Becoming a Lagosian?

An Ethnography of Urban Identification in Gowon Estate

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Abstract

This dissertation tries to bridge African urban studies and poststructural cultural geography by doing an ethnography of urban identification in Gowon Estate, an ethnically and religiously diverse neighborhood with a special historical background in Lagos, Nigeria. It has three lines of contribution and argumentation. First, this research usefully employs a performative lens and conception of relational space to understand the rural-urban dynamics in Africa. In doing so, I argue that our understandings of home (home places), ethnicity, and spirituality in urban identification processes are deepened by examining unbounded homes, everyday ethnicity, and performative spiritual sociality. Second, this research illustrates a way of doing performative ethnography of urban identification. Specifically, it suggests balancing place- and subject-ontologies through the framing of "cities in life". Furthermore, I call for two performative interventions in the studies of urban identity: one is to spatialize the performativity of identification; the other is to distinguish narrative identities from reiterative everyday discursive practices through which power implicitly works. Third, this dissertation sheds light on a "Lagosian" phenomenon based on the context of Gowon Estate–Estate boys. Born and raised in the Estate, while these young men were stereotyped by the older generations, they performatively enacted the place-identity through counseling practices in the affinity groups: they provide advice to each other on "projects" in which they could participate and on "relationships" that they could mediate. I argue that these socio-spatial practices in and around the neighborhood make Gowon Estate a sticky space in their urban lives, leading to a kind of aspirational unsettling. Outside the affinity groups, their bordering

practice not only refers to whether or not they engage in online scams but more profoundly pertains to the normative discourses of “money ritual” in their performative spiritual sociality. Moreover, Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness are entangled in their urban experiences. The performed and performative ethnicities manifest in their everyday usage of pidgin English mixed with Yoruba and also infuse their experiences of learning Yoruba at school and pursuing higher education in their “home” places. A focused study of Estate boys helps us better understand generational differences of urban identification in Lagos.

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For Talia Ye Tao

Who mean the world to me

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Introduction

Prelude

"I am going to move back to Lagos. I must. I lie in bed, on my back, wearing only boxer shorts, enduring the late afternoon's damp heat. I have headphones on… It is at high volume, but the generators say, No, you will not enjoy this… This is Lagos. I disagree, turn the volume up, listen to both the music and the noise. Neither gives way. No sense emerges of the combat between art and messy reality."

—Teju Cole, "Every Day is For the Thief", 2014, p. 69.

When I first arrived in Lagos—the largest metropolis in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2012, I was not struck by the cityscape and its vibrant city life. I have lived in Chinese megacities for years, including Guangzhou and Hong Kong where numerous African traders engaged in transnational businesses. The differences between Lagos and these cities are not restricted to cityscape but to how people were attached to and made sense of city life, as illustrated in the writing of Teju Cole—one of my favorite Nigerian-American writers. After meeting many Chinese expatriates and traders who were my research subjects in 2012, I found that none of them planned to settle in Lagos because they did not identify themselves with the city. Such disidentification was also found among other Nigerian residents I encountered during the decade when I stayed in Lagos.

Nevertheless, the city's population is exploding, and Lagos is rapidly climbing up the ladder of most populous cities in the world.[1]

By settling in Lagos, one is expected to become a Lagosian in some ways. This was the theme of a classic anthropological study of urban identity in Lagos (Barnes 1974). In her Ph.D. dissertation "Becoming a Lagosian", Barnes (1974: 9) defines a "Lagosian" as the offspring of parents or grandparents who themselves settled permanently in Lagos.[2] Although my study conceptualizes Lagosian identity and also urban identity in more complex ways, I still appreciate Barnes' pioneering work to highlight "Lagosian" identity in African urban studies. The title of this dissertation echoes her work, but the added question mark implies the open-ended processes of becoming in which "Lagosian" is not necessarily a static status that every resident wants to become. In other words, urban identification can be an ever-changing multi-dimensional process, as described in Teju's narrative as well as in my Lagosian friend Tope's life.

I came across Tope in 2016 when I looked for an urban neighborhood to be a study site. This 30-year-old Yoruba man showed me around Gowon Estate—a community of dozens of high-rise buildings lived in by a variety of residents from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Tope grew up in the Estate but then lived in a cheaper area close to it. From Tope's social networks, I got to know various residents in Gowon Estate and became interested in how they engaged in the processes of identification with or against

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[1] According to the 2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects published by the United Nations (2019), the population of Lagos is more than 13 million, ranked the 18th in the world, second in Africa between Cairo and Kinshasa. A Washington Post report predicts that Lagos will become the most populous city in the world by the end of the 21st century (See the report: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/africa-cities/).

[2] She further explains that the first-generation migrant who decided to be a permanent resident of the city, cannot be called a Lagosian but is "becoming" one (Ibid).

Lagos life. Being seen as an *oyinbo* (meaning foreigner in Yoruba) man bearing a Yoruba name Kolade, I became a resident, who is also temporally, spatially, and socially involved in their neighborhood/city life and also in their longer life trajectories. By living with them during 2018-19, I gradually realized that the ambivalent identification with Lagos unfolds in complex ways, on which I will shed light in this dissertation.

This ethnographic monograph covers several aspects of living life in Lagos. First, home is an essential and a more generic part of urban life. Various urban residents can have different ways of (dis)identifying Lagos as a home and Gowon Estate as a home. Therefore, the experiences of making a home and feeling at home can affect people's urban identities. Second, a more specific part of urban life in Lagos pertains to ethnicity. Given the historical and cultural backgrounds of Lagos, Yoruba people like Tope are usually perceived as the majority in the city. The role of ethnicity thus should be taken into account of urban identity. Apart from being a Yoruba, Tope is also a Christian. How does the intersecting ethnic and religious identities relate to his urban identity? Religion, or spirituality in a broad sense, is another important topic to explore. Born in Lagos and raised in Gowon Estate, Tope's socio-spatial identity as an Estate boy is distinct from his father's. Knowing his family well, I also delve into the generational difference of urban identification. In sum, home, ethnicity, spirituality/religion, sociality, youth and generation are all related with regard to urban identity in Lagos. How to weave them into a coherent ethnography hinges on a particular approach that I will detail in the subsequent literature review.

Rethinking Geographies of Urban Identity (in Africa)

To understand urban identity, we need to first clarify what is urban. Generally speaking, the urban is often defined by what is not urban—notably the rural—and gradually by other concepts that address the continuum between the urban and the rural, such as suburban and peri-urban. In this rapidly urbanizing world, Brenner and Schmid (2014: 750) propose an inspiring concept "planetary urbanization" to address the urbanization processes that are "unevenly woven, constantly imploding and exploding, fabric of social relations, struggles, experiences, strategies". With this framing, the urban seems to "stretch to envelop everywhere" (Merrifield 2014: x). Brenner and Schmid's theory largely lies in the structural analysis of urbanization by teasing out the socio-spatial relations across different scales and locales, therefore it has attracted many critiques from feminist and postcolonial perspectives (See Peake et al. 2018). However, the planetary perspective is to some extent useful to redefine the urban. For instance, drawing on Mouffe's (2000) interpretation of "constitutive outside", Roy (2016) contends that the planetary perspective of critiquing the rural-urban dualism should be focused on the incomplete, contingent, and undecidable processes through which the urban is made, lived, and contested. I suggest that her advocate for critical urban studies should also include a poststructural intervention to urban identity, because people's identification with the urban has not been restricted to the urban place they inhabit. From the perspective of relational space–as multiple relations meet in space, at meeting places, new relations and identities come into being and always in the process of becoming

(Massey 1991; 1999)–urban identification should be approached by teasing out the constellation of these relations.

Why do I emphasize identification instead of urban identity? Phrasing of identification in this dissertation is to interrogate the conception of identity as a static and singular term. As a "processual, active term, derived from a verb", "identification" invites us to "specify the agents that do the identifying" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 14). In this vein, place and identity are not regarded as reified "categories of analysis", but "categories of practice" – "categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 4). Moreover, this study treats discourse and practice as mutually constitutive aspects of place and identity. Discourses are understood as sets of power-laden discursive practices: discourses are used by people to make sense of the social world they inhabit, while discourses are constructed to impose meanings on the social life. This framing of discursive practice, according to Foucault (1977), has two implications: the surface meanings that individual subjects can interpret, thereby developing a contingent knowledge; the system of rules which govern the meaning production through power. Throughout this dissertation, I use "discursive practice" particularly to emphasize those power-laden everyday sayings and doings.[3]

[3] The usage of "discursive practice" does not imply that the relationship between discourse and the non-discursive is not simply a mirroring, according to Foucault (1977). Discourse is based on the underlying 'power/knowledge' which cannot be reduced to human intentionality. This power/knowledge matrix links discourse to the non-discursive and creates the connections which makes it possible to speak about some aspect of the world in a particular regime of truth.

This phrasing of urban identification is also consistent with post-structural theoretical stances that view "identity" not as a thing or essence but as a "process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter" (Butler 1993: 9). Moreover, this materialization refers to "a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citing of power" (Butler 1993: 15) in identification processes. In other words, citing or citation in Butler's sense is to reiterate differently, instead of a repetition of the same. Through citational, reiterative discursive practices, "immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power" (Ibid), identification stabilizes and materializes. Accordingly, the enactment of identity materializes a "constitutive outside"[4] which marks the exterior against which the category of identity seems bounded.

In the remainder of this section, drawing on this proposition on urban identification, I will first review the geographical literature on urban identity. In doing so, I identify the difference between the place-ontology and subject-ontology; the latter of which I advocate in this study. Moreover, I will introduce two interventions I will make to geographies of urban identity: one is to frame "cities in life" (against life in cities); the other is to understand the performativity of urban identification. Subsequently, I will further explain how these two interventions can respectively contribute to rethinking urban identification in Africa by bridging African urban studies and poststructural geographies.

[4] In line with Roy's (2015) use of "constitutive outside" to interpret the urban, identification can also be approached in this way. The constitutive outside here stands as the paradoxical other that is both excluded from the identity and included at the interior, because without "other" the identity category does not exist. This idea is particularly useful in interpreting the place-identity of young men born and raised in Gowon Estate (See chapter 4).

Reflecting on Geographies of Urban Identity: Between Place- and Subject-Ontologies

The geographical literature that primarily[5] studies urban identity over the past two decades can be categorized into two strands. The first has focused on place-identity in an urban context. There is a long tradition of examining place and identity as mutually constituted, dynamically interactive, discursive, and practical categories in human geography (For a review, See Diener and Hagen 2022). Pred (1986: 31) introduces a time-geography approach to place, "the ever becoming of what is the scene as place and what takes place under historically specific circumstances". Indebted to structuration theories, political geographer Agnew (1987: 5) contends that for a space to become a "place", three requirements need to be met: locale, location, and sense of place which he defines as a "subjective orientation that can be engendered by living in a place". Sense of place thus becomes a geographical concept that links identity and place. In her famous piece "A Global Sense of Place", Massey (1991) defines place as a site of multiple identities and histories. Furthermore, Rose (1995: 87-132) explains that senses of place relate to identity in different ways: they may invite identification with a place, but the meaning of a sense of place may be irrelevant to how people identify themselves. Over the years, these geographers have built the theoretical foundations of a place-identity paradigm.

[5] "Primarily" means that urban identity/identification (in some cases, urban belonging is also included) is the research theme or at least one aspect of the theme. Those which only mention urban identity a few times do not count; those which study other kinds of identity in an urban context do not count, because the city in this scenario is treated just as a background of the study site. The review articles do not count; only empirical studies of urban identity are included in this literature review.

Indebted to this paradigm, urban geographers have examined urban identity by reifying the "place" at the scale of urban neighborhood in cities[6] (Martin 2005; Carter et al. 2007; Lelandais 2014; Burrell 2016; Millstein 2017; Yarker 2018; Frost & Catney 2020; Preece 2020). These works have shed light on the ways in which urban identities are formed, negotiated, and contested in response to the economic, social, and cultural changes of urban neighborhoods. However, most of these works focus on "Western" cities so that urban identities are approached through Western characteristics of neighborhood dynamics, such as post-industrial gentrification, cultural regeneration, and tourism urbanization. A few exceptional works based in "non-Western" cities (e.g., Istanbul and Cape Town) approach urban identities from the perspective of collective identification in the grassroots resistance against top-down urbanization projects, particularly through urban housing struggles (Lelandais 2014; Millstein 2017). Thus, vast experiences of urban identity formation and negotiation outside activist politics in non-Western cities deserves more attention.

Although this strand of scholarship, in general, has contributed the geographical paradigm of place-identity nexus to understandings of dynamic urban identities in ever-changing urban places (predominantly neighborhoods), geographers tend to theorize urban identities through conceptualizing preordained and fixed ontology of places networked into regional, national and/or global hierarchies. This conceptualization, as Andrucki and Dickinson (2015) have critiqued, puts places in the center of studying urban life, therefore it primarily conceptualizes "life in a city" with which city dwellers

[6] There are other urban places associated with urban identity formation such as public space (Brahinsky 2011) and cultural landscape (Ziyaee 2018), but urban neighborhood literature accounts for the majority.

identify; in my approach to urban identities, I suggest taking a different perspective—"cities in life" that centers on individual urban residents' fluid ontological conceptualization of places which are experientially placed within individual life trajectories. This perspective, I will later explain, will be consistent with a poststructural intervention to "life in a city" using a performative lens.

The second strand of literature, though still based on the place-identity paradigm, emphasizes the status of particular social groups within cities who are usually migrants[7] in "Western" cities (Tzfadia and Yacobi 2007; Devadason 2010; Christensen and Jensen 2011; Skelton 2013; Shdema et al. 2021); exceptional case studies are based in Istanbul and Dehradun, India (Secor 2003b, 2004; Deuchar 2019). In this strand, instead of underlining the place-ness in urban identification processes, geographers focus on how urban identities intersect with other categories of identities, such as gender, ethnicity, and nationality, in a diverse urban space or an ethnically-coherent neighborhood. In other words, identities can be freely, subjectively negotiated, contested, and mobilized by (migrant) subjects in response to various situations in urban societies.

Geographers contributing this scholarly tradition have made efforts to illuminate the subjectivity and agency of urban migrants/residents in the processes of negotiating and mobilizing urban identities, but this interpretation is built on the proposition of fully autonomous and conscious subjects having capacities to *do* identity. In poststructural geography that is informed by Butler's (1993) work, however, such masterful humanist subjects are distinguished from the subjects as situated subjects in the power-discourse

[7] This does not mean that migrants are the only subjects in the studies of urban identity. There is a strand of literature that focuses on gendered identity, sexuality, and urban space (Knopp 1998; Bondi and Rose 2003; Butcher and Maclean 2018).

matrix and in the unconscious compelled repetition of everyday discursive practices (Nelson 1999; Gregson and Rose 2000). Such poststructuralist interventions have widely been applied to geographical studies of identities of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and race, but urban identities have not been centrally interrogated through this lens. This dissertation takes poststructuralist approaches seriously in exploring the geographies of urban identity.

Both strands of scholarship have shed light on the specific processes of urban identification based on place and engaged in by people, but each of them neglects some aspects of identification when constructing their ontologies. Here ontology refers to "the set of basic elements that are presupposed by a particular vocabulary, theory, or descriptive framework" and "a mode of analysis that aims at exhibiting the underlying presuppositions of…the very possibility of meaning, knowledge, or appearance" (Malpas 2012: 230). Accordingly, the first strand of literature that hinges on the place-identity paradigm can be treated as a representative of place-ontology: place and its meanings and theories are centrally positioned in the analysis of urban identification. The second strand of literature emphasizes a subject-ontology: human subjects, especially urban migrants in some literature, demonstrate their subjectivity and agency in the processes of constructing, negotiating, and contesting urban identities. As I critically reviewed, both sets of ontological thinking and empirical studies understate or ignore something: the former does not situate relational space in people's life trajectories so that the relationality is not revealed in the place-centered scope of urban identification; the latter overemphasizes the conscious, agentic performance and representations of urban identity without much critical examination on the unconscious, performative enactment of

identities through reiterative everyday discursive practices. Therefore, I suggest that we should make two conceptual and theoretical interventions as elaborated below.

Framing "Cities in Life"

Urban identification, in the first place, unfolds for individual subjects; therefore, urban identification can be seen as a constellation of multiple trajectories of personhood becoming in a specific urban context. Compared to "being" that underlines duration of a certain state, "becoming" implies relatively radical change from one state to a new status or identity (Grosz, 1999). In this urban context, the subjects of becoming can be "Lagosian" or any status closely associated with Lagos and urban places in it, such as Yoruba-ness, (un)settled status, and Estate boys. However, unlike Barnes' framing, becoming "Lagosian" is not just the formation of a singular, fixed Lagosian identity, but involves various practices of identification with a fluid discourse of "Lagosian" in relation to other categories. In other words, each city resident is on the way to gain or negotiate a specific assemblage of identities over the time of their life course. To lean toward the subject-ontology in the study of urban identification, I suggest prioritizing the subjects' life experience over the place they inhabit.

In geographies of urban identity, "life in a city" is a common conceptualization, whereby scholars endeavor to shed light on certain aspects of urban life that are closely associated with the particular cities and city residents identify themselves with or against (e.g.,Pile 1996; Fincher and Jacobs eds. 1998; Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Yiftachel 2006; Myers 2011). These works have contributed considerably to our understanding of

the specifics of urban experiences in which urban identities are formed, negotiated, and mobilized. What they generally leave out, by focusing on the framing of "life in a city", however, is how the meanings of such experience are shaped by social relationships stretching out along longer life trajectories, often spanning not only the current city of a person's residence, but the many other places that remain important to them. In fact, human geographers have argued for thinking space relationally for a long time (Massey 1992, 1998, 2005; Havery 1996; Amin and Thrift 2002; Amin 2007; Jones 2009). Specifically, the idea of relational space means that as multiple relations meet in space, at meeting places, space is thus open, always in the process of becoming. Although this relational turn in geography has rendered important paradigmatic shifts, much of these foundational works takes the perspective of place-ontology (Malpas 2012). The abstraction of socio-spatial relations in this vein (e.g., Jessop et al. 2008) often emphasizes place-ness over the experiences and narratives of individual subjects. This imbalance risks losing attention to the "underlying character of space as it stands in relation to place and time" (Malpas 2012: 240). Thus, I argue that taking account of multiple relational places that are socio-spatially woven into individual life trajectories will further deepen our understanding of the subject-ontology in urban identification processes.

To support this claim, this study proposes, as an alternative conceptualization to "life in a city", "cities in life": an approach that prioritizes individuals' lived experiences and life trajectories over the cities that these individuals inhabit. In this regard, the phrasing "Lagos in life" refers to a project aimed at understanding how the city of Lagos is not solely subjectively experienced on its own terms, but also in its residents' socio-spatial

relationships within lives in other places, including the residents' hometowns, as well as other cities that have featured prominently in the narratives of their own life stories. Reconciling this spatial relationality of places with the temporal trajectory of individual lived experiences helps to tease out the new conceptual perspective of a place in the individual's life, especially for the focused city of Lagos and the relational space of Gowon Estate.

By inserting the perspective of place and placing into urban identification processes, "cities in life" can also provide geographies of urban identity with a temporal dimension to understand becoming of personhood. Based on the place-identity paradigm, urban geographers gradually incorporated individual biographical narratives and memories of changing urban neighborhoods in the studies of their (dis)identification and (un)belonging (Cole 2013; Degnen 2016; Pinkster 2016; Preece 2020). However, these narratives are epistemologically and methodologically oriented by place-ness rather than ontological personhood.[8]

Although this study brings in the conceptual framing of "cities in life", it does not negate the studies of urban identities through the framing of "life in a city". Indebted to the place-identity paradigm that approaches urban identity through the place-ontology, I also take place-ness seriously in the human-oriented subject formation in the specific urban fabrics. However, as illustrated in my critique of autonomous, agentic, and fully conscious subjects in the studies of urban identities, I suggest taking a performative approach to fill the gaps in the studies of performances and representations of urban

[8] Another set of literature taking temporal approach to youth becoming in the geographies of youth (See the review, Worth 2009: 1051-1052) provides only generic analysis of personal identification rather than contextualize (urban) places of identification.

identities (the second strand of literature). This can help us avoid overemphasizing agency and subjectivity in the subject-ontology. In other words, I will still examine identities of residents in an urban neighborhood of Lagos, as showcased in most geographical literature on urban identity, but more profoundly, this study in the neighborhood is guided by the framing of "cities in life" and performativity of identity.

Understanding the Performativity of Urban Identification

The concept of performativity questions the fixity and a priori determinacy of identity and subjectivity. According to Butler (1993: 2), it captures "the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains". Butler's work has been most influential through its use of performativity to denaturalize the gendered subject, providing an important explanatory model for a poststructural intervention. This notion directly responds to Austin's theory of speech acts, which questioned representationalism by demonstrating that language has the potential to actually do something in the world rather than merely depict an already existing state of affairs (Glass and Rose-Redwood 2014: 4). In this vein, performativity has been productively employed by human geographers as an anti-foundational, de-naturalizing and de-essentializing approach to rethink the social construction of identity, that involves race, ethnicity, citizenship, gender, space, and power (Bell 1999; Gregson and Rose 2000; Rose 2002; Secor 2003a[9];Thomas 2005; Kaiser 2014; Kaiser and Nikiforova 2008; Pine

[9] Interestingly, Secor (2003a) employs a performative approach to gendered identity in Istanbul, while she does not do so in the studies of urban identity in the same context (Secor 2003b; 2004). In her analysis of spatial practice of work for the enactment of gender identity, Secor (2003a) does not distinguish performance and performativity.

2010; Sullivan 2012; Andrucki and Dickson 2015; Aly 2015). Although they deploy performative notions and concepts for different ends, these works have demonstrated that performative theories can help to fundamentally disrupt the fixity of geographical categories of analysis by drawing attention to everyday discursive practices through which place-identities are both constructed and destabilized over time.

For the concept of urban identity which can intersect with multiple "categories of analysis" in the urban context, such as race, sex, gender, ethnicity, and class, deploying performative theories is not simply applying its analytical notions to any urban empirics; rather it requires the specificity of the urban categories of discursive practices, because "identity and specificity work interchangeably" so that the "subject position" becomes self-referential (Butler 2010: 441). The urban conditions in each city create specific scenarios in which individuals *do* identity work. For instance, this specificity is addressed in Secor's (2003a) study of gender performativity in urban identification in the city of Istanbul where the spatial practice of work is constitutive of gendered subjects and marks gendered identity and difference; it is also addressed in Aly's (2015) ethnography of everyday Arabness in London where, he suggests, processes of identification with race, gender, and class are interdependent. I agree with Aly that the urban is a complex configuration of various processes so that we need to understand the performative nature of intersecting identification processes.

The intersecting categories of identity have been extensively studied in many Western cities like London (e.g., Naylor and Ryan 2002; Peach 2002; Gidley 2013; Neal et al. 2013). Framing through urban diversity and multiculturalism, these works in the social geography of urban identity focus on the representations and performances of

intersected ethnic and religious identities. For instance, drawing on interviews with African migrants in Milton Keynes, Neal et al. (2013: 315) suggest that "people mix with, encounter one another, and manage cultural difference and ethnic identity in more contingent, pragmatic, and 'at ease' or convivial ways". Only based on how informants narrate their identities without much attention to the non-representational and performative dimensions of ethnic identification, the authors ignore power dynamics in their urban identification processes (the word "power" is even rarely mentioned in their writing). Taking the difference between performance and performativity seriously, I argue, can help to articulate how power works through everyday repetitive discursive practices in which ethnic identification intersects with other categories of identities.

Drawing from poststructural scholarship, geographers have emphasized the nuanced difference between performance and performativity: "performance—what individual subjects do, say, 'act-out' and performativity—the citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performances—intrinsically connected, through the saturation of performances through power." (Gregson and Rose 2000: 434; also see Aly 2015: 25-30). In other words, a performative reading of identification processes makes researchers attend to the outcome of discourses of identity categories (ethnicity, spirituality etc.) stemming from repetitive, citational acts. Such difference, however, is not sufficiently addressed in ethnographic work; rather, performance and performativity are used interchangeably under an umbrella of "performative ethnography" (Castañeda 2006; Henry 2012; Alhourani 2017). The usage of performance draws on the scholarship of Erving Goffman and Victor Turner, which are quite different from Butler's version of performativity. This mistreatment of

performance and performativity does not unravel the citationality of discursive practices so that power is only staged at the time of performance and representation.[10] . Consequently, doing ethnographies can fall back into the track of constructivism that overemphasizes the agency of subjects in the power-discourse matrix. In this dissertation and especially in chapters 6 and 7, I will elaborate on how distinguishing performativity from performance of ethnicity and spirituality can help to understand urban identification processes in the ethnically and spiritually diverse city life of Lagos and Gowon Estate.

Rethinking Urban Identification in Africa by Inserting "Place"

The existing literature on urban identities in Africa lies in a relatively enclosed scholarship without much dialogue with the place-identity paradigm in geographies of urban identity. In earlier studies, Africanist scholars usually examined urban identification processes in terms of rural-urban connection/migration/interaction, which involved urban migrants' identification with their rural "homes" through social networks sometimes maintained by hometown associations (Tostensen et al. eds. 2001; For a review, see Gugler 2002). A representative study in this vein by Ferguson (1999: 82-122) proposes a "cultural dualism", referring to how Copperbelt urban workers plan for their rural futures in the economic decline of the urban while maintaining their "urban

[10] In a study of the Somali migrant community in Cape Town, Alhourani (2017) claims to employ a "performative ethnography", but the interpretation is largely based on how informants represent their identities: "When they spoke about their origins, they often stressed their belonging to and membership of a cohesive Somali community. It was however through performative ethnography that the Somali participants entered into collective conversations in which they expressed clearly their shared feelings of fear and their cultural differences, multiple belongings and nostalgia and attachment to their homeland." (Ibid, 213). This is a clear example of mistaking "performativity" for performance.

styles"—a phrase he argues is more appropriate than urban identity. This pioneering and in-depth study paved the way to study identification in the dynamic rural-urban interactions. Furthermore, Africanist geographers discovered that retired middle-class elders tend to migrate to suburban areas or smaller towns (Mercer 2017; Page and Sunjo 2018). Therefore, the dichotomous patterns of Africa's rural-urban mobilities have been interrogated and complicated by circular and more open-ended forms of migration (Potts 2010) and more dynamic urban identity and belonging (Lee 2011; Barratt et al. 2012; Foulds 2015; Njwambe et al. 2019). Although these works have illuminated the dynamic processes of urban identification in the rural-urban interactions in Africa, the specificity and relationality of place has not been sufficiently discussed in this rural-urban framing.

Nevertheless, the geographical concept of place has recently been invoked in Africanist scholarship. In observing the scarceness of humanistic cultural geography studies of sense of place in Sub-Saharan Africa, Myers (2005) conducts a case study of Jongowe, a small settlement in Tanzania, to illustrate that the residents' place-identities are intertwined with livelihood struggles. This was one of the earliest attempts made by an Africanist geographer to call for engagements with the place-identity paradigm by drawing from lived experiences in Africa (though not in an urban African context). More recently, a small number of scholars at the African Center for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town, began to examine place-identities in the urban fabrics of South Africa (Ferreira 2007; Erwin 2015; Rink 2016; Millstein 2020). These South African case studies do not just apply the theoretical framing of place-identity and place making that originated from Western contexts but also speak back to the geographical literature by

advancing local social-spatial practices in identity formation, such as urban quartering in Cape Town (Rink 2016).

In addition to the primary focus of urban identification in the rural-urban framing and the new South African work that echoes the place-identity paradigm, urban identities more likely appear as a secondary subject under the themes of youth identities in anthropological ethnographies. In other words, urban identities are not primarily examined but partially discussed in ethnographic studies of urban youth experiences, such as the youth popular culture of barber's shops (Weiss 2009), young women's engagement with the sexual economy (Cole 2010), young men's everyday performance of bluffing and consumption (Newell 2012), youth struggles and strategies in the midst of economic uncertainty (Mains 2012) and youth street hustling for livelihood (Di Nunzio 2019). These exemplar book-length ethnographies downplay the rural-urban dualism and largely focus on the formation and changes of youth identities in specific urban conditions (also see the articles, Hansen 2005; Masquelier 2013). Although youth transition to adulthood matters in Africa's urban development (for the review, see Banks 2021), I suggest that urban identity should not remain secondary in youth identity research.

In sum, despite the expanding attention to "place" in South African scholarship, the perspective of place is largely lacking in the studies of urban identity in Africa. On the one hand, rural-urban framing that is still employed in some cases dismisses the specificity and relationality of place in studying processes of urban identification; on the other hand, the focus on youth identities in anthropological ethnographies of urban Africa takes urban identity lightly without the articulation of place-ness and the city-ness in the

intertwined processes of youth becoming. Therefore, I call for inserting the perspective of place in examining individual life trajectories that encompass youth transition to adulthood in urban Africa, and this intervention not only echoes the place-identity paradigm but also helps build the conceptual framing of "cities in life".

"Cities in life" usefully tackles three sets of research problems that are revealed in studies of urban identity in Africa. First, it brings in the geographical perspective of place-identity and relational space to rethink urban identification in Africa. Place matters deeply, for it is "a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world" (Cresswell 2015:18). I suggest that interrogations of the epistemology of rural-urban dualism should pay heed to the geographical insights into ontological narratives of places in human experiences. That said, not simply the places positioned in research subjects' life trajectories, but also the socio-spatial relations that constitute and connect places, should be identified and critically discussed in terms of their meanings, senses and power dynamics, rather than simply slotted into an urban or rural category. Accordingly, the place-identity paradigm in geographies of urban identity is not simply applied to an African urban context but shifts from place-ontology to subject-ontology with attention paid to how human subjects *place* cities relationally (as chapter 3 details).

Second, this subject-ontology of placing helps to rethink the preexisting positionality of lived space of city and neighborhood, such as Lagos and Gowon Estate. The conceptual framing of "life in a city" tends to put the studied city in the central position of individual urban identification. In this sense, the changes of urban neighborhoods in the city become focused and prioritized in the studies of dynamic urban identification processes, as reviewed before. However, the centrality of city and neighborhood is not

fixed but imagined and reimagined as central, marginal, or both in individual life trajectories. Indebted to poststructural theories (of performativity of place), Andrucki and Dickinson (2015) take a biographical approach to interrogating the centrality and marginality of places in transnational migration processes. This research informs us of the value of "cities in life" framing to understand the conceptualization of Lagos and Gowon Estate as homes in life.

Specifically, the framing of "cities in life" helps to understand the generational difference of making and feeling of home in urban identification processes, which is primarily addressed in chapter 4. In African studies literature, the concept of "home" has involved the ideas of place-identity. Home is built on materiality of housing so that the material configuration of home reflects the residents' self-identification (Pellow 2018). Moreover, the term "home people" usually means personal identification with indigeneity and ethnicity in mostly rural villages (Smith 2005). "Home place" is regarded as a place of belonging that develops translocal and transnational networks through so-called "home associations" or "hometown associations" in large cities (Mercer et al. 2009; Feldman-Savelsberg & Ndonko 2010). In contrast to "home-geographies" which examine the interplay between lived experiences of urban homes and the contested domestication of urban space, in most cases in a "Western" city (See Blunt and Sheringham 2019), home is implicitly or explicitly based on the rural-urban interactions in African studies literature. Therefore, "placing cities in life" incorporates how older and younger generations differently feel 'at home' when they make, unmake, and remake homes in the city and the neighborhood. This framing not only bridges both sets of scholarship on

home but also facilitates a rethinking of place-identity and ethnicity in Africa (in chapter 6).

Third, this framing is consistent with a poststructural approach to identity which is largely missing in the studies of urban identity in Africa. Much like the geographical literature that emphasizes migrants' agency in negotiating and mobilizing urban identities, the African urban studies literature usually does not take poststructural approaches to urban identity[11]. Anthropological ethnographies usually treat urban identity as a representation of urban experiences or embedded in identity politics (esp. ethnic politics in Africa), though they illustrate the dynamics of urban identification in the rural-urban nexus. In his representative urban ethnography in the Copperbelt, Ferguson (1999: 96-99) briefly mentions (rather than engages with) Butler's "new poststructuralist approaches to identity" in his account of cultural styles that he believes are performative, but his analysis still centers on the economic and political relations between urban workers and rural allies. In subsequent ethnographic research, Africanist anthropologists embrace constructivist representational approaches to urban identities without much account of the performativity of identification (Englund 2001; Smith 2004; Larkin 2004; Whitehouse 2012; Vivet et al. 2013; Prothmann 2018). Dismissing the performative dimension, as I argued earlier, can lead to underexploration of power dynamics in discursive practices. In the next section, I will elaborate on how a performative intervention to everyday life in Lagos is necessary for bridging African urban studies and poststructural cultural geography.

[11] Poststructural theories and concepts are employed by few Africanist urban ethnographers, like Newell (2012) who applied performativity to his interpretation of bluffing in relation to urban modernity and Ivorian nationalism.

Bridging African Urban Studies and Poststructural Geography: Learning from Lagos

In the review of geographies of urban identity, I found that there is an empirical tendency to conduct case studies in a Western urban context, and most of these works interact with each other without engaging with the empirical studies beyond Western cities[12]. Although urbanist scholars have proposed various concepts and theories to invoke the dialogues between scholarship across academic hemispheres, such as postcolonial cities, ordinary cities, worlding cities and subaltern urbanism (Yeoh 2001; Robinson 2006; Roy 2015; Roy and Ong 2011; Leitner and Sheppard 2016), few of these conceptual frameworks and associated empirical studies *centrally* engage with urban identities. Much work endeavors to interrogate Western-based theorization of urbanization and development that manifests differently in the Southern hemisphere. I appreciate this movement and advocacy for theoretical alternatives, but I think, in terms of geographies of urban identity, the foremost moves include two steps that this dissertation takes. The first, which has been elaborated above, is to dialogue with the place-identity paradigm without overemphasizing the place-ontology and with attention paid to subject-ontology of placing cities in life. In doing so, the generational differences in urban identification processes can be illuminated. The second, which is detailed subsequently, is to participate in the poststructural intervention to migrant subjectivity and agency in urban identity formation through conducting an ethnographic study in a specially-positioned non-Western context.

[12] For instance, in Tomaney's (2015) review of belonging and identity mostly in urban worlds, none of the case studies from Africa are mentioned.

I suggest that Africanist scholarship should join this poststructural intervention to geographies of urban identity by employing performative theories to reframe the idea of "life in a city". In terms of the specificity of "life in Lagos", two categories of analysis are identified (in chapter 1) from the existing literature: modernity and diversity. Drawing on the concepts of narrative identity[13] (Somers 1994), I argue that modernity and diversity are conceptual narratives which reflect certain aspects of life in the city, though they are sometimes at odds with ontological narratives of cities in individual life trajectories. These categories of analysis–modernity and diversity in Lagos history and society– are informative when choosing a study site—Gowon Estate in Lagos—but fade away when categories of discursive practices emerge, such as "family house", "Estate boys", "Yoruba", "Lagosian", "money ritual" etc. from a performative reading of subjects' everyday lives.

To understand how these mundane discourses work to shape urban identification, I suggest inserting the performativity of identity in four interrelated aspects of urban identification when understanding and interpreting individual performances and experiences. These four aspects, home, youth identity, ethnicity, and spirituality, are not derived from an analytical framework I propose but emerge from life stories narrated by Lagos residents and my own ethnographic experience in an urban neighborhood of Lagos.

[13] There is not any clear border between "narrative" and "discourse". Drawing on Somers' (1994: 616) reframing of narrativity, narratives are "constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by casual emplotment". In this sense, what makes "discourse" distinct from narrativity is the power-discourse matrix, addressed by Foucault and in performativity scholarship.

In the first place, urban identification is enacted through making home in a city and a neighborhood as well as feeling at home through socio-spatial experiences in these places. The performative perspective brought into African urban contexts is to conceptualize "home" as unbounding and relational space (Murdoch 2006; Cook et al. 2016), therefore enriching the African studies literature that usually treats "home" as domestic space associated with "family house" (Pellow 2018; Njwambe et al. 2019). In line with Cole's (2011; also see Cole and Durham 2007) interpretation of generational differences in social change in Africa, I extend the discussion of generational difference to the study of home-related urban identification. The generational lens from Lagos is particularly useful in understanding urban youth identification, filling the gap in the literature on home and identity (Blunt and Sheringham 2019). Moreover, specifically indebted to the performative concept of sticky space, which refers to space saturated with intensified emotions (Ahmed 2004; Laketa 2018), this study illustrates that Gowon Estate becomes a sticky space for the younger generation who grew up in the neighborhood, especially being called Estate boys.

The second performative intervention is made to youth social identification with the urban neighborhood. Gowon Estate, as a specifically positioned neighborhood in Lagos history and society, is associated with stereotyped labels of young men, locally as "Estate boys" (with quotation marks). Instead of treating youth identity as a pregiven category in response to urban changes of Gowon Estate, I conceptualize Estate boys (without quotation marks) through the performative enactment of place-identity among young men born or raised in Gowon Estate. In African urban studies, ethnographers have illustrated the meaningful social practices of young men, particularly in terms of bluffing (Newell

2012) and performing manhood (Smith 2017). By acknowledging their contributions, I further suggest that counseling practices after bluffing and performing manhood are also important, because through reiterative everyday practices of counseling in the young men's affinity group, their identification with Gowon Estate is performatively and socially enacted. This echoes the earlier finding that Gowon Estate becomes a sticky space for young men. Moreover, drawing on Kraftl's (2007) performative reading of utopian unsettling, I propose "aspirational unsettling" to understand how the formation of social identity among Estate boys can affect urban identification. The subject-ontology of this ethnographic study directs us to place Gowon Estate in one's mobility trajectories and social networks in city life. In doing so, we can further understand how stickiness of emotion and stretched out social relations are combined to create a dynamically balanced "unsettling" status for young men.

In the aspects of ethnicity and spirituality, I suggest that the nuanced difference between performance and performativity should be taken seriously. In contexts other than Africa, scholars have studied how Irish ethnicity is both performed and performative: while "actively" and consciously engaged in constructing Irish ethnicities, the subjects also "passively" follow discourses of Irishness that they are unknowingly helping to construct (Sullivan 2015). In the ethnography of Arabness in London, Aly (2018: 202) emphasizes the interconnection between performance and performativity by vividly illustrating "the entangled and ongoing relationship between *how people do* hetero-, ethno- and class normativity—performance—and *why they do these things* in particular ways—performativity". In many ethnographies conducted in urban Africa, however, *performances* of ethnic and religious identity are usually the focus, without distinguishing

them from the *performativity* of identity. In fact, Africanist scholars have noted some phenomena that we can rethink from a performative perspective. For instance, life in Lagos is culturally and politically dominated by Yoruba peoples, while other groups navigate through the diverse urban life and sometimes resist Yoruba dominance (Peil 1991; Gandy 2005; Whiteman 2012). Also, Lagos is regarded as a city of "religious pluralism" (Janson 2021) where Christianity and Islam encounter and develop in conjunction with the spirituality of witchcraft. This specific urban context provides a perfect venue through which we can understand how ethnicity (of Yoruba-ness) and spirituality (of religion and witchcraft) articulate with urban identification. In particular, performative theories help us examine the reiterative power of discursive practices of ethnicity and spirituality.

In sum, bridging African urban studies and poststructural geography is an ambitious mission and cannot be achieved only through a single research project. Nevertheless, urban identity appears to be an ideal starting point to draw them into an ethnography in Lagos. Given that Lagos is one of the most extensively researched cities in Africa, it may not be eye-catching to read the evidence illustrated from this study of everyday life in a neighborhood with extension to many other places along life trajectories. However, reflecting on the mundane experiences is exactly what is needed for a methodological intervention and conceptual theorization. It demonstrates that we can and we should theorize through African everyday experiences.

The Outline of Chapters

The rest of the dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Drawing on Somers' (1994) dimensions of narrativity, Chapter 1 is composed of two parts. In the first, it identifies the conceptual narrativity of modernity and diversity from the scholarly narratives of Lagos in history and Gowon Estate in the history of Lagos' apartment housing. Juxtaposing both historical accounts, I will demonstrate how Gowon Estate is specially situated in the larger context of modernity and diversity in Lagos, thereby illustrating the specificity of this ethnographic study site. In the second part (section 1.3 and 1.4), the public and ontological narratives of "life in Lagos" are also juxtaposed to presenting three kinds of paradoxes that inform the study of home, ethnicity, and youth in the following chapters. More specifically, these paradoxical statements from my informants are related to some aspects of their lives in Gowon Estate, including the declining living environment, diverse resident population and the younger generation born and raised in the neighborhood. This chapter does not simply introduce the city and the study site as backdrops but vividly unfolds through narratives of histories of places and people's lives in them.

After placing Lagos and Gowon Estate in various narratives to explain why Gowon Estate serves as a vantage point in understanding life in Lagos, I elaborate on how I did ethnographic fieldwork in Gowon Estate in chapter 2. By living my life in the neighborhood, I exposed myself to various people in multiple social spaces. Also, I explain how I approached and selected informants through social networks, as social relations play a central role in this ethnography of urban identification. Moreover, life-

story interviews were conducted together with multiple rounds of ad-hoc interviews that cover a variety of topics informed by individual life experiences. By visiting a hometown place and showcasing two young people's mobile life, I suggest researching identification with Lagos and Gowon Estate from the perspective of relational space. Lastly, I emphasize the significance of reflexivity in doing a performative ethnography.

To shift from the place-ontology of presenting "life in Lagos" to the subject-ontology of placing Lagos in life, Chapter 3, first conceptualizes Lagos as a relational place woven out of stretched-out socio-spatial relations along individual life trajectories. By showcasing three life trajectories intersecting through the central mosque in Gowon Estate, Lagos, I elaborate on how Lagos and Gowon Estate in their lives are constituted by their social relations and relationally placed with their hometowns and other cities. . As one of them also identifies Lagos as an "unimportant" place in his life, I suggest that categories of places should not be generalized. Furthermore, by paying attention to the temporality in the life-story telling processes, I discover the generational difference of narrating how eight informants become "settled" or "unsettled". This indicates that urban identification should not be studied only through representations of life experiences.

Following the generational difference of narrating time in life stories, Chapter 4 further elaborates on the generational difference of urban identification by examining home making practices. Still from the perspective of placing Lagos and Gowon Estate in life, I aim to understand how the city and the neighborhood are identified as a home. Drawing on the literature on home and identity, I add that not only home making is important for urban identification, feeling at home also contributes significantly to the performative enactment of place-identity in the city. Seeing home as unbounded, always

in the process of making, unmaking, and remaking, I elaborate on how older and younger generations differently feel at home by making and remaking homes. In particular, through the performative lens, I illuminate how Gowon Estate becomes a sticky space—a space saturated with emotions and meaning—for second-generation young people born or raised in the neighborhood. Among them, I particularly pay attention to young men, given the longtime stereotyping of young men in Lagos–one of the three paradoxes about life in Lagos.

In Gowon Estate, these second-generation young men are also stereotyped with a label of "Estate boys" which is the theme of Chapter 5. There are two ways of "Estate boys" being used in this context: one is the stereotyped label; the other is the place-identity of these young men born and/or raised in the Estate. For the former one, I further illustrate how this label is socially produced and reproduced in neighborhood life of Gowon Estate, with reference to two other labels, "yahoo boys" (Internet scammers) and "big boys" (those scammers who have made fortunes). For the latter one, to explain how the place-identity is performatively enacted, I elaborate on two kinds of social practices in the youth affinity groups—"project" counseling and "relationship" counseling. Respectively following young men's social activities--bluffing and dating girlfriends—these counseling practices are widely observed within the affinity groups. Drawing on a key informant's, an Estate boy's, daily sociality and mobility in and out of Gowon Estate, I interpret how his social identity is performatively constructed through these counseling practices and how his social identification contributes to urban identification with Gowon Estate.

Chapters 6 and 7 continue employing a performative approach to everyday ethnicity and spirituality in urban identification processes. By understanding ethnicity as both performed and performative, I specifically elaborate on how the entanglement of Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness contribute to urban identification. For instance, in the institution of indigeneity in the university admission process, some members of the younger generation born and raised in Lagos chose to study in their home places. Although they performed their non-Lagosian identities, their Lagosian identities are performatively enacted through their socio-spatial experiences of going back to study. Another scenario unfolds through (learning) speaking Yoruba language in Lagos life. I will first showcase how some first-generation migrants perform their Yoruba-ness by speaking the language in neighborhood life. Furthermore, many residents unconsciously equated their living experiences in Lagos with their ability to speak Yoruba, though they claimed the agency to speak or not to speak for personal preference. Drawing on the reiterative practices of learning to speak Yoruba in the Lagos schools and in everyday conversations, I illustrate how dis(identification) with Yoruba-ness intersects with people's Lagosian-ness, thereby performatively enacting their urban identification.

Performative ethnicity is also enacted in the religious spaces of Gowon Estate which I discuss in chapter 7. The majority of this chapter examines the idea of spiritual sociality—a kind of sociality that encompasses both religious and witchcraft discursive practices. In addition to performing spiritual sociality in the churches and mosques, I discovered that the spiritual sociality becomes performative in everyday social spaces, especially in the practices of living with neighbors and hanging out with friends. A study of the latter social practice by Estate boys helps us better understand how these young

men identify themselves against other people through spiritual sociality. At the end of the chapter, I discuss how the norms of morality are produced by both generations to make sense of spiritual sociality and how sense-making contributes to their urban social identification in Lagos.

In sum, this dissertation tries to bridge African urban studies and poststructural cultural geography by doing an ethnography of urban identification in Gowon Estate, Lagos. It has three lines of contributions. First, for African studies, this dissertation usefully employs a performative lens and the concept of relational space to further complicate the rural-urban dynamics in the studies of urban identity. In doing so, our understandings of home (home places), ethnicity, and spirituality are deepened by specifically examining the unbounded homes, everyday ethnicity, and performative spiritual sociality. Second, for poststructural cultural geography, this dissertation illustrates a way of doing performative ethnography of urban identification. Specifically, it proposes to balance place- and subject-ontologies through the framing of "cities in life". It also addresses two major performative interventions: one is spatializing the performativity of identification; the other is to distinguish narrative identities from repetitive discursive practices through which power implicitly works. Third, this dissertation sheds light on a specific "Lagosian" phenomenon based on the context of Gowon Estate–Estate boys. By teasing out two meanings of Estate boys, a stereotyped label and a place-identity, this study of Estate boys' performative enactment of their socio-spatial identities enriches our understandings of complexity of urban identification processes, which links up all the sub themes–home, ethnicity, spirituality/religion, sociality, gender, youth and generation.

Chapter 1 Placing Lagos and Gowon Estate in Narratives

"There is the specificity of place which derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations…all these relations interact with and take a further element of specificity from the accumulated history of a place, with that history itself imagined as the product of layer upon layer of different sets of linkages…"

–Doreen Massey (1994: 156)

"It occurred to me that the basic character of Lagos urban fabric was the same as the structure of the film industry, which is also gigantic, astounding in scale, filling the horizon farther than the eye can see, but all generated by small-scale independent producers."

–Jonathan Hayes (2016: XXI)

How one articulates a place like Lagos is a difficult task, as each individual can narrate one or several facets of life in Lagos from a specific experience. As Africa's largest metropolis with a vibrant urban life, Lagos is represented through various kinds of cultural productions, especially films, music, and novels. Despite those realist representations identified by cultural studies scholars such as Jonathan Hayes, life in Lagos, I suggest, cannot be simply studied through representational approaches. The specificity of "Lagos urban fabric", following Doreen Massey's philosophy of place, unfolds through a distinct mixture of individual social relations. Therefore, I suggest that

we should delve into the "fabric" of social-spatial relations, not as categories of analysis (as in Jessop et al. (2008)), but as categories of discourse and practice constructed in lived experiences.

In the place-identity paradigm, introducing the place is necessary before relating it to the research subjects' identification experiences and processes. Urban geographers therefore tend to provide an account of cities and study sites with more space left to write about identity formation and negotiation (Secor 2004; Skelton 2013; Deuchar 2019). However, in these works, we actually know little about the larger context of city life in Istanbul, Auckland, and Dehradun than the descriptions limited to the "relevant" context of the lives of Kurdish migrants, young people, and unemployed men—the research subjects.

In many ethnographies of urban Africa, similar treatments persist. The city and study sites are usually introduced as background of ethnographic research[14]. These introductory accounts are usually based on archives, second-hand sources, and field anecdotes. Although they provide readers with background information that is subsequently enriched by ethnographic portraits of characters, there is a lack of theoretical connection between a "thin" description of a place and a thick description of people's life in the place. Thus, to better illustrate the relationships between place and identity, I agree with Pratt (1998: 45) that "there is a need to take seriously the historical geography of identity formation".

The way I introduce the city and my study site is to place the city and the site in narrative identity formation that involves their histories. Drawing on Somers's (1994)

[14] In Newell's (2012) ethnography "The Modernity Bluff", for example, there is a section "Abidjan: the urban setting" in its introduction. Similar introductions to Arusha, Addis Ababa and the Copperbelt are also found in these ethnographies (Weiss 2009; Mains 2012; Haynes 2017).

conception of four dimensions of narrativity, this chapter will tease out three of them, conceptual, public, and ontological narratives of "life in Lagos". Accordingly, conceptual narratives are the concepts and explanations constructed by social researchers; public narratives are those narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than individuals, ranging from the narratives of families, workplaces and churches to those of governments and nations; ontological narratives are the stories that individuals use to make sense of their lives and to define who we are (Somers 1994: 618-620).

In this chapter, in addition to providing background information, I explore the conceptual narrativity of modernity and diversity by reviewing the scholarly literature on the history and society of Lagos. However, this does not mean that only concepts of modernity and diversity are identified from the literature; they are important for connecting different narratives over time and space. In other words, based on these conceptual narratives, lives in Lagos and in Gowon Estate are connected through the historical accounts which I will respectively provide below, demonstrating how this site serves to understand "life in Lagos".

I will also juxtapose both public and ontological narratives of lived experiences in Lagos, both echoing the conceptual narratives to some extent but more importantly illuminating some aspects of narrative place-identities in the contexts of modernity and diversity of Lagos. Somers (1994) suggests that identities are narratively, temporally, and relationally constructed through both ontological and public narratives. This ethnography particularly relies on the former, but the paradoxes identified from ontological narratives inform us of the partiality of studying urban identification *only* according to the representations of changes in urban places. Moreover, three kinds of paradoxical

expressions also make me pay particular attention to the emergent discourses in the ontological narratives of life in Gowon Estate, paving a path to the subsequent analysis of home, youth identity, and ethnicity in this study of urban identification.

1.1 A Brief History of Lagos: Conceptual Narrativity of Modernity and Diversity

The name of Lagos, which originates from the Portuguese word "Lagoon", signposts the colonial legacy of the city. However, people's migration to and settlement in the Lagoon areas had already taken place before Europeans' arrival. The Awori people, a subgroup of the Yoruba, migrated from Ile-Ife and became the earliest settlers (Peil, 1991: 5). With Benin Empire's conquests from the West (now in Edo State), a new Yoruba ruler was appointed to govern the Lagoon region and paid tribute to the king of Benin until the nineteenth century (Baker 1974). In this period, many other Yoruba sub-groups migrated to this coastal region–the periphery of Yorubaland under Benin's influence (Peil 1991: 30-36).

However, the Atlantic slave trade forever altered the society by boosting its population and economy. Lagos's growth as a slave port led to its colonization by Great Britain, and Lagos thus rapidly rose as a British colonial capital in the second half of the nineteenth century (Mann 2007). Lagos became the premier commercial, administrative, and political center of the country that would later in 1914 be known as "Nigeria." The excellent harbor as well as the later construction of a railway line linking it to the north of the country gave Lagos an advantage as a magnet for commerce and migrants that very

few other Nigerian cities had. This status was formally affirmed when in 1960 the city was made the capital of the newly independent nation.

After Nigeria's independence, Lagos became a key arena for ethnic politics in Nigeria. The founding government based in Lagos was a coalition of the Northern People's Congress led by Ahmadu Bello, a party dominated by Muslim northerners, and the Igbo and Christian-dominated party led by Nnamdi Azikiwe, while the opposition comprised largely Yoruba peoples' Action Group party led by Obafemi Awolowo. Therefore, throughout decades, Awolowo and his followers made efforts to culturally unite Yoruba sub-groups and politically exert their influence (Adebanwi 2014). With the tensions and conflicts between Northerners and Igbos at all levels of Nigeria's political systems, the Igbo-dominated Eastern region declared independence as the "Republic of Biafra" after Northerner General Yakubu Gowon became the military head of state. The civil war broke out in 1967 and ended with the fall of Biafra in 1970. Consequently, Igbo politicians were marginalized while Yoruba elites became more influential on the political arena in the rest of the twentieth century.

In the 1970s, the oil boom in Nigeria led to the prosperity of the national economy and the emergence of Nigerian nationalism, or in Apter's (2005) term–nationalization of Nigerian cultures. Amid Nigeria's soaring national confidence as a rapidly developing oil-state, African cultures were incorporated into its new "empire of cultural signs" that sought to erase its colonial legacies from collective memory (Apter 2005: 5). Such efforts notably included the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos, then still the national capital, in 1977. In his speech at the FESTAC opening, the military head of state Olusegun Obasanjo (later becoming the first civilian

president in the Fourth Republic) invited all the assembled Nigerians and international visitors to “gain inspiration from what was left behind by our ancestors” (Whiteman 2012).

After the oil economy collapsed in the 1980s, the following decade witnessed the failure of the country’s Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) policies. As a way of getting out of the economic crisis, the state, under the impulsion of the International Monetary Fund, adopted the SAP in 1986, aimed at reducing the staggering external debt that had built up, the chronic balance of payments crisis, hyper-inflation and rising unemployment; however, the expected positive effects of SAP were yet to be seen (Ibrahim 2000). Drawing on the statistical data combined from 1982 to 1995, Adesina (2000: 152-153) discovers that the long-term unemployment rate doubled after the SAP was implemented and peaked in 1991. This evidence demonstrates that unemployment was not serious in the Second Republic (1979-1983), though government corruption had been widely recognized then (Joseph 1987); in the late 1980s and early 1990s, unemployment had severe impacts on Nigerian society. In this circumstance, Nigerian nationalism became less stable, leading to societal disorder and even political violence in major cities (Jega 2000). To counter the adverse effects of economic decline on the grassroots level, a kind of local initiative, community development associations (CDAs), was widely formalized in Nigerian cities (Onibokun and Faniran 1995). Ahonsi’s (2002) case study of CDAs in two poor areas in Lagos indicates that although CDAs could not bring much resource to residents, they could to some extent solve the problems in terms of community security and local governance[15].

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[15] The role of Gowon Estate CDAs in local governance is very limited now, but this finding informs me of looking at urban identification processes at the neighborhood level.

When Nigerian societies were stabilized in the Fourth Republic period (1999-now), neoliberal policies were adopted by the ruling party–Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)–for sixteen years. These policies did not reduce unemployment rates but made young people more vulnerable in a highly uncertain future (Thurston 2018). This future was depicted by Lagos State Government as a world-class megacity in Africa with a number of infrastructure projects emerging with an influx of global capital (Adama 2018). As a former Lagos state governor Babatunde Fashola claimed, it is expected to be “a new and beautiful Lagos which would be a reference point for best practices that you can find anywhere in the world” (Basinski 2009: 6). Such efforts were continuously made through the political succession of governorship from Bola Tinubu to Babatunde Fashola and to Babajide Sanwo-Olu. In fact, many observers believe that the significant development of Lagos into a modern world-class city in the past two decades was led by Lagosian politicians (associated with All Progressives Congress, APC) in the competitions with PDP politicians in the Federal governments (Cheesemand and de Gramont 2017).

In retrospect of the history of Lagos, two kinds of conceptual narrativity emerge: modernity and diversity. In scholars’ narratives, modernity and diversity are common theoretical concepts with multiple implications, but here I would just like to focus on one aspect of the “modernity” narratives revolving around Lagos—apartment housing. Although the provision of apartment housing has been limited in the post-independence era and the major form of residence in Lagos is compound housing, the construction of apartment housing in Lagos signposts a special history and politics of modernity not only in Lagos, but in Nigeria more broadly. Since the late colonial era, Lagos has been Nigeria’s center of architectural modernism, where a set of high-rise buildings was

erected (Peil 1991). In 1968, for instance, a modern City Hall with three floors of offices was constructed. In the 1970s and 1980s, commercial high-rise buildings were built along Marina and Broad streets in Lagos Island. Favoring a program of tropical modernist architecture for its prestige buildings and the British New Town style for its housing estates, the Federal and Lagos State governments sought to demonstrate both their independence from European cultures and their ability to perform the functions of a modern state (Immerwahr 2007).

One of the peak moments of demonstrating architectural modernity in the postcolonial era was the 1977 FESTAC. Bolstered by the booming oil economy, this ambitious Pan-African exposition of Nigerian nationalism was held in Lagos. For this event, Nigerian national and Lagos city governments built iconic urban architectures and dramatic infrastructure, especially known for the National Theater and FESTAC Town where an array of multi-floor modernist apartment buildings was built to meet the visitors' housing needs. These large-scale constructions highlighted the nation's stability and its ability to provide for urban livelihood (Immerwahr 2007). Although Nigeria's economic prosperity and political stability were eroded in the turbulent 1980s and 1990s, Lagos in many ways has been one of the main focal points of Nigeria's continuing cultural vitality and lifestyle of modernity (Whiteman 2012).

Another conceptual narrativity found within the literature on Lagos is diversity, manifesting itself in the forms of ethnic and religious diversity. Like any metropolis, Lagos's population is heterogeneous, including the majority of Yoruba peoples and the minority of Igbo, Hausa, and many other Nigerian ethnic groups and foreigners. The "Yoruba ethnicity", to which we will return with a more critical and performative

perspective in chapter 6, is socially and politically constructed with reference to a collective of place-based groups in Southwestern Nigeria (Adebanwi 2014). Apart from Awori indigenes who migrated to Lagos at the earliest time, other dominant Yoruba groups include Ijebu, Egba and Egbado (Peil 1991: 33-38). Some urban neighborhoods in Lagos were gradually dominated by minority migrant groups, such as Agege which became a major settlement of Hausa people over the course of the second half of twentieth century (Olukoju 2006). Moreover, the ethnic diversity of city residents is particularly manifested in the use of pidgin English—the language of the multiethnic masses on the streets of Lagos. Pidgin is formed by and located in the interstitial everyday space where English meets an indigenous language or languages. As a transethnic mass language, it disciplines both the foreign and the local languages within the processes of sprawling urbanization, "where only self-conscious and heroic periodic renewals are able to shore up—and even then, in reshaped "modernized" forms—ethnic loyalties" (Olaniyan 2004: 92). This linguistic hybridity is also related to the public narratives of Lagos as "Eko Ile", a Yoruba expression meaning "Lagos home" and the Pidgin English phrase of "No Man's Land".

Religious diversity in Lagos manifests in the assemblage of different forms of Christianity and Islam and the convergence between the two religions. In the first place, there has been an explosion of religiosity in the urban landscape of Lagos: "billboards advertise salvation, bumper stickers proclaim, 'Only God can save Nigeria', a zone of vast new churches is under construction at the urban fringe" (Gandy 2005: 51). Responding to prospering Pentecostalism, Nasr Allah al-Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), which translates as "There is no help except from Allah", was founded in

Lagos in 1995 by a group of young Yoruba professionals who were concerned about the lack of religious awareness among higher-class youth. Targeting Muslim youth, its leadership fashioned NASFAT as a revivalist Muslim movement aspiring to achieve "conformity with modernity" (Soares 2008). Moreover, Janson (2016: 646) reveals that beginning with the religious revival in the 1970s, Lagos has produced new constellations of religion in the form of Chrislam: "Chrislamists" in the cases of religious organizations *Ifeoluwa* and *Oke Tude* do not strive to harmonize Christianity and Islam but create a pragmatic assemblage of diverse – and often contradictory – religious elements as long as it helps them confront the contingencies of daily life in Lagos. Despite the rich narratives of religious diversity, this conceptual narrativity has not captured the full range and complexities of spiritualities that are explored in this dissertation.

In a broad sense, the conceptual narratives of ethnic and religious diversity are not separated but fall into a kind of ethno-religious nexus in postcolonial Lagos. Scholars have noted that since the political period of the Second Republic (1979-1983), Yoruba Pentecostalism has been highly involved in electoral politics (Marshall 2009: 99). In Obasanjo's regime (1999-2007), a circle of Southwestern-based Christians has exerted influence on the incorporation of Muslim and Northern Nigerian discourses in Obasanjo's political power (Obadare 2006). Also, Gandy (2005: 51-52) discovers that ethnic organizations in Lagos such as Oodua People's Congress have taken an increasingly ethno-nationalist turn by promoting Yoruba supremacy and organizing attacks against other ethnic groups and Muslims. All these scholarly accounts demonstrate that population diversity does not mean social harmony among people from

different backgrounds; rather tensions and conflicts are more likely narrated and represented through complex combinations of ethnicity and religiosity.

In sum, drawing on the existing literature, I have given a very brief account of the history of Lagos in the Nigerian context by drawing on the conceptual narratives of modernity and diversity. The modernity narratives about the construction of apartment housing in Lagos informs the selection of a study site in my research. Also, the ways of "diversity" unfolding through ethno-religious nexus in Nigeria and in Lagos informs the necessity to consider an urban place that is discursively represented as an assemblage of ethnic and religious diversity but may overshadow its residents' identification with the specificity of this place. Putting these together, Gowon Estate in Lagos is ideally positioned as the study site for this dissertation.

1.2 A Brief History of Gowon Estate: Conceptual Narrativity in an Urban Neighborhood

In the residents' everyday conversations, there are two ways of defining Gowon Estate: one refers to it as an apartment housing area where those four-story highrise buildings are located; the other one points to a larger geographical area where FHA-planned road networks cover (see figure 1.2). The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) acquired the land from indigenous residents (said to be Awori people) in the 1970s, but only the part adjacent to Egbeda was spent on apartment housing construction. The rest of it is used for various commercial and residential purposes nowadays. In this dissertation, Gowon Estate refers to the former area where most of my informants reside.

1.2.1 Apartment Housing in Lagos

In Lagos, the expansion of compound housing is associated with rapid urban sprawl, but the conditions of apartment housing, especially those found in Gowon Estate which were constructed and managed by the Federal government, signpost waves of privatization and diversification. Initially, as mentioned above, apartment housing projects constructed for Nigeria's FESTAC demonstrate the state's ambition of evoking modernity and nationalism. However, national and state public housing policies significantly failed in meeting public needs during the 1980s, leading to the privatization of these apartments from the 1980s to the present. This account of Gowon Estate's brief history below illustrates its special positionality in the conceptual narratives of modernity and diversity in Lagos.

Housing policies and programs in Nigeria have undergone difficult processes since its independence in 1960, that have been described by scholars as "debacle", "failure" and "wrongful" (e.g. Aliu et al. 2018). Although Nigeria's economy was bolstered by the oil boom, the country's faltering housing policy, as noted by Abiodun (1976), led to a great shortage of adequate housing, very high occupancy rates, and a high rate of occupants per room in most Nigerian cities. The SAPs of the 1980s did not help with public housing issues and directly contributed to privatization initiatives (Ogu and Ogbuozobe 2001) as elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. Given the rapid growth of urban population and unbridled corruption permeating Nigerian economic and political spheres, the public did not trust that low-cost housing programs, either managed by the federal or the state governments, could effectively address the housing crisis (Aliu et al. 2018). When public

housing became financially unsustainable, the governments began to commercialize the properties, including apartments in Gowon Estate.

Although the above-mentioned conditions of Nigeria's housing demonstrate the governance failure in meeting the public's need for sufficient and quality housing, the delivered housing programs still provided Nigerians with experiences of modernity by living in apartments. Influenced by the modernist public housing provision schemes in Europe, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) was established and began to construct apartments at a large scale in the 1970s (Agunbiade et al. 2016), and Gowon Estate was one of the earliest programs. However, the number of apartment housing units did not grow significantly. Until 2006 when the latest national census was published, apartment housing only accounts for 9.8 percent of total housing provision in the country. This percentage also implies that the majority of Nigerians tend to live in self-constructed compound houses—usually an independent house surrounded by gated walls, creating a communal space between the house and walls. Consistent with traditional African housing, the contemporary compound space provides residents with a sense of community and family cohesion (Olatubara 2012). However, construction of private compound houses involves complicated land tenure issues which involve both civic governments and indigenous governance (Peil 1991: 142-149). With rapid urbanization led by governments in Nigerian cities, self-constructed compound houses are faced with more regulations than ever (Agunbiade et al. 2013).

In Lagos, urbanization is especially driven by the informality of private house construction. Unregulated and flexible management of land in the peripheral regions of Lagos result in an increasing number of rental units, compounds, family plots and even

private housing estates (gated communities). This urban sprawl did not happen at once but took place over time with housing construction "plot by plot" in the city's periphery (Sawyer 2014). Therefore, compound housing which is related to African housing tradition and rapidly expanding during the privatization wave (Amole et al. 1993) has become a primary form of housing in Lagos.

1.2.2 Gowon Estate: An Apartment Housing Scheme

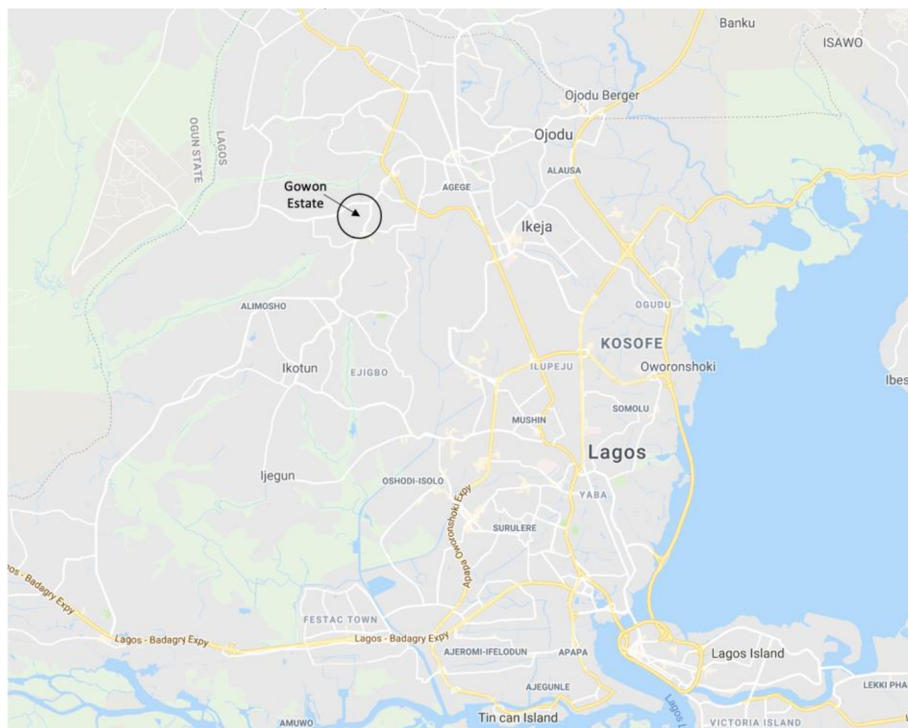

Figure 1.1 The Location of Gowon Estate in Lagos

Despite the dominant form of compound housing in Lagos, the construction of more than 50 apartments in Gowon Estate signposts a special history and politics of modernity. Gowon Estate was named after Yakubu Gowon, the military leader and head of the state (1966-1975) and was established together with FESTAC Town to serve as

accommodation places for FESTAC participants. The setting of Gowon Estate was similar to FESTAC Town which was described as a masterpiece: "With over 5,000 dwelling units consisting of two- and three- bedroom flats and duplexes, each equipped with all the modern amenities, including parlors and wardrobes in contemporary styles and bright colors" (Apter 2005: 49). However, given its smaller size than FESTAC Town and the peripheral location in Ipaja then (now a transport hub in North Lagos), Gowon Estate received much less attention. After FESTAC finished, Gowon Estate apartments were allocated to employees of federal agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigerian Army, and the Nigerian Navy, and later also to state-owned enterprises, such as Nigerian Airways and the Nigerian National Shipping Line. However, when the headquarters of those federal agencies moved from Lagos to Abuja, which was announced in 1976 and finalized in 1991, there was a vacuum of infrastructural maintenance in Gowon Estate throughout the 1990s. The partisan politics in the Federal-State opposition (Fourchard 2011) worsened the poor management of housing properties and estate infrastructure, as the Lagos State government did not take responsibility for repairing the roads in the Estate until 2015. Specifically, Lagosian political leaders invested their powers only into the local communities where they could gain more political autonomy (Cheeseman and de Gramont 2017), therefore aggravating the infrastructural conditions in FHA-owned housing estates like Gowon Estate and making earlier residents sell or rent out the apartments.

In this context, the population in Gowon Estate became diversified. Those earlier civil servant residents had the priority to purchase the housing properties from the FHA through their employers. If they could not afford it, they could choose to pay in monthly

installments from their salaries. If they chose to give up purchasing the apartments, they had to leave so that FHA could sell them. Up to the time of writing, only the Nigerian Navy still held housing ownership of several buildings while all other apartments have been privatized. Due to the declining living environment in recent decades, some of those higher-status employees who purchased the apartments have now left the estate and/or rented out their properties. This has led to a diversity of estate residents through the mixing of housing owners and tenants, as well as former government employee families and various people in other occupations.

Although there is little scholarly literature about Gowon Estate, by placing this neighborhood in the history of apartment housing in Lagos, we can see that its history reflects the changing society of Lagos and Nigeria, with regard to the conceptual narrativity of modernity and diversity. The sister project FESTAC Town has been placed as part of the broad narratives of Nigeria's national culture construction in Apter's (2005) political ethnography. In this ethnography, I will place Gowon Estate as part of the nuanced narratives of lived experiences in and beyond Lagos.

1.3 "Life in Lagos": Juxtaposing Public and Ontological Narratives

As Somers (1994: 606) suggests, individuals tend to locate themselves "(usually unconsciously) in social narratives *rarely of our own making*." Drawing on this framing, Vanderbeck and Dunkley (2003) find from their studies of young people's narratives of rural-urban difference in the United States that there are connections and disconnections between the ways in which individuals understand their own lives (ontological narratives)

and the public narratives that circulate through social networks, institutions, and the media. In this section, by juxtaposing public and ontological narratives of "life in Lagos", I not only illustrate (dis)connections but also emphasize some paradoxes–seemingly self-contradictory statements–in ontological narratives. Being consistent with or at odds with what is revealed from the public narratives, these paradoxes raise some questions which cannot be tackled by only examining individual representations of life experiences. These paradoxical questions thus prompt us to seek a better way to dig into the rationale of identification. Meanwhile, these questions are also related to some aspects of everyday life in Gowon Estate (in section 1.4).

1.3.1 "Suffering but Smiling"

In the brief historical accounts of Lagos and Gowon Estate, modernity becomes a key discourse in the public narratives which are primarily given by scholars and associated with governments' urbanization projects. However, when it comes to living lives in this "modern" city, the public narratives which are given by digital media and popular films convey a kind of tension—prosperous urban development coexisting with individual hardships and resilience.

For instance, Feranmi Akeredolu, one of contributors on the popular digital media platform, Africa.com, wrote "Real life in Lagos, Nigeria"[16] from his Lagos experience,

> "The city is widely notorious for the negative things – the shanties stories (check out the BBC documentary in 2010); the snatch and grab stories; the extortion stories; the

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[16] See the report: https://www.africa.com/real-life-lagos-nigeria/

fake ID's and the fake certificate stories; the fake product stories; the traffic and congestion stories; the lawlessness stories. I remember someone who visited Lagos ranting online that, 'Lagos life is just plain stupid (traffic jams, hustle for everything, wake up by 5 a.m., get your wallet stolen in public transport, lack of fresh air due to overpopulation and dirt, etc.).' There are always complaints about the chaos that is Lagos – that social exuberance that irritates some people with a different sense of sanity – one which, ironically, represents the soul of the city – the entrepreneurial spirit of the city."

This representation of "life in Lagos" vividly captures some key experiential aspects of life in Lagos, which are also addressed in some scholarly literature (on extortion, Apter 2005: 2; on traffic and daily mobility, Xiao 2019; on lawlessness, Agbiboa 2022). Moreover, many popular Lagos novels, such as Adesokan's *Root in the Sky* (2004) and Chris Abani's *Graceland* (2004), capture the rhythms, strategies, and constraints in everyday life in "slum" neighborhoods widely known as Maroko and Ajegunle. Due to their cheap rents, these low-budget neighborhoods became first-choice destinations for urban migrants who later moved to other average neighborhoods in the city, including Gowon Estate.

The most vivid popular narratives of "life in Lagos" come from the Nollywood film industry which emerged in Lagos in the 1990s and thrived in the recent decade. The way to represent Lagos in the Nollywood films is very strategic: the cityscape of Lagos is romanticized by filmmakers through establishing shots of upper-class residential areas and the skyline of some high-rise landmarks, while a close shot of chaotic street life is hardly identified (Haynes, 2007: 142). Nevertheless, many Nollywood storylines of life

in Lagos are not as rosy as this strategic shot depicts, as illustrated in a popular film *Domitilla: The Story of a Prostitute*. A young Lagosian woman, in order to make enough money for herself and family, has to sell her body in the red-light district of Lagos at night in addition to her daytime office job. Although she later tries to escape from the cruel reality of being abused by vicious men and to leave behind her work in prostitution, she has been suffering from the social and emotional vulnerability, leading to Christian redemption. This storyline involving gender, sociality, and spirituality typifies many other films in which city dwellers experience the utopia of fortune and success in Lagos as well as the inevitable dystopia that comes soon after (Okome 2012; Aderinto 2017).

In the ontological narratives of "life in Lagos" given by my informants living in Gowon Estate, as partly revealed in the movie *Domitilla*, a paradoxical emotional coexistence of what people want and what they are doing pervades the narratives, manifesting as a disappointment about unsettling status while still remaining in the city to hustle for temporary livelihood. The complaints on living conditions in Lagos usually ended with an optimistic outlook for the future, which echoes the above popular narrative of "the entrepreneurial spirit of the city".

A paradoxical saying impressed me when I talked to my neighbor Tami (living in Flat 11). She was a 38-year-old woman, born in a large family in Gowon Estate. Among seven siblings, only she and the youngest sister went to college. However, her life unstably oscillated between Lagos and Ibadan (Nigeria's third largest city) --her husband's home place. She described Ibadan as a "cheap and peaceful" place, "we are young. We don't have much." However, when she had two children and her husband lost his job in a secondary school in Ibadan, they moved to Lagos by renting this flat in

Gowon Estate, where Tami's parents still lived in the "family house". However, Tami's life in Lagos became more uncertain than its in Ibadan: her husband hustled for custom clearance work at Port Apapa while she engaged in trading goods from Cotonou. Being an educated woman in her family, she felt ashamed of not being independent enough, as facing her parents living in the same neighborhood, "it's (an) insult", she said. Nevertheless, she still cherished a hope for a change in their life in Lagos if her husband would get a stable job, "we are suffering, but we are smiling." "Suffering and smiling" is a song by Fela Kuti, a famous Nigerian musician, whose music has had a huge impact on Nigerian popular culture. Tami's expression, by using "but" instead of "and", endowed Fela's song with an optimistic viewpoint in the narrative of her lived hardships.

At the beginning, I was confused about this paradoxical statement: why did not people like Tami suffering from life in Lagos leave for other cities? Why did not my informants who complained so much about Lagos and Gowon Estate leave for other places? What is behind the optimistic and aspirational expressions? These questions cannot be answered by me or by themselves directly, because people can make a list of good aspects of life in Lagos and Gowon Estate. For instance, the "modernity" narratives can also resonate with individual opinions about Lagos development. On the surface, my informants sometimes positively commented on the changes of the cityscape of Lagos, particularly on the infrastructure development led by former state governor Babatunde Fashola. Saku, a Hausa Navy officer who migrated from Sokoto to Lagos in 1998 when he was 24 years old, described his first impression on Lagos: "What the hell! Lagos life is not easy…Oshodi was a 'no-go' place. Too much crime. It's Fashola changing Oshodi. Now it's heaven." Oshodi was a transport hub with severe traffic congestion and

infamous pocket picking. Due to the widened roads and increasing police patrol, this place becomes a representative example of urban development in ontological narratives of life in Lagos from not only migrants like Saku but also Lagosian youth like Jacob. Nevertheless, can changes of cityscape really lead to individual identification with the city? Can the identification with "Lagosian" be enacted through the "suffering" experiences in Lagos? All these questions cannot be simply answered with "yes" or "no", because the paradoxes conveyed through "suffering but smiling" imply the complexity of urban identification materializing through life.

Juxtaposing public and ontological narratives of life in Lagos, we can see that a feeling of ambivalence about life in Lagos was revealed from the paradoxical statement "suffering but smiling" as well as implicated in many popular culture representations of urban utopia and dystopia. The questions raised from this paradox cannot be answered now by only interpreting ontological narratives. Nevertheless, the paradox guided me to explore the performative enactment of identification instead of only examining how informants performed and narrated. Regarding Tami's life story of "suffering but smiling", I gradually paid my attention to her everyday discursive practices: how Lagos is identified as a home, a home very practically made and emotionally felt by Tami. Also, "aspiration" and "unsettling" become a paradoxical assemblage in my interpretation of youth identification in Gowon Estate (in chapter 5). All these efforts cannot be made without critical views of paradoxical expressions.

1.3.2 "Never Distinguish People", But "We Are Different"

Regarding the popular narratives of ethnic and religious diversity in the history of Lagos, both popular and ontological narratives of "life in Lagos" focus on representing tensions and differences between Yoruba and non-Yoruba residents in Lagos. Given that the tensions in city life were sometimes evoked in the public spheres, individual narrators become very cautious when directly talking about ethnicity, usually affirmatively stating that they do not distinguish or judge people according to their ethnicity. However, a paradoxical statement is also found in the conversations about differences between Yoruba and non-Yoruba people. This paradox prompts me to seek a way to understand the role of ethnicity in urban identification.

As introduced earlier, given the settlement of Yoruba sub-group Awori people in precolonial Lagos, Yoruba peoples often call Lagos "Eko Ile" (Lagos home). This phrase was particularly popularized by Fela Kuti's song "Eko Ile", which built, both lyrically and sonically, upon a playful cheekiness and self-irony that depicts Lagos as a problem—the "problem of *known* dimensions": Lagos is a familiar, unsurprising problem, and therefore one could be comfortable with it (Olaniyan 2004: 93). As one of the most iconic Nigerian musicians in history, Fela's lyrics have been widely used in everyday conversation, as showcased in the saying of "suffering but smiling" by Tami.

Another popular discourse "No Man's Land" in pidgin English, however, was publicly debated among a few Lagos-based celebrities in 2017. An event "Lagos History Lecture" was held at the Eko Hotels and Suites, a high-end hotel and conference site in

Victoria, Lagos. At this widely reported event[17], Rilwan Akiolu, *Oba* of Lagos (Lagos king in Yoruba), said "Lagos should not be referred to as no man's land because our forefathers were the founding fathers of the State. And it was after several years that the Europeans came and others." Here "our forefathers" refer to Yoruba/Awori peoples rather than others. On the same occasion, Akinwunmi Ambode, the Lagos governor then, made a more neutral comment on life in Lagos: "It is important for us at this epochal gathering to refresh our memory about the beginning; the journey of how the Aworis played an important role in the evolution of what we call Lagos today…Our greatness is in our ability to be the melting pot for all cultures and as at today, there is no tribe in Nigeria that is not represented in Lagos." The politician's narrative is more strategic to bring up an idea of "melting pot". This does not signpost that life in Lagos really melts all kinds of ethnic cultures, but in fact demonstrates how politicians discreetly manipulate discourses on ethnic diversity in Lagos. After all, ethnic tensions have been negatively affecting Nigerian societies[18].

In ontological narratives of life in Lagos, ethnic tensions are not talked about in the first place, as people are usually very cautious about being perceived as "tribalists", meaning that one socializes with others according to ethnicity or "tribes" (in their words). Henry, a 32-year-old man born in an Igbo family, described his close friends in Lagos to

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[17] See one of the reports, "Lagos, not No Man's Land, Osoba, Akiolu, Others", O. Olawoyin, May 25, 2017 https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-west/232151-lagos-not-no-mans-land-osoba-akiolu-others.html

[18] Rilwan Akiolu was accused of revoking ethnic tension when he publicly threatened Igbos that he would throw them into the lagoon if they would not vote Ambode for Lagos governorship. Afterwards, he made a statement to clarify, in which he said "Lagos has also not betrayed the Igbo people. Lagos has done so much to make the Igbos comfortable and to prosper. For this, we expect reciprocal respect and understanding." In his tones, he still treated Lagos as Yoruba home city while Igbos are strangers. See the report, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/04/oba-of-lagos-makes-clarification-on-his-threat-to-igbos/

me. At the end of our conversation, he added, “I’m not a tribalist. When I meet Igbo friends, I speak (pidgin) English. I also speak (pidgin) English with other people.” Such expression and explanation were also found in the narrative given by Adeyinka, a Yoruba young man, also 32-year-old growing up in Gowon Estate. When Adeyinka mentioned two Yoruba friends and an Idoma friend to me, he explained that this did not mean he was personally inclined to socialize with Yoruba. “This is just because I didn’t travel much and meet many people. I knew this Idoma person when I did NYSC[19] program in Benue. So, I believe I will make friends with more people from other regions when I travel more.” However, he did not have to travel far to meet people from other backgrounds, because Gowon Estate itself is very ethnically diverse, so as to Lagos. It was interesting to see how both Henry and Adeyinka performed their discreet attitudes toward ethnicity as Lagos politicians do. This paradox intrigued me to explore the role of ethnicity in their urban identification.

Although many informants tended not to talk about ethnic tensions and not to engage in the debates about “No Man’s Land” and “Eko Ile”, they often talked about ethnic differences through their urban experiences in Lagos. For instance, Sawyer, a young Igbo man born in Lagos, told me a story about his encounter with a Yoruba trader in Oshodi, the market area having changed from a “no-go place” to a “heaven” according to the Hausa man Saku. The Yoruba trader did not sell what Sawyer wanted, but the trader asked Sawyer not to go to another shop which was also run by a Yoruba by claiming that they did not have it either. Sawyer commented, “If this is [were] Igbo man, he would let his Igbo brother benefit. Yoruba people, they don’t trust each other at all.” This might not

[19] The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is a program that requires all Nigerian graduates from universities and polytechnics to participate in a one-year internship in public services.

relate to trust in a general sense, as Sawyer generalized his impression from an encounter with this single trader. Nevertheless, narratives about ethnic differences, especially the differences from Yoruba people, were heard many times from non-Yoruba informants. Therefore, ethnic difference is not a conversational taboo in this context, but informants still perform as they are not concerned by ethnicity.

1.3.3 "Because of Area Boys", While Living in the Area for Ten Years

For a long time, "life in Lagos" has been described as "chaos and disorder" in public narratives, and this kind of "chaos and disorder" is often attributed to "area boys". In a broad sense, "area boys" refer to young men who are identified with the streets, notably in Lagos as well as in other major cities in Southern Nigeria. Originally, "area boys" grouped themselves into a form of social organization who carried out duties to their communities that included acting as security personnel. In the late 1980s when economic hardships thrusted many families into poverty and the military regimes failed to maintain societal order, many young men whose families could not afford an education became bored at home and unemployed on the streets. Therefore, these young men started extorting money from passersby in the areas where they organized themselves. This infamous phenomenon that still occurs today resulted in negative public narratives of "life in Lagos", as we have partly known from Akeredolu's quote above—"the extortion stories" implying area boys' actions.

However, many contemporary cultural products in Nigeria, such as novels, plays and movies, gradually endeavored to correct the stereotypes of "area boys". One of the most

famous and earliest works was the play “The Beatification of Area Boy: A Lagosian Kaleidoscope” written by Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka. Drawing on the ordinary life of an area boys’ leader in Lagos, Soyinka showed the resilience of Lagos youth under the brutal military regime. Following Soyinka’s path, many other writers and artists also tried to normalize young men’s life in Lagos. In 2019, Nigerian director Tolulope Itegboje produced a documentary “Awon Boyz” (mixed Yoruba and Pidgin, meaning “our boys”). This film, shown on Nigerian media as well as Netflix, offers a balanced narrative about lives of “area boys”. In an interview[20], he called for humanizing the street boys of Lagos and destigmatizing “life in Lagos”.

Despite these efforts, stereotypes of young men in the shadow of “area boys” still persist in ontological narratives of “life in Lagos”. When it comes to the problem of security in Lagos, my informants always used “area boys” as examples. In Saku’s narrative of his arrival in Lagos, he said, “you can’t count money on the street. If you wear good shoes, area boys will take (them) away”. In fact, he never told me a personal case of being robbed or extorted by “area boys”, but he associated the negative impression of life in Lagos with the hypothetical account of “area boys”. Similarly, some informants also related the images of urban places to “area boys”. Gbala initially lived in the neighborhood of Bariga, and he attributed his moving home away from Bariga to the problem of “area boys”. “I left Bariga because of area boys. You know, Bariga boys. They fight and kill each other, even (in the) daytime.” It is true that some areas like Bariga in Lagos have more youth violence than others (Akinyele 2001). However, Gbala

[20] “Lagos street boys: Interview with Tolulope Itegboje”, Dika Ofoma, 2021, See the report: https://africasacountry.com/2021/09/lagos-street-boys

had lived in Bariga for ten years before moving out. The discourse of "Bariga boys"/Area boys and narratives of lengthy lived experiences in Bariga become a paradox.

Moreover, the persisting stereotypes on "area boys" in Lagos further facilitate the construction of other labels of "boys"—young men in this context, such as Lagos boys, Estate boys, yahoo boys, big boys, agbero boys[21], cult boys[22] and bad boys in my informants' narratives. Similar to Gbala's use of "Bariga boys" which associates his stereotypes with the place-identity of youths in Bariga, there is a salient stereotyped label associated with the place of Gowon Estate: "Estate boys". Unlike "area boys" stereotyped with extortion and violence, "Estate boys" underwent changes of meanings, more often associated with the other two categories, "yahoo boys" and "big boys". I will introduce this phenomenon in the next section and elaborate on young men's social identity in chapter 5.

In this sense, a persisting stereotype of young men, in the name of "area boys" and others, still pervades in the ontological narratives of "life in Lagos", though many kinds of public narratives have been trying to counter the effects of stereotyping. This difference between both types of narrative prompts me to further explore young men's identity in this ethnography of urban identification. In particular, the shifting discourses on "Estate boys" caught my attention.

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[21] Agbero is a Yoruba word to describe young men who collect levies aggressively, usually applied to those informal transport workers around bus stations in Lagos (Agbiboa 2016).
[22] "Cult boys" refer to youths involved in crime organizations. There is also increasing campus cultism in Nigerian universities. Zack, a 20-year-old youth and also a scammer (yahoo boy), described his perception of "cult boys": "they usually wear jeans lower than underwear. They shoot and even kill."

In the above accounts of life in Lagos, the city is not treated just as a backdrop of residents' lives but is dynamically alive through life experiences. Conceptual narratives of modernity and diversity in Lagos history can deliver a certain layer of specificity which directs me to explore lived experiences in an urban place—Gowon Estate—that is uniquely positioned in Lagos history, but "life in Lagos" is not all about modernity and diversity. The specificity of "life in Lagos" that public narratives represent is related to but not always consistent with the specificity that individual residents identify with. The three paradoxical statements illustrated from ontological narratives inform me of specific subjects in a study of urban identification: home, ethnicity and youth. These aspects also echo the discourses in ontological narratives of life in Gowon Estate.

1.4 Gowon Estate in Ontological Narratives

Despite the special history mentioned above, very few residents in Gowon Estate could narrate this history or identify its heritage. In the narratives of various experiences of identifying and moving into Gowon Estate, none of my informants emphasized the history of Yakubu Gowon. For some elders, the only story of this neighborhood referred to the time when Gowon Estate was built during the FESTAC. "Gowon" no longer represents a person's name in this context but becomes a place's name. In this section, I will present some ontological narratives to illustrate the three aspects of narrative identities of this ever-changing neighborhood.

1.4.1 The Used-to-be "Estate of Ice Block"

On the surface of narratives of lived experiences in Gowon Estate, infrastructural decline became my informants' primary concerns. In recalling the earlier years of their settlement in the neighborhood, many residents expressed their nostalgia about infrastructural modernity and convenience. Over time, the decline of the built environment made them see Gowon Estate as an ordinary neighborhood that is struggling with an "infrastructure crisis" in Lagos (Gandy 2006).

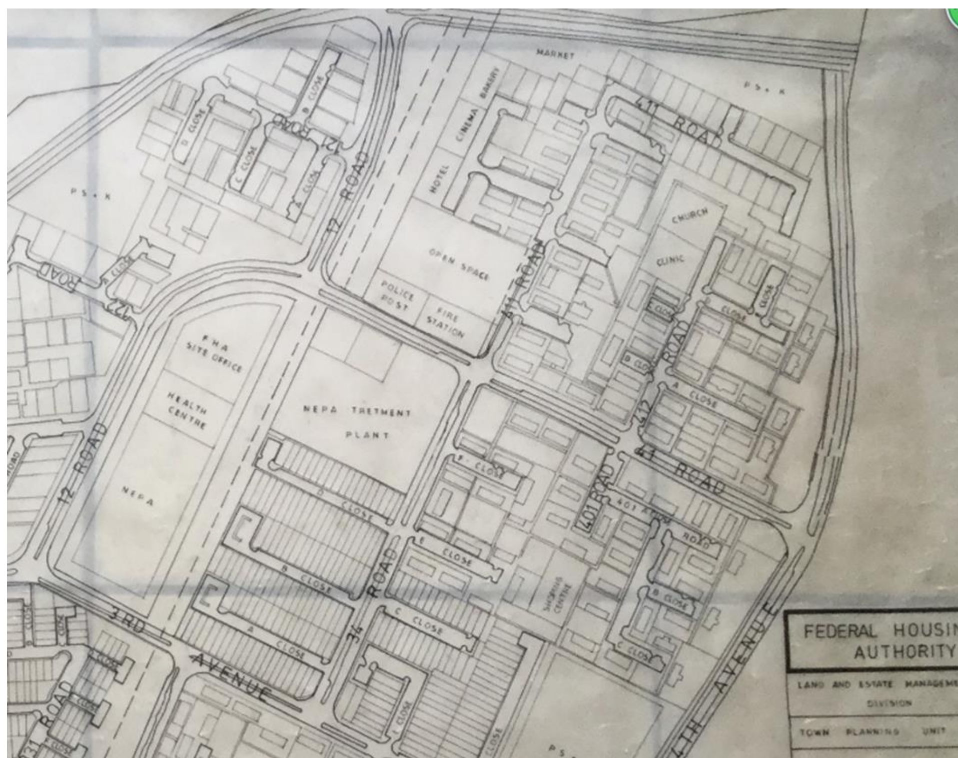

Figure 1.2 The Master Plan of Ipaja New Town (Gowon Estate)

Source: Federal Housing Authority, Nigeria

As the FHA planning map (figure 1.2) shows, Gowon Estate is sectioned in grids, and the gridded roads were all named after numbers, such as 411 road where I stayed. A large

number of good quality two-bedroom apartments and a small number of three-bedroom apartments were constructed. When I renovated my rented apartment, construction workers told me that the concrete used in this building was one of the best in Nigeria. Similar comments on the high quality of this federal housing construction were frequently heard from my informants, especially when comparing Gowon Estate to low-cost housing projects constructed by Lagos State Government, such as Abesan Estate nearby. Therefore, the rents in Gowon Estate are still higher than those in surrounding estates constructed during the Lagos Governor Jakande regime (1979-1983).

In addition to housing construction, another modernist symbol of Gowon Estate is its infrastructural provision, particularly for electricity supply. Nigeria has long been struggling with the shortage of electricity supply for civic use (Aliyu et al. 2013). However, this had not been a problem for residents in Gowon Estate until recently. Odedeyi, one of my informants and also the neighbor in Flat 3, called Gowon Estate "an estate of ice block", because it used to have a constant supply of electricity which enabled the residents to pump underground water and to make ice blocks in their freezers. She added that many restaurant workers in the surrounding areas came to knock on their doors and buy ice blocks from residents, and this benefit was one of the major incentives for her family to move in by renting this flat in 2009.

The water supply was also a feature in Gowon Estate. As Lagos does not have a municipal system of water supply, the estate was built with a large water tower to reserve the pumped underground water for the whole community. According to Afolabi, who moved to Gowon Estate with her family in 1988 when she was twelve years old, "the estate then was quiet. [It had] stable power and water supply. Only four or five flats in

this block were taken (occupied)”. Similar comments were heard from other informants who moved in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

The “modern” living environment of Gowon Estate as designed initially is no longer present. Despite the elite-driven urbanization underway in Lagos (Adama 2018), the city-wide infrastructure crisis still permeates this neighborhood, partly due to partisan politics mentioned above. The most serious crisis is the shortage of electricity supply. Although residents have different memories and narratives of when electricity supply became unstable, the “estate of ice block” told by Odedeyi is no longer recognized by all my informants. In the year when I lived there, the average daily electricity supply was approximately six hours. Sometimes when accidents happened to the transformers, electricity could be suspended for more than two days. The time when electricity would be suspended or supplied was unknown, because a prior notice had never been provided by the authority NEPA. Residents usually try to predict the timing according to their experience. On May 17, 2018, when I chatted with Ogunje in his clothes shop, he hesitated to turn on his mini-generator. “I say NEPA will bring light [electricity] around 7:10; if not, at (the) latest 7:30”. To attract customers, he finally turned it on at 7:40 PM, but the “light” arrived twenty minutes later.

The water supply is largely based on electricity supply. Since the pumping machine relied on extensive usage of electricity, community-wide water supply was no longer working due to shortage of electricity. My neighbor Josh recalled, when he moved in in 1988, “taps have water. But a few years later when NEPA takes away light, the water tower doesn’t work anymore”. When Tope first showed me around in 2016, he pointed to a pipe at the corner of an apartment, “water from the tank [water tower] used to come out

here". Moreover, the gridded roads lacked regular maintenance and cleaning, resulting in worsening ruggedness and pollution by all kinds of solid waste. The 411 road next to my block was regarded as the most rugged one so that vehicles rarely ran through this way. In addition to lack of maintenance, Kudus added that a World Bank project brought by the Babagida administration during 1994-1995 caused the road problem. "They built a big pipe under the road connecting Ipaja to Agege. The roadbed became unstable." Kudus resigned from the Nigerian Navy and became the secretary of the central mosque in Gowon Estate, partly because he liked living in this neighborhood and saw it as his home.

The difference between the nostalgic narrative of infrastructure then and the critical narrative of the built environment now illuminates a kind of ambivalent identification with Gowon Estate, as showcased in the narratives of life in Lagos as well–the ambivalent feelings. However, urban identification is more than what informants tell about urban infrastructure and living environment. As the review of the place-identity paradigm indicates, this dissertation does not simply interrogate a unique identity of Gowon Estate as a static "category of analysis" in ontological narratives but explores how this neighborhood is relationally placed in its residents' socio-spatial experiences.

1.4.2 The Present-Day "United Nations of Nigeria"

Although the Federal Housing Authority has an office in FESTAC Town, they only focus on managing the documentation of housing properties without any intervention in community welfare. Therefore, loosely organized CDAs usually take charge of basic

community affairs, such as arranging waste removal from assigned waste spots and having road lights repaired, while repairing the deteriorating roads is beyond their capacity. The Northern CDA, which incorporates my residential block, usually holds regular meetings on the first Saturday of each month. On June 2, 2018, I went to attend the meeting at 10 AM in a classroom in Palmville college, a private secondary school just opposite my block. Ten block representatives and four CDA executive members attended the meeting. They discussed the necessity of replacing street light bulbs on 41 Road and waste management of the dumping site at Ponle. Although CDAs wish to facilitate community development, the actions were always compromised due to shortage of funding and lack of public participation.

Nevertheless, Gowon Estate is one of the urban neighborhoods in Lagos without an indigenous governance structure in which the community head is a titled Yoruba chief, called *baale*. Namely, CDAs should take charge of community affairs in correspondence with Local Councils, the lowest governmental agency. However, due to the longstanding influence of Yoruba *baales*, usually resulting from their ownership of lands, many CDAs in Lagos still rely on local *baales* to coordinate community affairs (e.g., Olukoju 2005). That was why we see that *Oba* Akiolu's speech evoked ethnic tensions in Lagos. In Gowon Estate, whose lands had been acquired by the Federal Government in the 1970s, this dual governance system does not exist. Therefore, CDAs can autonomously operate on the basis of an ethnically diverse resident population. The current Northern CDA's chairman is Adewunmi, a Yoruba elder, but his predecessor was Okeme, an Igbo elder running the Orange Bar in the neighborhood. During my participation in CDA meetings

in 2018, I observed representatives from very different ethnic backgrounds according to participant lists.

In my visit to a former CDA chairman who had lived in Gowon Estate since 1986, he briefly introduced the historical connection between Gowon Estate and FESTAC. At the end of our conversation, he commented, “Gowon Estate can be called the ‘United Nations of Nigeria’; we have all kinds of tribes living here.” Sure enough, in my earlier pilot research in 2017, I randomly talked to more than 50 people in the Estate who identified their places of origin with some 20 different states. The metaphor of “United Nations of Nigeria” impressed me and directed me to explore how diverse this neighborhood is in everyday social space.

Figure 1.3 A Wedding Held in Gowon Estate (View from My Apartment)

The space of apartment housing facilitates social interactions among a diversity of residents in Gowon Estate. An enclosed family life as commonly existed in a compound setting is replaced by a new dynamic of neighborhood life, in which a family event more likely becomes a neighborhood event. Birthday parties, Christmas reunions and weddings were attended not only by relatives but also by neighbors in their social networks. The ground space between buildings, which is usually used as parking lots and children's playground, accommodates these events on a large scale. Over the years I lived in the estate, I attended ten events, including three in this space, including Mama Nan's 70-year-old birthday party, Bawa's daughter's wedding and Baba Frank's child's 100-day celebration. When events were held, several canopies were set up to shade portable tables and chairs borrowed from neighborhood restaurants and bars. Rosemary, a 42-year-old woman from Plateau living on 411 road, also a member of Hekan Church, even ran the business of lending tables and chairs for event use. Close neighbors sometimes played central roles in planning and assisting with such events. However, those neighbors who were not invited for various reasons had to excuse themselves when the events were held in such a constrained space. After all, among 16 households in a building, not everyone gets along well with one another.

1.4.3 Shifting Discourses of "Estate boys"

Since the first wave of residents moving in Gowon Estate took place in the late 1980s, their children who were born and/or raised up in the Estate have turned to their 30s, forming two generations of residents through different socio-spatial experiences. Due to

the housing arrangements in Gowon Estate in the 1980s and 1990s, many allocatees were colleagues working in the same places, though some of them moved out when the living environment declined. Existing social bonds among coworkers were reinforced in this material setting where private space is restrained and shared space extends socio-spatial relationships among households. Alternatively, the disagreements and conflicts of interests at work could also be brought back to neighborhood life, and vice versa. Thus, it has been observed that neighbors in the same building did not help each other while friends from different buildings often mingle in the neighborhood. Although the social atmosphere appears friendly in Gowon Estate, social bonds between first-generation neighbors were not necessarily strong. For instance, in my block, Josh and Bawa on the fourth floor greet each other frequently, but in Josh's reflection on friendship and social relationships, he did not mention Bawa at all. The close person he emphasized was Lawrence living on 401 road. Similarly, Obaga resided in a block on 52 road where many of his former colleagues lived together. He did not mention any close relationships with them. The colleague whom he often socialized with is Ibabe, who came from the same Cross River state and is living on 412 road. I was also able to interview Ibabe to know better about Obaga's social identification in Lagos and elsewhere.

The networks of first-generation residents based on workplaces and residential arrangements also affect the sociality of the second generation of residents. Due to their parents' working relationships, they socialized with each other in their early years through family ties. One of the common narratives on their social relationships is that he or she is "my family friend" or "our fathers work together". However, it is doubtful that their relationships were always as close as described to me at the beginning, but they

indeed knew each other well. In the small circle of these young residents, romance became easily formed and widely known. A great deal of love stories as well as breakup experiences were narrated in my interactions with the younger generations. When the resident population was diversified with more and more tenants moving in, this group of people were loosely categorized as “Estate boys” or “Estate girls”. The phrase “Estate girls” was only heard a few times, while the phrase “Estate boys” was widely used.

These categories of discourse not only refer to the identities associated with Gowon Estate as a place of birth and growing up but also shifts, over the course of resident diversification, to stigmatize youth identities, particularly focusing on males. In this regard, a kind of stereotyped narrative of “Estate boys” emerged to describe some second-generation young men’s misbehavior, such as drinking, smoking, and scamming. When I moved in, Mary, who lived on 52 road, reminded me of the lack of safety surrounding my residence, “be careful of those Estate boys”. I further asked, “what about them?” Instead of telling me the details, she just replied, “Idahosa would tell you.” Idahosa, one of my key informants in Tope’s circle, is Mary’s “family friend” because Idahosa’s father and Mary’s father Obaga were both central CDA leaders. However, Idahosa never spoke of how unsafe “Estate boys” are, as technically he himself is an Estate boy. In the numerous conversations with Idahosa, Tope and Jacob, I found that they only referred to misbehaved second-generation youth in Gowon Estate as “yahoo boys”—a norm used commonly in Nigeria to describe youth who engage in online scamming. These differentiated identification practices informed me of how youth identity is specifically associated with the making and unmaking of the place of Gowon Estate. In this dissertation, especially in chapter 5, I will shed light on two ways of

categorization and identification: one is the stereotyped label of “Estate boys” (with quotation marks); the other is a performative enactment of place-identity of Estate boys (without quotation marks).

In addition to Mary’s narrative, stigmatized discourses of “Estate boys” were more widely employed by adults with families living in Gowon Estate to imply the declining built environment and increasing concerns over security issues. My neighbors like Dick, Philip and Gbala whose children were of primary school age often complained about the presence of “Estate boys” in the “corrupt” social environment of Gowon Estate. Nevertheless, none of them specifically identified who are “Estate boys”, and they never indicated that they would be moving out of the Estate at the time of our conversations. In their narratives, “Estate boys” is much like the discourse of “area boys” (specifically “Bariga boys” in Gbala’s narratives) in Lagos, which signified the crisis of disorder and insecurity in the era of neoliberalization in the 1990s (Ismail 2009).

The account of Gowon Estate’s history illustrates that the place of this neighborhood is uniquely positioned in Lagos’s history with regard to the conceptual narratives of modernity and diversity. However, such unique history is not openly narrated by residents in Gowon Estate; various ontological narratives imply disidentification with the neighborhood in the context of social change, despite such identification being negotiated among different types of resident population. Instead of focusing on the neighborhood-based (dis)identification which is a common theme in the geographies of urban identity (Martin 2005; Burrell 2016; Preece 2020), I suggest exploring how the specificity of a neighborhood place—Gowon Estate—unfolds through individual socio-spatial

experiences in which urban identification is differentially enacted. In other words, the place of this urban neighborhood is not a source of residents' identification practices but is relationally woven into a longer trajectory of individual life. In this process, discourses such as "estate of ice block", "united nations of Nigeria", and "Estate boys" emerged, disappeared, and/or changed, thereby continually reproducing new norms of living lives in this place as well as in Lagos.

Chapter 2 Doing Ethnography beyond Place and in Life

Given that ethnography has been employed by scholars, particularly by anthropologists and sociologists to holistically explore human cultures and social structures in depth, I as an urban cultural geographer do and write an ethnography of urban identification by bringing together the place- and subject- ontologies. For geographers, "ethnography is a uniquely useful method for uncovering the processes and meanings that undergird socio-spatial life" (Herbert 2000: 500). As geographers Crang and Cook (2007) indicate in their handbook, ethnography is not a linear model that is built on three stages "reading-do-write". I agree with these fellow geographers that ethnography is a field-based socio-spatial process in which ethnographers engage with texts–not only written records but also verbal narratives–and people through a reflexive way back and forth. Such a process can never be finished but is to some extent represented and interpreted by ethnographers to illustrate a relatively holistic account of a theme–urban identification in this research.

In this sense, this ethnography involves not only the method of participant observation[23] through my lived experience in an urban neighborhood but also the life-story interviews together with multiple rounds of specifically-themed in-depth interviews

[23] Participant observation is a core research method that makes a research work qualified as "ethnography". Shah (2017) proposes four constitutive aspects of participant observation in an ethnography: long duration (long-term engagement), revealing social relations of a group of people (understanding a group of people and their social processes), holism (studying all aspects of social life, marking its fundamental democracy), and the dialectical relationship between intimacy and estrangement (befriending strangers). This research follows this definition of participant observation. Nevertheless, ethnographic fieldwork cannot be done only with participant observation; it should be integrated with other methods, including different kinds of interviews.

about research subjects' lives beyond the neighborhood and the city. Unlike an urban ethnography based on a focused, problematized space (Wacquant 2002) or multi-sited ethnography that traces flows of people (Marcus 1995), the ethnography of urban identification rests on the (narratives of) life experiences which cross boundaries of space and time.

Moreover, this ethnography is highly influenced by performative theories and approaches. By distinguishing performativity from performance, I not only collect what people say and do as "data" but critically explore why people say and do in this way by engaging with reflexivity. Therefore, the "repeat(ed) in-depth and largely unstructured interviews" that Aly (2015) used in his "performative" ethnography of everyday Arabness in London are also adopted in this ethnographic research. Also, as the biographical approach works well with performative theories to interrogate the norms of centrality and marginality in migration processes (Andrucki and Dickinson 2015), the open-ended life-story interviews are guided by performative theories to critically examine norms and norming in their narratives of life stories.

In this chapter, I first introduce my lived experience in Gowon Estate with a brief account of lived spaces there. Second, I talk about how I identified my informants by understanding their social networks and regularly visiting some key social spaces. Third, I address the ways in which I conduct life-story interviews on the basis of my ethnographic fieldwork. I explain how this approach is different from life-course or life-history approach. Fourth, I emphasize that this research is not restricted to the bounded neighborhood but considers socio-spatial relationships and practices beyond places. Not only did I visit a particular hometown place in Yorubaland, but I also conducted an ad-

hoc research activity with three young people (two males and one female) about their sociality and urban mobility. Lastly, I stress how important it is to incorporate informants' reflexivity into the performative approach. In doing so, I self-reflected over and also invited my informants to reflect on my positionality and our relationships in the field.

2.1 Living My Life in Gowon Estate, Lagos

My ethnographic fieldwork is based on my one-year residency in Gowon Estate of Lagos. To conduct participant observation, I rented a two-bedroom apartment from February 2018 to February 2019. Its address—Flat 15, Block 2, Close A, 411 Road—reflects how Gowon Estate's residential area is spatially structured (See Figure 2.1). Each building (called a "block") has 16 apartments (called "flats"), and number 15—my flat—is located on the fourth floor. Among the 16 households in my block, only seven owned their apartment. All other residents are tenants to private owners. In this block, I have interviewed 14 households including my landlord who had moved out. At least two family members in each of seven households talked to me at length. As we came across and greeted each other every day, we often paid visits to each other's home. Living with these neighbors enabled me to observe their family and intergenerational relationships, echoing the life stories they narrated to me individually.

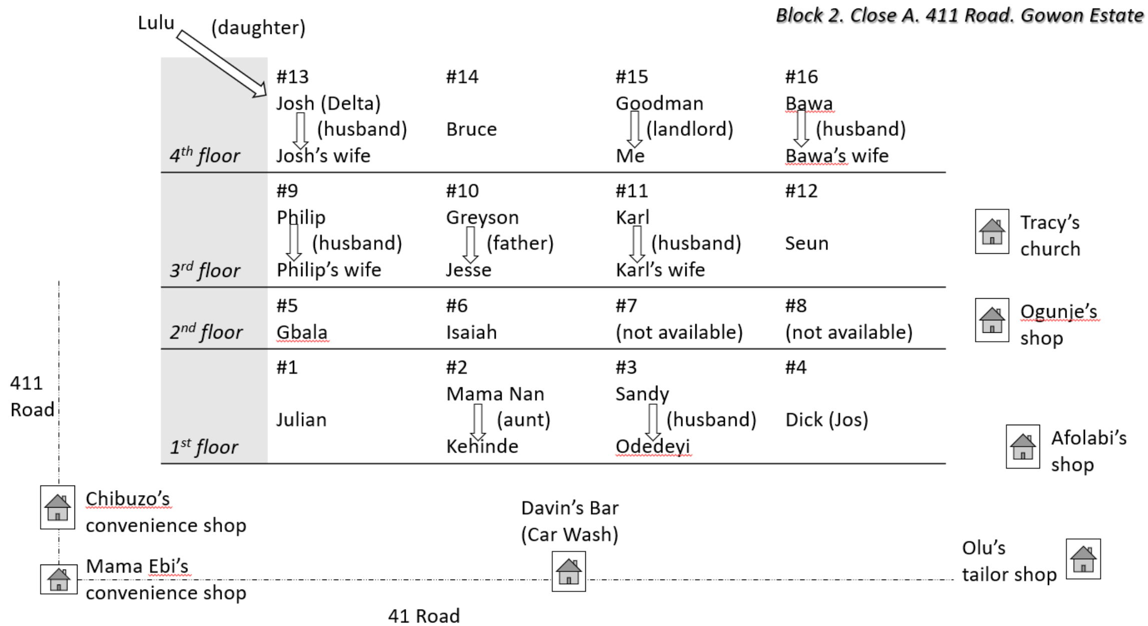

Figure 2.1 The Interviewed Neighbors and Their Relations

My block is located by the "American Junction" that connects the main 41 road with smaller 411 road and 34 road. 41 Road was renovated in 2015, the year when Lagos State government began to approve funding for the federal government project after 16-year electoral opposition between Lagos State and the federal governments (Cheeseman and de Gramont 2017). Now 41 road is one of the high-quality roads in Gowon Estate. In terms of business activities, the section of 41 road between Ponle and American Junction is the busiest area in the realm of Northern CDA, including three bars & restaurants, five eateries, and many convenience shops. Below (See figure 2.2) I would like to introduce some key living spaces in the area where I often visited and conducted participant observation.

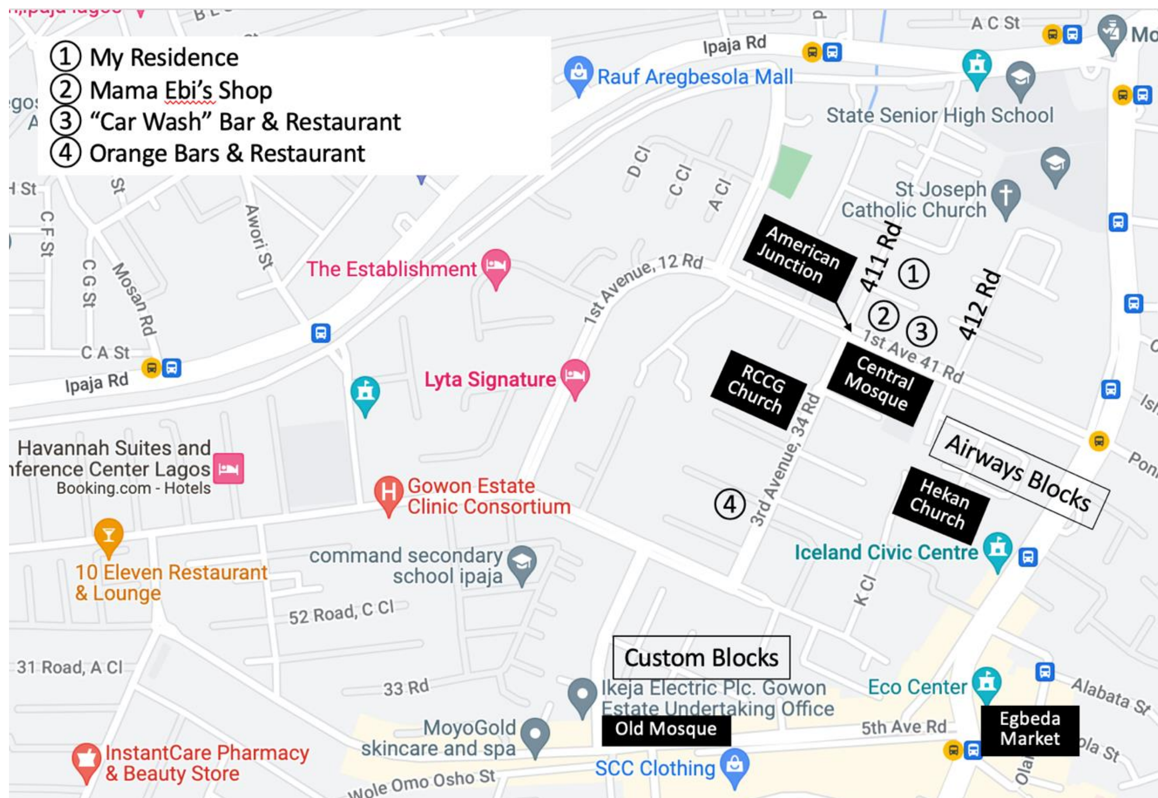

Figure 2.2 The Map of Gowon Estate

Neighborhood bars are usually popular places for men at all ages. On a few occasions, women were seen to accompany men, especially in the affinity groups (see "*flexing* with *omoge*" in chapter 5). The attractions in bars are not only alcohol and music but also screens playing live football matches. Bars are thus extremely crowded during match days. Some people sat there for multiple matches in a day with just one bottle of beer. Many customers also took advantage of this period to charge their phones. After all, bar owners had to turn on generators to power televisions and loudspeakers. Two major neighborhood bars are my primary observational sites: one is called "Car wash" along 41 road as it is attached to a car wash business outside the open-air bar; the other is called "Orange bar" on 34 road as its exterior wall and roof are painted in orange. Their

respective owners, middle-aged man Davin and elder Okeme, are also my research participants. Both bars sell food and drinks at reasonable prices, for instance 250 naira ($0.7) for a bottle of Star beer. There are also two upper-level luxury bars outside this business area but still in Gowon Estate, Lyta and Havannah. They are run together with hotels, including swimming pools surrounded by bar areas where Star beer sells at 400 naira. The difference between neighborhood bars and luxury bars not only lies in levels of consumption but also pertains to social spirituality that is recognized and practiced by Estate boys (see chapter 7).

Restaurants around 41 road and the American Junction often set up portable tables beside the road curbs when dusk arrives. Two open-air restaurants are popular for their foods–pepper soup (a kind of spicy soup with goat meat) and catfish. These restaurants were recommended by my informants and became important sites to socialize with them, though we also extended our interactions to other restaurants outside Gowon Estate. Another type of eatery is much smaller, with only a few portable seats. They usually sell Nigerian fast food, such as stews, rice, and meat. Without music and TVs, these places were not favored by young informants. A specialized food, fried Indomie noodles, is often sold at food stalls. Ujema's wife is famous for making this food in the neighborhood. I got to know my informant Ujema through regular visits to her Indomie. These two restaurants were also social spaces where I hung out with Tope and Idahosa's group.

The religious space in Gowon Estate appears very diverse. The Redeemed Christian Church of God on 34 road, a branch of one of the largest religious organizations in Nigeria, usually gathered more than fifty people at their Sunday congregations, including

my neighbors Greyson in Flat 10 and Greyson in Flat 3. As one of the largest church organizations in Nigeria, RCCG has multiple branches in Gowon Estate, and the one on 34 road was the most popular. The St. Joseph church on 412 road is the only Catholic church in Gowon Estate. I sometimes accompanied Obotu to Sunday mass, where I often encountered Baba Frank and Henry. The Hekan church beside the former playground "Kuwait" is the church serving Christians from Northern Nigeria. Jackson in the music department and Rosemary in the women's choir are my key informants there. Tracy's church just next to my block is one of the smallest churches, usually no more than ten attendees during Sunday's congregations. I also attended gatherings at Adeyi's church which is located at the Western periphery of Gowon Estate. Adeyi, a pastor and also the founder of his church, his wife Shagama living with him, and his church member Boye living in an apartment on 34 road, all actively participated in my research.

Two large mosques are key religious spaces for Muslims, and three smaller ones scattered in Gowon Estate. The one at the American Junction is called the central mosque. It was built in the late 1990s and was renovated in 2013. The other one on 51 road is the oldest and largest mosque, built in the early 1990s (named "old mosque" in this dissertation), more likely gathering Muslims from the North. At the old mosque, I often sat at the imam's shop beside the mosque, while observing his son Amir selling water to Muslims and interacting with a variety of people. At the central mosque, I knew many more people as it was very close to my residence, and the fact that I was able to speak Yoruba facilitated our interactions. I was even taught to pray and sat with people inside the mosque.

Convenience shops are also important social space to gather residents[24]. Customers usually hang around and chat for a while after patronizing the shops. Mama Ebi's shop at the corner of American Junction is one of the popular shops in the area. Since she moved to Gowon Estate in the late 1990s, her business has been growing. Since the loss of her husband, this shop has been her primary source of income to take care of her son Williams and daughter Fiona. Williams is a key informant who openly shared his scamming stories with me (chapter 5 and 7). In the evening, there are often around ten people gathered around sitting or standing beside the shop. I was also one of them almost every night. Another shop I often visited is Afolabi's that attracted neighbors who knew Afolabi's family, such as Baba Frank who regularly drank a glass of wine at the shop's only table while chatting with Afolabi or her mother. Not every convenience shop is a social space, however. My neighbor Gbala owns a shop on 411 road, but I seldom saw customers hanging in his shop.

In addition to these living spaces, let me briefly introduce the temporality of everyday life in Gowon Estate with reference to my experience on an ordinary day–July 12, 2018. I was woken up by the central mosque's loudspeaker at 5:30 AM. Soon after, my neighbor Bawa passed my window in the dark to join the first prayer. After a nap, I got up around 6 AM, as many neighbors had already begun their activities: while brushing my teeth on my balcony, I heard Philip loudly praying on his balcony (Flat 9). At this time, NEPA[25] supplied the electricity, making morning activities busier. Given that we all supposed this

[24] Other social spaces like convenience shops but not providing specific services include Tom's shop selling recharge cards and Olu's tailor's workshop. Both places often gather young residents who know Tom and Olu. Tom is one of my key informants, and I also interviewed Olu multiple times.

[25] NEPA refers to the National Electric Power Authority. Although its name has changed to The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), my informants still use NEPA in everyday life.

supply would not last for two hours, our neighbors hurried to step downstairs to pump the underground water. Waiting in the queue, I greeted Mama Nan and chatted with Odedeyi. This was my first social hour.

After filling my water tank and having my breakfast home, I strolled to Egbeda market along 41 road. En route, I greeted my neighbors one by one. In the early morning, working-class neighbors, such as Philip, Dick and Sandy, had set off to avoid traffic congestion in the city; therefore, I could only greet their wives. Mama Ebi's and Chibuzo's convenience shops were opening up to receive early customers. Other shops, including Ogunje's clothes, Afolabi's drinks, and Olu's tailor workshop, were not opened until 9 AM. Tom usually started supplying recharge cards to convenience shops around this time (details of his spatial movements are displayed in the later section).

From morning to noon, Gowon Estate remained tranquil–this was what Mama Nan liked and recommended to me when I first moved to this block. Around noon, some eateries and restaurants began to open. Without electricity, I bought cooked white rice from an eatery downstairs, mixed with a vegetable dish I made by myself. At 12:30 PM, Amir came to discuss his translation of his father's interview. Amir is a son of the imam at the old mosque and was willing to translate his father's Hausa narrative. At 1:30 PM, our discussion was suspended by the central mosque's call for praying. Instead of going to this nearest mosque, Amir said he would head back quickly to the farther old mosque (The other differences between two mosques will be elaborated in chapter 7).

Later in the afternoon, Gowon Estate became noisy. Under the loudspeaker's call around 4 PM, more Muslims headed to the central mosque, where I sat in the mosque compound and chatted with them. This sound was mixed with children's laughs and

screams as they wandered around convenience shops after school. Open-air bars were prepared to receive customers. When I passed the Car Wash bar, Davin was serving two elderly adults. Back to my block, Jacob and Tope came to see me, as we planned to have dinner together. It was still early so I left them for a meeting with Rosemary and Joey, Tope's former neighbor on 412 road. Joey had just been back home from his political station in Ikeja. For those who left workplaces before 5 PM, this was the time when they could arrive by evading afternoon rush hours on roads, otherwise they might only arrive after 8 PM. I talked to them about my research, and Rosemary agreed to introduce me to her church–Hekan–that was primarily attended by people from the North, but Joey was a little hesitant about an interview. On the way back to reunite with Tope and Jacob, I witnessed the gradual vibrancy at many places: churches were lit up for evening activities, the central mosque made another call for prayers in the dusk; bars & restaurants became crowded. Tope, Jacob and I sat at a portable table on the curbside; this is an open-air space for an unnamed eatery at the American Junction.

When dusk was verging into night, all kinds of social activities spread through the neighborhood. Churches played loud music for fellowship activities; mosques instead became a quiet place for those Muslims to chat and rest after the last prayer on that day. After dinner, I sat at several sites of social space for participant observation. People usually gathered at the sites where they were familiar with: many young people hung around Mama Ebi's shop; Baba Frank drank at Afolabi's shop; Kehinde sat at Ogunje's clothes shop; Dylan chatted with Tom downstairs; so on and so forth. As working-class residents finally return after rush hours, they tend to relax at these sites or grab beers at the bars & restaurants. Olu stopped working as well, but his tailor's shop was not closed

until 10 PM, turning into another social space for Estate boys. After 10 PM, these social activities began to fade away, except those at pricy places, such as Lyta and Havannah. Convenience shops were closed at last, usually after 11 PM. Gowon Estate residents, including me, then fell asleep together with generator noises.

2.2 Understanding Social Networks in Gowon Estate

In addition to living with residents in Gowon Estate, I also expand participant observation through different sets of social networks. All the 102 informants were not selected from random encounters in Gowon Estate. They were approached through a certain connection and/or in a certain social space. After becoming familiar with my research identity and themes, they were invited to participate in this project. In this sense, no one in this research is an independent person; they are socially connected to one or another in some ways. Nevertheless, some informants are more connected than others. Therefore, I paid close attention to these informants and now introduce some of them who were my key informants and appear in this dissertation many times.

The first set of social networks centers on three young men who all grew up in Gowon Estate--Idahosa, Tope and Jacob, as shown in the figure 2.3. Idahosa, the son of the chairman of the Central Community Development Association, was the first person I met in Gowon Estate back in 2016, who introduced me to his affinity group members Tope, Jacob, Abby etc. However, Tope gradually became closer to me, due to his role of mediating the relationships between Idahosa and Jacob as well as others (Henry, Olu, Olupo etc.). By knowing many of his acquaintances and family members, I was able to

further understand his unsettled life and the practices of counseling within the affinity groups. Outside the affinity groups, Tope also kept weak ties with people such as former neighbor Rosemary. Tope does not know Rosemary's church member Jackson, but I was able to know Jackson after Tope introduced me to Rosemary. This snowballing strategy made me learn about many other people's lives through interactions with key informants.

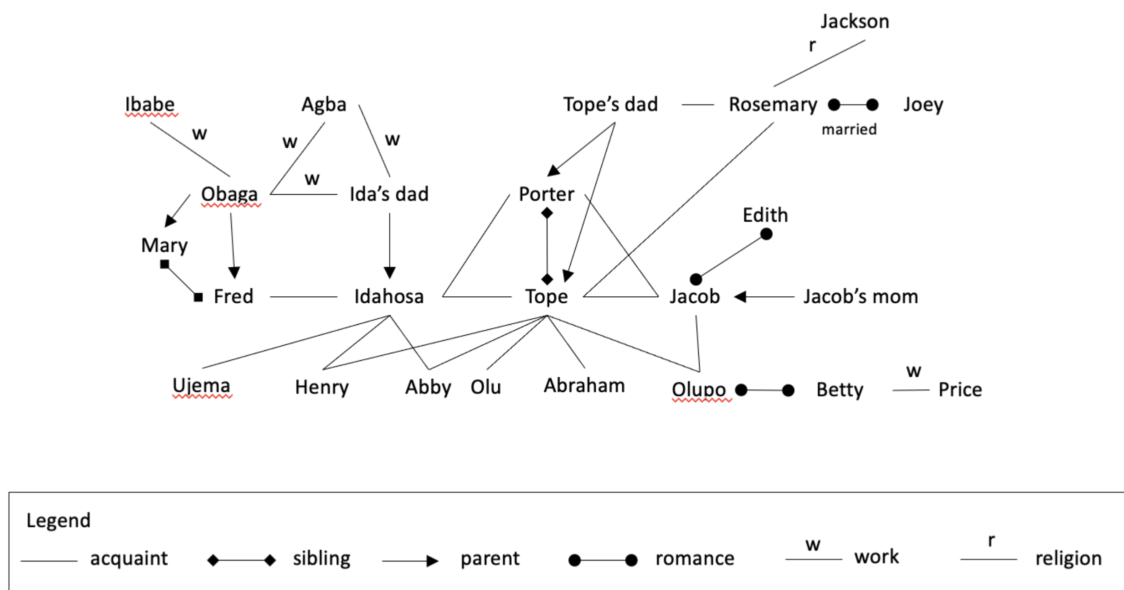

Figure 2.3 Informants Known through Tope's Network

The second set of networks (figure 2.4) depends on Tom, a 29-year-old man who migrated from Cross River to Lagos in 2005. He managed a shop selling phone recharge cards on 41 road. In Gowon Estate, He rented a half of an apartment, with a wooden wall set up by the landlord to demarcate two halves. As a first-generation urban migrant as well as a tenant in the Estate, Tom's network does not overlap with those young men who grew up in Gowon Estate. In neighborhood life, he kept working relationships with many shopkeepers (such as Mama Ebi and Mama Samuel), the studying relationship with Boye (his schoolmate at Yaba Polytechnic), routine interactions with neighbor Dylan, and

romantic relationships previously with Nneka and later Okwujo. In other words, the majority of Tom’s social relationships are based in Gowon Estate. Nevertheless, except Okwujo, Tom said none of these people were close to him and would be his friends.

In the figure 2.4, we can see another set of networks focused on Williams’ family with connection to Tom’s. Williams is an Estate boy whose social group is all youths in their 20s, quite different from those in their 30s such as Idahosa and Tope. So, although being Estate boys, Williams’ network does not overlap with Tope’s affinity groups. Given that Mama Ebi’s convenience shop was one of the most popular social spaces, I was able to observe different networks of residents meeting and talking to each other at the same time. Nevertheless, each affinity group of youths usually had their own space to socialize. For instance, Williams’ group often sat behind Mama Ebi’s shop for casual conversations.

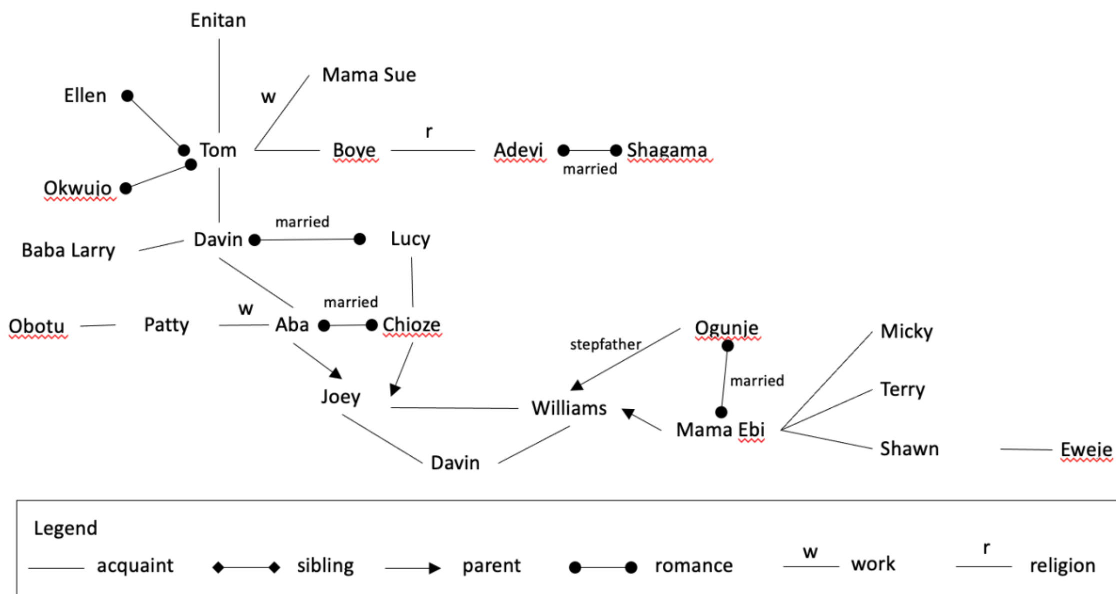

Figure 2.4 Informants Known through Tom’s and Williams’s Networks

In addition to these two network groups, I also participated in social activities in churches and mosques, thereby diversifying the pool of my informants in the neighborhood. Not only did I go to those institutionalized churches, such as RCCG, St Joseph and Hekan churches, but I also participated in religious activities organized by two pastors Tracy and Adeyi who founded their churches. Compared to larger churches, these two small ones often develop closer relationships among their members, helping me further socialize with residents in the Estate. Speaking of the low attendance at her church, Tracy, a 59-year-old woman from Adamawa state said, “church is like a market. Not everyone comes every time”. Due to the small number of members (no more than 10 people as I observed at times), the donation from church members was limited and had to be largely spent on the operation of the church, including facilities, rent, and electricity. While running the church, she was teaching in a secondary school on the part-time basis so that the income could prevent her from poverty. In contrast to Tracy, Adeyi’s combination of church and business was successful. Although he fully engaged in the church together with his wife Shagama, Shagama mainly took charge of two pharmacy shops in the neighborhood. Their church members became regular pharmacy customers in this regard, while all their shopkeepers were active church members in different church groups. Hence, church and pharmacy became interdependent, thereby contributing to their middle-class livelihood in Gowon Estate. Currently, they live in a three-bedroom apartment in a Townhouse-like building along 34 road, while respectively driving a second-hand SUV and a Toyota car.

2.3 Hearing Life Stories

Over the course of 15 months from June 2017 to March 2019, I made 185 audio recordings of interviews with 102 residents of Gowon Estate, 76 males and 26 females, who claimed to come from 26 of Nigeria's 36 states. During my field research on June 5, 2017, an elder who had lived there since the early 1980s told me a metaphor: "Gowon Estate is the United Nations of Nigeria", signifying the ethnic and regional diversity of the resident population in this neighborhood. In this setting, my informants' self-described ethnicities included Yoruba (n=35), Igbo (n=12), Hausa (n=10), and various other minorities. Muslims, 11 of them were Hausa, accounted for 20 of my research participants, and the other 82 were Pentecostalist or Catholic. The ages, home states, hometowns and lived places along life trajectories of some participants are showcased in table 2.1, for a glimpse of sorting out the demographic data.

Table 2.1 The Catalogues of Selected Informants' Life Trajectories

Names	Age	Hometowns	Places having lived before and now	Interview dates
Mama Ebi	51	Kogi	Kogi, Kaduna, Lagos	3/19
Lucy	37	Enugu	**Enugu***, Lagos	3/20
Ogunje	28	Benue	Lagos, **Benue**, Ekiti, Lagos	3/21; 9/11; 02/16
Adeyi	58	Ekiti	Ado Ekiti, **Owo**, Oyo, Lagos	3/22; 12/28
Fred	30	Obutu	Lagos, **Calabar**, Lagos	3/24; 10/07
Afolabi	43	Ondo	Lagos, **Kwara**, Ibadan, Lagos	3/26; 9/12
Odedeyi	45	Ekiti	Ekiti, **Ilorin**, Lagos	3/28; 02/14
Olu	33	Ogun	Lagos	3/29; 12/07
Seun	33	Ondo	Lagos, **Ekiti**, Lagos	5/18; 9/19
Olupo	32	Edo	Lagos, **Edo**, Lagos	5/18; 10/06
Kehinde	35	Ogun	Lagos, **Ogun**, Akwa Ibom, Lagos	5/19; 02/11

* Places in bold are places where informants enrolled in universities/polytechnics.

When living in Gowon Estate, I conducted 102 life-story interviews with a variety of residents, often multiple times with a single person. These interviews took place in a private space, either indoors (my living room or their apartments) or outdoors (bars, restaurants, and street corners), allowing only the informant and me to hear and to participate in the conversation. A life-story interview usually lasted for 30-100 minutes. The usual language of these conversations was Pidgin English, sometimes mixed with Yoruba. The interviews were all recorded with oral informed consent beforehand.

In the open-ended interviews, I usually started with an invitation, such as "tell me what happened in your life from your birth till now" (wording differed according to conversational contexts). In this way, I encouraged them to share the stories along their life trajectories by noting the years and places of their lives. This helped me understand how they place cities in their lives as chapter 3.1 details. I did not intervene unless their narration drifted too far away (for instance, they might not focus on personal stories but move to topics such as a general description of Nigeria's history or Christian values). If I felt some personal narratives were interesting, I would jump in and say "could you tell me more about…" In the process of the interview, I also observed and noted their ways of narration and embodiment of feelings.

Conducting life-story interviews does not simply mean recounting a life course or history. In human geography, especially in the field of time-geography (Hägerstrand 1985) and migration studies (Carling 2017), the life-course approach has been taken seriously to understand interconnections between individual experiences over the lifetime amidst social, spatial, and historical changes (Horschelmann 2011). In African studies, a life-history approach is often used to examine how personal memory and nostalgia reflect

various influences such as specific postcolonial conditions (Werbner 1998; Coetzee and Nuttall 1998; Pype 2017). Both approaches are useful in shedding light on individual subjectivities through nostalgia and the memory work of rupture with the past. This study not only collects the content of life stories as the life-course and life-history approaches do but also attends to narrativity—the ways of time being narrated in life stories. The added value of this time-narration approach will be elaborated in chapter 3.2.

While listening to informants' life stories, I paid attention to the specificity of each person's life trajectories through which specific socio-spatial experiences made the person become who he or she was. This specificity does not simply refer to an "interesting" story that the informant wanted to share or I wanted to hear but emerged from our intersubjective communication: we both thought it necessary to set up another time to talk about that experience. This was called an "ad-hoc interview" in my research. Through the fieldwork period, I conducted 16 ad-hoc interviews that followed life-story interviews. The topics range from Obotu's housing lawsuits to Adeyi's efforts to build a church, from Williams's scam practices to Kudus's role of managing a mosque (All these cases will be described in following chapters). These specific experiences contribute to understanding of "the specificity of place" (Massey 1994: 156) in one's life trajectories.

Moreover, interpreting their life stories relies on my ethnographic experiences that intersect with their everyday lives in Gowon Estate. Differing from some life-course research that is primarily built on enclosed biographical interviews and structured surveys with research subjects (e.g., Collins and Shubin 2015), the approach taken in this study is very open-ended: recorded life-story interviews are supplemented by numerous informal conversations with informants on a daily basis. As ethnographers care more about

aspiration and experience instead of life stages presumed in the recording of key life events (Johnson-Hanks 2002), participant observation in neighborhood life enabled me to understand the conjunction and disjunction between informants' prior experiences and their current livelihoods in Lagos.

2.4 Engaging the Life Beyond Place

In my recurring engagement with my informants' life stories, I conducted preliminary analysis of partly transcribed interviews and observational notes, which informed my subsequent interactions with informants on a rolling basis. In the analysis, I paid attention to how informants narrated their arrival in Gowon Estate and lived experiences in other places before moving to the Estate. In this way, Gowon Estate is not just a specially-positioned neighborhood in Lagos's and Nigeria's history but specifically placed by the informants in relation to other places they have inhabited. This was the way in which discursive practices of "home" were identified. Having done research in Lagos since 2012, especially field research on urban transport mobilities, I have been to many areas in Lagos. My familiarity with the geography of Lagos sometimes surprised my informants and facilitated our conversations about "life in Lagos" beyond the place of Gowon Estate.

Similarly, indebted to the perspective of placing cities in life, I also paid attention to how first-generation migrants narrated their arrival in Gowon Estate and lived experiences in other cities before migration. In doing so, the discourses on home places, including hometowns, home states and home regions, emerged from the preliminary analysis. To better understand their identification with "home" places versus Lagos, I

chose to travel to one of the hometowns in life stories—Oka Akoko in Ondo State. This small town is located in a peripheral area of Yorubaland, next to Edo and Kogi states. This choice results from a scan of 102 residents' life trajectories, among which seven[26] identified Oka-Akoko as their hometown. Considering the diversity of resident population in Gowon Estate, the fact that seven unconnected people are associated with a single town is very unusual. Therefore, I went to Oka Akoko five times during 2016-19. However, this ethnography is not a migration study that focuses on the migrant connections between hometown and Lagos. My traveling experiences to a "hometown" beyond Lagos not only facilitated my interactions with people from this place as well as people who know this place[27] but also enriched my understanding of the meanings of Lagos in relation to hometowns.

In addition to life narratives, I also delved into social relations that stretch out beyond the neighborhood and Lagos along life trajectories. In analyzing life stories, I paid attention to those people particularly mentioned by the informants. Afterwards, I invited them to participate in the second round of interviews that focused on social relationships. Specifically, I asked informants to elaborate on each person mentioned in the earlier life-story interviews, positionality in their social networks, and memorable experiences with the person. Therefore, the narrated social relationships are not necessarily restricted to their current lives in Gowon Estate and Lagos but encompass their former colleagues,

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[26] They include Agoro (age 57), Tobi (age 56), Hector (age 52), Mama Samuel (age 47), Lily (age 34), Obina (age 32), Fashola (age 29). Agoro and Tobi are close friends. Fashola heard of Obina but did not know him. So, generally speaking, these people from Oka Akoko are not all socially connected.

[27] My neighbors Bawa and Josh were very interested in talking about Oka Akoko and Yoruba traditions. This was how I explored performative ethnicity in everyday conversations (See chapter 6).

childhood friends, and religious fellows in many other places where they had lived. Nevertheless, this narrative echoed what I observed: how they socialized with other residents in social spaces in Gowon Estate, including apartment buildings, street corners, open-air bars, and political meeting venues. In total, I conducted social relationship interviews with 54 informants from 2017-19.

Apart from letting them talk about social relations, I further add a spatial dimension in the study of their sociality beyond a bounded place. Although there are business opportunities in Gowon Estate, including those bars, restaurants and convenience shops, many residents have to earn their livelihood outside the Estate, particularly in more economically prosperous districts such as Ikeja and Lagos Islands. Even for those who opened shops in the Estate, their business relationships hinge on spatial practices. Therefore, I invited three key informants, Tope, Tom, and Betty, to participate in an ad-hoc research activity "spatializing your social life". Given the longtime trust relationships with me, they were all very cooperative and provided quite a lot of data for my understanding of Gowon Estate as a relational space. The way to collect the data was to invite them to write journals, either in written form or in their phones. These journals focus on their daily interactions with people, with noted time and place (For one of Tom's notes, see figure 2.5). Afterwards, I reviewed their journal notes and made interviews with each of them who participated in this project for the cycle of a week.

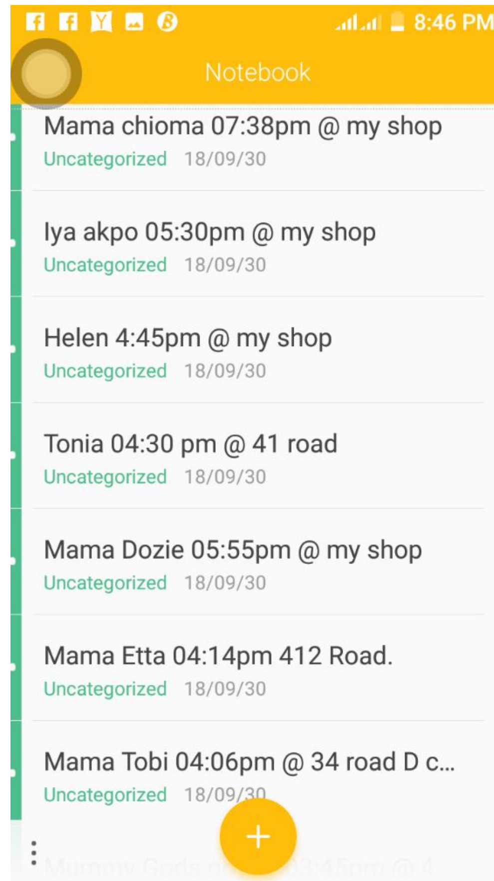

Figure 2.5 Tom's Journal Note

In this section, I briefly showcase two young informants' lived mobility, with Tope's case to be illustrated in chapter 5. Comparing Tom's and Betty's mobile lives in the neighborhood and also in Lagos can provide us with a glimpse of the positionality of Gowon Estate in youth urban livelihood. Tom was self-employed with entire livelihood based on Gowon Estate; Betty had a fixed-term contract with Lagos State government. Compared to underemployed Tope whose immobility will be elaborated later, these two youths' lives are routinized through socio-spatial practices. Learning their urban mobility can help us understand the specificity of bundling relational places in each's urban life.

Tom, a 30-year-old man, runs a phone recharging card business in Gowon Estate, and his lived mobility is completely based in the neighborhood. He bought recharge cards from four primary telecom networks at a lower price in Egbeda and sold them to convenience shops all over the Estate. All day, he walked from one shop to another to supply cards. The profit is marginal per supply, but altogether he could make 2,000-3,000 naira ($5.5-8.2) a day. He described himself as a hardworking man, implying his difference from those Estate boys. By saving through the past ten years after he migrated from Cross River to Lagos, he was able to sponsor himself for a part-time graduate certificate program at Yaba Polytechnic in Lagos. He invited me to attend his graduation ceremony in 2018.

Tom's daily schedule was extremely busy with his business throughout neighborhood space. He worked from Monday to Saturday, all day from morning to evening. On Saturday September 29, 2018, for instance, he supplied recharge cards to 34 shopkeepers in Gowon Estate, who were his regular customers. He started working around 8:30 AM, and followed his everyday route along 401 road, the Airways blocks, 412 road, 34 road, Egbeda market, the 5th Avenue, the Custom blocks, Lyta hotel, back to 34 road and 412 road. Along this route, he met each customer for about 10 minutes when he delivered the cards and had brief conversations. These customers were usually old women, whom he called "mama" in his note. He came back home at 4:45 PM and had a nap until 6 PM. He then came out to his own shop beside the central mosque. In the evening, instead of wholesaling cards, he primarily sold cards to individual customers. Among 52 people he met on that day, his girlfriend Okwujo (Helen in his note) was the only person he regarded as a close person. All the others on the note were met for business purposes,

while he met Okwujo three times a day on different locations in Gowon Estate. Okwujo was unemployed and stayed with her brother on 41 road. They had been dating for a year before Tom participated in this research. Apart from six working days, Tom does have one day off on Sundays. He usually goes to his church at Iyana Iba, the one he has been attending since he arrived in Lagos. As it is located closer to his former residence, it took him more than two hours traveling from Gowon Estate to this church, but Tom did not change his membership to any church in Gowon Estate.

Betty, a 24-year-old woman, is living with her parents and four siblings on 411 road. She is the eldest and grew up in Gowon Estate. She went to study at Rivers State University in her home place (about which we will learn more in chapter 6). After graduation, she returned to Lagos for her NYSC program[28]. She was appointed to the position of a front desk intern in the tax department in Lagos State Government. The primary work is to let visitors register their information and provide basic inquiry services. According to the NYSC program, her salary was only half of a formal employee's. Nevertheless, she was pleased to work in "a decent environment in Lagos" (in her words). Although this was only a one-year internship without much possibility to transfer to a formal employment, Betty took it very seriously. She told me that many of her university cohorts were appointed to Northern Nigeria. "I'm happy I can work in Lagos," she said.

During her routine working days, she usually gets up at 5 AM and cooks for her family. She described this as the duty of being the eldest in the family. She leaves the

[28] The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is a program set up by the Nigerian government to involve Nigerian graduates in nation building and self-development. The one-year working experience in an appointed place is compulsory for all the university and Polytechnic graduates.

apartment by 6 AM. It usually takes her 20 minutes to walk through the neighborhood to embark on a bus at the Egbeda market, while greeting several neighbors along the way. Growing up here, she is able to greet them in Yoruba language. She takes the *danfo* bus to Akowonjo roundabout and transits to a bus directly taking her to the workplace in Ikeja, one of central business districts in Lagos. In this way, she is able to reach the office by 8 AM. Her colleagues also arrive around the same time, but her supervisors often come one hour later. There is a one-hour break, from 1-2 PM, during which she eats her lunch prepared at home. During working hours, she occasionally chats with Mr. Samson in the ICT department, whom she described as the closest friend at the workplace. Around 5 PM, she finalizes her work and returns home. She usually arrives at home around 7 PM under normal traffic conditions. After having dinner with family, she goes to her friends' homes, as most of her friends are also her former schoolmates growing up together in Gowon Estate.

The two cases of youth mobility demonstrate their different socio-spatial relationships with Gowon Estate. Tom's livelihood completely relied on the neighborhood, but he did not have deep social attachment to this place, except his dating relationship. Although Betty spent most of her daytime outside the neighborhood, her social life is largely based in Gowon Estate, involving neighbors and schoolmates. More specifically, knowing their everyday spatial practices can further help me delve into the reiterative discursive practices through which their urban identification is enacted. In Tom's case, his frequent interactions with elders, most of whom are Yorubas, prompt me to explore everyday ethnicity in his identification process. In Betty's case, her daily socio-spatial practices

make me rethink her narrative of going back to study in Rivers State, therefore leading to an exploration of performative Lagosian-ness. Both cases will be revisited in chapter 6.

2.5 Reflecting with Informants

In response to Nelson's (2014) critique of performative approaches that silence the research subjects' reflexivity, in this project I tried to evoke, discern, and incorporate the research subjects' reflective narratives in the ethnography. Through multiple recurring formal and informal interviews, I was able to discern the variation of narratives given by the same person on different occasions. As narrativity is one of the key analytical points in this methodology, I not only analyzed their narratives of life experience but also invited them to reflect on their narratives. For instance, when I found their former narratives are different from the latter ones, I invited them to reflect if this difference resulted from their changing perceptions of my identity, their changing ideas of the narrated experiences, or anything else. For some key informants, in the later stage of my fieldwork, I also encouraged them to reflect on my positionality in their life, meanwhile I also shared reflections with my informants on my role as a researcher and on my relationship to them. These interactions illustrate an intersubjectivity between me and my research subjects, facilitating my understanding of their sayings, doings and thinking.

In retrospect, my entry point into the field may have affected my research subjects' participation and the narrativity of life-story telling. Being seen as an *oyinbo* or *nyocha* (respectively meaning white foreigner in Yoruba and Igbo languages) in Lagos, I was always expected to provide material benefits in the public space such as the airport or

markets. To minimize such expectation, I patiently explained my identity and research project to residents in the early stage of moving into Gowon Estate. In the casual conversations then, a common concern, sometimes a critique, came up from my informants: I get research information from informants while they get nothing from me. To counteract a logic of materialist exchange, I did not bend to offer anything monetary before inviting them to interviews, but I did clarify the reasonable benefits from participating in my research by telling their stories: drawing the public and international attention to lives in this neighborhood and Lagos in a general sense (without disclosing their identities); keeping a friendship with a particular foreigner (me) in their life (I explained my special positions from different angles, such as a Chinese, a student from the U.S., and a university teacher); and getting a souvenir based on our friendship especially when I traveled from abroad. All in all, I did not want to leave them an impression that I was compensating them for providing me with their life stories and experiences, because such an impression could distort their narratives that they shared with me.

Research subjects' reflexivity was also gradually evoked in the process of ethnographic fieldwork. The life-story interviews were built on the personal ontological narratives in the open-ended form. Some informants told me that they never thought of reviewing their lives in this interactive way. Moreover, when I specifically enquired about particular themes in their life stories, they sometimes began to ponder on their choices and decision-making. All these reflexive narratives were embedded in a series of our discussions back and forth. Among 102 life-story narrators, 54 were followed up for a second time, and a few people even have done four-rounds of recorded interviews. There

were also numerous daily interactions with my neighbors and key informants which were written in the field note. The repetitive interactions with informants hinge on progresses of our mutual understandings of each other's characteristics and ways of thinking. In doing so, I engaged in "a repetitive recycling of interpretive moves" (Mishler 2006: 30).

By the end of fieldwork, I had informative conversations with some key informants about my changing positionality. I realized that some informants were initially confused by why I, as an *oyinbo*, was interested in their personal lives. When they gradually learned my research objectives—to build a theory of living life in Lagos from collecting and analyzing individual life stories—they opened their minds to participate[29]. For instance, Betty told me, "If you're a Nigerian researcher, I wouldn't tell you my life, because a Nigerian easily passes my words to somebody else. You're different. You're *oyinbo* from far away. I know you are not part of us and will leave us finally, so I never fear sharing my life with you." She was highly engaged in the research process and was one of three people who wrote journals on their daily mobility and social interactions for this project. Similar reflections were also made by Tope, who liked to share all kinds of concerns, from work to love, from family to friends, with Kolade (my Yoruba name). In retrospect, it was difficult for some people to accept my research at the beginning, but once they trusted me for various reasons and agreed with my research objectives, they were willing to openly share their experiences, feelings, and thoughts. This process is exactly reflected in my neighbor Kehinde's case: we had a brief interview on May 19, 2018, but I could discern that he was very cautious and conservative; through daily greetings and gradually increased interactions with him over nine months, the second in-

[29] There are some people who never opened up to do interviews due to their spirituality (See chapter 6).

depth interview took place in a restaurant on February 11, 2019. What made him change his attitude was his feeling, “I see your mind is pure.” It was never too late to reach that point, where informants reflected on my positionality together with their personal life, where I reflected on their experiences and their reflections together with my ethnographic “becoming” (Ingold 2014).

Chapter 3 Placing Lagos in Life: Urban Identification across Space-Times

By placing Lagos in conceptual, public, and ontological narratives, we can see that "life in Lagos" is associated with discourses on modernity as well as ethnic and religious diversity in the history of Lagos. More specifically, by juxtaposing public and ontological narratives of "life in Lagos", some paradoxical expressions draw my attention to the meanings behind what narrators talked about their life stories. In other words, to understand the complexity of urban identification which may not only pertain to Lagos, individual representations of "life in Lagos" are not sufficient. I suggest we should "zoom out" to place Lagos in life.

Indebted to Massey's (1994) uniqueness of place defined by its interactions and relationality, I add that, in geographies of urban identity, such relationality should be illuminated and understood along individual life trajectories in order to shift from place-ontology to subject-ontology. In other words, cities and neighborhoods are relationally placed by human subjects in their lived experiences. In the place-identity paradigm, some scholars suggest that places become "sites for performing identities, where people "attach their own biographies to their "chosen" residential location. (Savage et al. 2005: 29). This is exactly a place-ontology in representing "life in cities", because people do not always freely choose to identify themselves with places due to some characteristics of places. Overemphasizing the place-ness in identification processes and human agency in constructing identities can lead to blindness on the power dynamics implicitly playing through discursive practices across spacetimes.

The ideas of relational space and space-time embrace the relational turn in human geography (Massey 1999, 2005; Harvey 2006; May and Thrift 2003) and productively inform the perspective of placing cities in life that is taken in this dissertation. First of all, by conducting life-story interviews, I collected various ontological narratives of socio-spatial experiences across cities in informants' lives. Instead of simply showing cities statically placed along life trajectories, I tease out types of social relations that constitute the spaces and are bundled in those places. This illuminates the uniqueness of place in life. By comparing the uniqueness between individual subjects, we then understand different ways of identifying with places of Lagos and Gowon Estate.

Moreover, given the idea of space-time assemblage, life-story telling here is examined through a practice of time-narration that places cities in life. This emphasis on narrativity differs from an application of the biographical approach (also called the life-course approach). In Diener and Hagen's (2022) synthesis of place attachment (place-identity in the same vein), performance and narration are fundamental dimensions of this paradigm. Therefore, the ways of telling life stories by a deeper engagement with how places are thought of between older and younger generations illuminate nuanced narratives of settling down. The framing of cities in life in a temporal sense, I suggest, paves the way for a performative intervention to the place-identity paradigm by illuminating the generational difference of urban identification.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first one consists of three cases of placing Lagos and Gowon Estate in life, all intersected through a social space in Gowon Estate. In the second part, I select eight life stories and present them in two sets. By comparing

their practices of time narration in life-story telling, I illuminate a generational nuance in informants' narration on "becoming settled".

3.1 Placing Lagos and Gowon Estate in Life

To tease out the specificity of this "bundle" of "cities in life", I suggest, is to shift the perspective from a place-ontology to a subject-ontology when employing the concept of relational space in the study of urban identification. In Massey's (1998: 29-31) conceptualization of relational space, three propositions on the politics of space are emphasized. First, imagining space as a product of interrelationships chimes well with the anti-essentialist view of politics of identity. Second, the idea that space is the sphere of possibility of multiplicity accords with the politics of difference. Third, imagining space as always in a process of becoming resonates with the political discourses on openness. These theoretical propositions convey important insights into relational space/place in identification processes, but the question is how to operationalize it. Malpas (2012: 238-239) raises the concern on Massey's work on relationality that "there is little or no account of the way in which particular relational structures operate…This actually makes it difficult to know how exactly to engage with such positions." Although I cannot generalize a way to apply "relationality", in this study, I propose that the perspective of placing cities in life can work well not only to illustrate the relationality of place but also to inform the direction to further explore the specificity of place-identity.

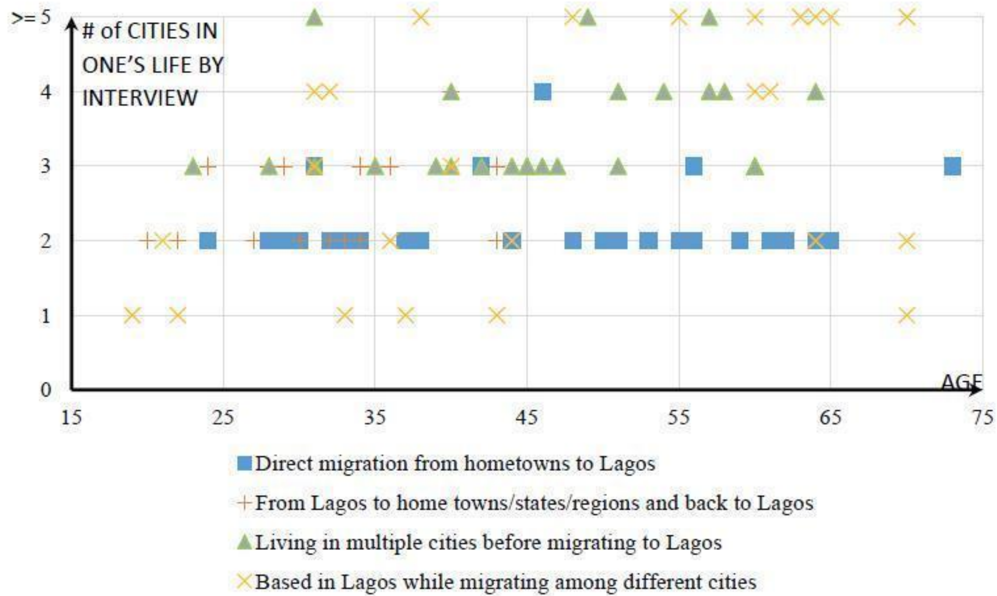

Figure 3.1 A Synthesis of Cities in Life

From this perspective, I take a biographical approach that collects and analyzes ontological narratives of life stories, within which cities are placed by individual narrators while narrators' social relations also stretch out in and beyond the city life. This approach can disrupt the "fiction of the atomized individual" by encouraging narrative movement among past, present, and future, allowing narrators to give shape to the social structures encountered (Miller 2000: 159). The preliminary analysis focuses on 102 informants' mobility patterns that differently involve cities in life trajectories. As shown in figure 3.1, there are four types of mobility experience[30]. The first comprises the place-ness of the hometowns from which people who settle in Lagos have migrated. The second type is a mobility pattern whereby Lagosian youths move to other cities and then

[30] For more details about mobility patterns, see Xiao, A. H. (2021). Lagos in life: placing cities in lived experience. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 59(3), 391-412.

return to Lagos, especially for educational reasons. The choices of these cities hinge on the politics of indigeneity on which I will elaborate in chapter 6. The third type involves people's movements to and among other cities before they take up residence in Lagos. Lastly, the fourth type consists of the mobility patterns of people who are based in Lagos but whose lived experiences temporarily extend to other cities (See chapter 4.3).

Figure 3.2 The Central Mosque Located on 41 Road at the American Junction

Based on this mobility analysis, I then analyze narrators' network of socio-spatial relationships; in this chapter, I choose to present three cases of individual lives who are all connected to the same relational space of Gowon Estate—the central mosque. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Muslims' networks based on the mosque in Gowon Estate are the stronger or more important than other types of social relations; there are other kinds of sociality coexisting in one's neighborhood life and city life, such as the

CDA, churches, workplaces, neighbors, and hometown associations. In fact, the chosen persons are differently positioned in the social network of the central mosque: Kusa used to be on the governing committee of the mosque and still actively participated in mosque daily prayers and other activities; Ada also regularly appeared in the mosque but he was socially distanced by other Yoruba Muslims who did not see Ada as a "real Muslim"; Mohamud sometimes prayed in the mosque but was not socially connected with any of these Muslim neighbors. All of their lives, however, were intersected in the same social and religious space in Gowon Estate, Lagos. By delving into how Lagos and Gowon Estate are differently placed in their life trajectories, I illustrate the diversity of narrative identities based on their migrant experiences.

3.1.1 Lagos and Gowon Estate in Kusa's Life Trajectory and Experience

Born in 1961 in a village of Iwo in Osun State, Kusa grew up with his family in Ile-Ife, Osun's ancient city and the economic center before the development of Osogbo. In his narrative, he identified himself closely with Ile-Ife as his home-city rather than Iwo: "All my family lived in Ife. Only for (the) ceremony, we went to the village in Iwo." I still recall that when I told him I had been to Ile-Ife for my research, he felt excited to tell me Ife is where he is from. Only when we started the life-story interview later, he mentioned Iwo as his birthplace. Another meaning of Iwo town in his life was addressed when it comes to his wedding. Due to his sister's introduction, he married a woman in his village and later brought her to Lagos. They held a traditional wedding in the village in 1984.

Except for such occasional events, Kusa seldom went back to this hometown, though he still had extended family members there.

From his home city Ile-Ife to Lagos—the place where he settled down—several other cities have played roles in his migrant experiences. When he was about to finish secondary school in 1979, his father's death made his education financially impossible. He dropped out and hustled for a livelihood. Teaching became a temporary solution to his uncertain livelihood, as many other informants also indicated. Instead of working in his home city Ile-Ife, he got a one-year teaching position in a primary school in Ibadan, the largest city of Oyo State. With his savings from this job, he was able to attend a technical school for a year in Benin City, a city close to his home state while out of Yorubaland. In 1981, a friend from his secondary school called him from Lagos with news of an employment opportunity. Due to his technical skills, he was hired by a manufacturing company in Apapa Port. In retrospect of his migration trajectory from Ile-Ife to Lagos, we may see a linear process in which his prior preparation always facilitated his subsequent livelihood: without the savings he earned in Ibadan, he could not have attended the professional school in Benin City; without the training experience in Benin City, he could not have succeeded in his first job in Lagos.

However, in terms of relational space, we should not overlook his web of relationships—these relationships constitute space at meeting places in his life. Massey (2005: 119) describes "places" as "bundles" of space-time trajectories drawn together by individuals through cognitive and emotional processes. These bundles, socially negotiated and constantly changing and contingent, are a manifestation of "throwntogetherness" (Ibid, 140) and make places by reconfiguring many simultaneous

places that people participate in. The concept of "throwntogetherness" therefore contradicts the view of place as settled and pre-given, with a coherence only to be disturbed by "external" forces (Ibid, 141). This account is useful in reconceptualizing places/cities through a subjective, dynamic, and relational lens.

In doing so, let me recount how those relations constitute Lagos in Kusa's life. When he attended the technical school in Benin City, his friend, "the Ife guy" in his words, who used to be the president of a youth club he belonged to in secondary school, played a crucial role in his migration experience. Not only did the "Ife guy" inform Kusa of the job opportunity in Lagos, this friend from his home-city also accommodated Kusa for a couple of weeks until Kusa got hired by the manufacturing company and moved to live alone in the Ojota area of Lagos. That said, Ile-Ife is not simply a home-city where he grew up and identified with but also becomes a relational place through which his livelihood was relocated from Benin City to Lagos.

Having arrived in Lagos, his new relational place was developed and multiplied. While living in Ojota, he formed his family by marrying a woman from his village (birthplace) and had his first son Tolu. Not long after he started working in the manufacturing company, he saw a job advertisement in a newspaper for staff member positions in the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). He then applied and finally got admitted after rounds of interviews and examinations. This new workplace brought him to a new social network of CBN colleagues (including Isaiah whom I will introduce later and also in chapter 7) and made him eligible to apply for a subsidized housing apartment, one of which is Gowon Estate. In the privatization wave, he purchased the apartment through a

mortgage until his retirement in 2005. In the past three decades, Gowon Estate and Lagos became his new home places.

Speaking of Gowon Estate, he was one of few people who intentionally emphasized the origin of its name. “This place is called Gowon Estate, but it is not. It’s Federal Housing Estate, Ipaja. During the time of Gowon, they built it. That’s why people call it Gowon.” When he narrated his life story, Gowon Estate as a federal housing and his identity as a former federal government employee were often associated. He recalled, “when I got here, the Estate was bad. All occupants were illegal. In a flat, you can see 10 people, even 15 people. It’s FHA evicting them. FHA brought the police.” Among various narratives of Gowon Estate in the 1980s, Kusa conveyed a strong sense of legitimacy of his residence in this neighborhood.

The relationality of Gowon Estate in Kusa’s social life manifests itself in three ways. First, the central mosque has become a key social space in his life since he moved in in 1989. He attributed the construction of this mosque to his and his Muslim fellows’ efforts. “It was me, Ajayi, Kosola and Bawa that wrote to FHA to give us a space for building a mosque.” Therefore, he had been sitting on the governing committee for a long time before he joined other social groups, such as the CDA. The second way to place Gowon Estate in his life pertains to his role of representing his block at the North CDA of Gowon Estate. He has been a regular attendee at the monthly meetings where I conducted participant observation in 2018. In this way, he kept a close relationship with the chairman of North CDA Adewunmi (whose biography is presented in the next section). The third type of relationality is based on his CBN network which includes around 30 former colleagues living in Gowon Estate now. Although he regarded this kind of

relationship as a weak tie, he benefited from this tie at one time, particularly from Isaiah, one of disputable figures in neighborhood life.

In our conversations on his life story, Kusa actively asked me about how I saw Isaiah. As the chairman of my block, Isaiah lived a mysterious life which led to various rumors in neighborhood life, including his numerous wealth and spirituality of witchcraft (More details in chapter 7). When I responded to Kusa that we got along well and greeted each other every day, Kusa told me his personal perspective and experience with Isaiah. As Kusa's son and daughter went to Lagos State University, there was a shortage of money to pay tuition fees at Kusa's hands. "I tried (to approach) many people, but no result. Then, I think who else can help me. I decide(d) to ask Baba [Isaiah]. I went upstairs and knocked (on) the door. I first proposed (borrowing) 40,000. Baba wrote a check. It's 50,000! He said, 'just return the rest if you don't need it.' I never forget how he's generous to me." When I asked Kusa if Isaiah is his friend, Kusa replied, "no, he is my boss." We also openly talked about the rumors around Isaiah in our later meetings after our relationships became closer. Kusa laughed about those stories, "I know some people don't like Baba, but this is the way he chooses to live in." More or less, the weak tie with Isaiah constitutes the relational space of Gowon Estate placed in Kusa's life.

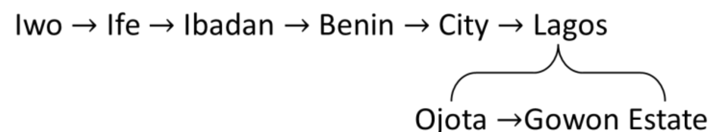

Figure 3.3 Kusa's Mobility Trajectory

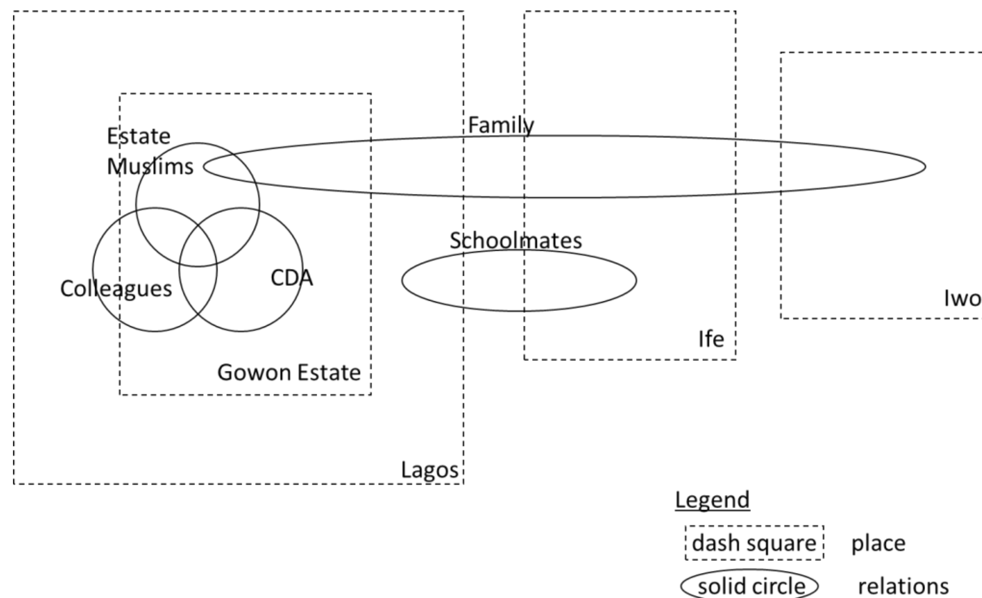

Figure 3.4 Placing Lagos and Gowon Estate Relationally in Kusa's life

By placing cities in Kusa's life trajectories, we can see different forms of social relations contributing to the meanings of places in life. Specifically in Gowon Estate of Lagos, these relations and meanings are interwoven to construct his lived space. This case study does not treat cities as static dots along migration trajectories as shown in figure 3.3 but delves into Kusa's ontological narratives of their social lives that involve cities and neighborhoods. Although the existing research has crafted reasonable categories of analysis to frame identification with African cities (de Bruijn et al. ed. 2001; Myers 2011), in this study I am adding the specificity of Lagos as a relational place in life. By examining the positionality of Lagos in the networks of social relations that infuse numerous ontological narratives (See figure 3.4), I discover that social relations formed in a city (e.g., Ile-Ife and Lagos) enable individuals to identify the more meanings of places than those of places without narratives of relationships (e.g., Ibadan and Benin

City). Furthermore, within the relational place of Lagos, Gowon Estate becomes a new relational place attached with more accounts of relations and identity than other places (e.g., Ojota). Within Gowon Estate, the residential block and the central mosque become a relational place again. In this sense, bundles of relations, meanings and identities are teased out as stripping the onions layer by layer. However, this metaphor does not mean that the outer relational places (Lagos) are more important than the inner ones (Gowon Estate), or vice versa. Instead, they are mutually constitutive of each other in one's life. The overlapped relationships, such as religious fellowship, workplace connection, and neighbor's collective, are all constituents of multiple relational places in life.

3.1.2 Lagos in Ada's Life Trajectory and Experience

In the same year as Kusa, Ada was born in a village in Okene, Kogi State. Unlike Kusa living in different cities between hometown and Lagos, Ada's migration experience was simple: due to his uncle's connection, he moved to work in Lagos when he was 26 years old. As a chairman of a Union Bank branch, his uncle arranged for Ada to work as a junior staff member in the bank. Among all the siblings in Kogi, Ada admitted that he was the lucky one to leave the hustling life behind. Upon arriving in Lagos, he was astonished by the social disorder during the Babagida regime and later 1993 general election. "Lagos was tough. People fight with each other. I tell myself: I must keep working. If I leave, I (will) lose my job." He first lived in the neighborhood of Ojuelegba and later was allocated an apartment in Gowon Estate from the Union Bank in 2000.

Although his life story seems to simply focus on a rural-urban migration trajectory that involves very few places, his life experience was found particularly rich when his marriage and family relations were revealed to me in later interviews. His first wife was a Hausa Muslim from Adamawa State. "I met her in Ojuelegba. I married her because she's a Muslim. I'm from a Muslim family." After marriage, his wife couldn't get pregnant for a long time. He wanted to divorce, but it was difficult to talk with a Hausa family about divorce by traveling to Adamawa many times, as he told me a lengthy story of how Hausa and Ebira peoples have different understandings of marriage and divorce. During that period, he had an affair with an Igbo, Christian woman Chioze[31] and they had their son Zack in 2000. However, the divorce had not been approved by the Hausa family and Chioze's family pressed Ada to marry her officially given that the son had already been born. That was the year when Ada got a flat from the Union Bank. So, Ada found a temporary make-do: he asked Chioze and son to live in the new apartment in Gowon Estate while still kept living with the first wife in his residence in Ojuelegba. He then commuted between two places in Lagos for five years until he finally divorced and married Chioze. In 2005, he moved to live with Chioze in Gowon Estate. Through these two sets of marriage and family relationships, Lagos is respectively placed together with Adamawa and Abuja, and more specifically between two neighborhoods, Ojuelegba and Gowon Estate.

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[31] However, Chioze told me a different story of this "affair". She insisted that Ada cheated her about having married and seduced to have sex with her. She complained continuously about how Ada was irresponsible for her and her family as Ada kept the strange relationships with two "wives" for such a long period. During those five years, Ada did not care about Zack so that Chioze had to work in a restaurant in Abuja for three years to provide for her son.

In Gowon Estate, as a Muslim, he was not socially connected with other Muslims in the central mosque, though he regularly prayed there and attended their social activities. Oftentimes, I saw Ada was a little silent among those Yoruba Muslims including Kusa. I initially assumed it was due to language barrier, but later realized that Ada was perceived by them not as a "real Muslim" because of his drinking behavior. Sure enough, Ada liked drinking beers in the neighborhood open-air bars, even during our interviews. In our reflective conversations, he admitted that he was aware of his drinking habit, particularly in this social space. "Muslims generally don't drink. If I drink, I won't go to mosque. I'll pray at home." Nevertheless, after I frequently conducted participant observation in the central mosque, I found that Ada's drinking might be a surface discursive practice that other Muslims used as an excuse. More profoundly, the power of performative ethnicity contributes to constructing borders between Yoruba and non-Yoruba Muslims (Ada and others) in the mosque. I will return to this point in chapter 5.

Without affinity groups in the mosque, Ada extended his social relations through his hometown association in Lagos. This association is organized on the basis of the local government area (LGA) in Okene. Its meeting has been held monthly for more than ten years. The number of attendees varies from ten to thirty. They rotated hosting roles in each member's house and contributed a sum of money to a mutual fund. Ada was active in this association and categorized a "hometown man" who was working for Chevron as his "good friend". He often invited this man to drink beers with him in Gowon Estate, where I also came across them at times. Apart from hometown networks, he did not keep close relationships with former Union Bank colleagues living in the Estate, though he

sometimes hung out with Patty, a Union Bank manager who handled his housing property. As a Catholic, Patty was able to drink with Ada.

Due to his career at the Union Bank, Ada seems to have settled in Lagos, by forming a family and owning an apartment. However, when closely examining his life trajectory and experience, I realized that Ada did not identify himself with Lagos and intended to return to the village in Kogi State. Unlike Kusa and other residents who purchased the apartment through the employment salaries, Ada could not afford the apartment alone because most of the salary savings were spent on two families (the Hausa's and Chioze's) and his alcohol consumption. It was recently that his son Zack paid off the mortgage via the scam money[32]. Ada never mentioned this to me but indicated that he would sell the apartment and go back to his village in the future. "Lagos is not my home. I came here for working." This kind of statement is very similar to those elders who were tired of city life and wanted to return to rural homes (See a South African case, Njwambe et al. 2019). If we did not place Lagos relationally in Ada's life, we might have a similar conclusion. However, knowing his struggles in marriage and family affairs as well as his social life in Gowon Estate, we can add that his disidentification with Lagos hinges on his social identity. It is also his core family bonds that made him rethink the possibility of returning to Kogi State. He reflected, "I marry from outside [meaning that he married Chioze who is not from his hometown]. They [Chioze and Zack] may not (be) used to living in my village." He still considered his wife's and son's situations, though his relationship with Chioze was not stable. He used to complain about Chioze's influence on Zack's religious belief, making his son turn to Christianity rather than Islam. However, Chioze also

[32] Zack is a scammer (yahoo boy) who engaged in online scams to obtain illegitimate money from Americans. We will learn more about his life story in chapter 7.

refuted this viewpoint in a separate interview that Ada set up a bad example of being a Muslim, so Zack himself did not want to follow his father. Such disputes happened many times in family life, according to Zack's narrative. Toward the end of fieldwork, Ada discussed his returning idea again with me, "Maybe I should go back. Marry another wife from my side [hometown] and live with her in the village."

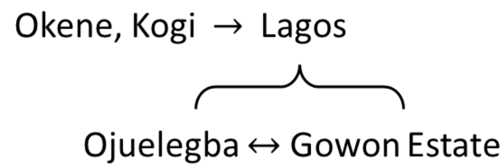

Figure 3.5 Ada's Mobility Trajectory

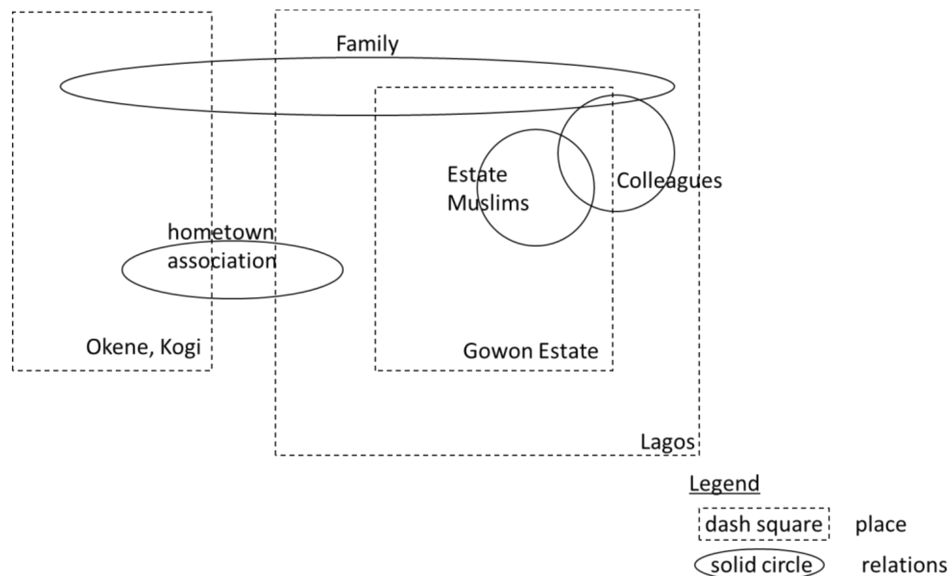

Figure 3.6 Placing Lagos and Gowon Estate Relationally in Ada's Life

Ada's dilemma reminds us that we cannot only examine one's mobility pattern between places in life trajectories; there are rich ontological narratives of socio-spatial

relations that constitute the relational place of Lagos and Gowon Estate in life. Superficially, Ada's migration is simple: from Okene to Lagos; within Lagos, from Ojuelegba to Gowon Estate (See figure 3.5). However, from the perspective of relational space, we understand that Lagos and Gowon Estate are not simple spots statically located along life trajectories but are places of meaningful, contested relationships. In Ada's life (See figure 3.6), family relations not only facilitate his migration and settling process but also complicate his identification with Lagos and hometown. Although owning an apartment in Gowon Estate, he did not feel at home, especially when it comes to estranged relationships with fellow Muslims and Chioze. His dilemma on returning to hometown and identifying with home place highly hinges on his struggles in family affairs, earlier on with the Hausa wife and later with Chioze and son Zack. Teasing out these relations from ontological narratives can help us understand urban identification as a multi-dimensional process.

Comparing Kusa's and Ada's life trajectories, we can see different migration experiences: Kusa literally migrated from a city to another with connections to the home village, while Ada migrated from a rural village to an urban center. In the studies of rural-urban mobility and migration in Africa (Baker and Aina eds. 1995; Geschiere and Gugler 1998; de Bruijin et al. eds. 2001), a common pattern is found that when rural hometowns lack opportunities to provide adequate livelihoods, individual residents tend to move to larger cities. In the processes of movement, they usually reconnect with family members, relatives or friends who have already settled in the cities. Based on this finding, scholars suggest that circular migration between the rural and the urban often takes place when

urban migrants encounter serious economic setbacks in the city and have to mobilize rural resources to sustain their livelihoods (Ferguson 1999; Potts 2010). We may foresee a circular migration in Ada's case or even in both given that Kusa has strong attachment to Ile-Ife, but a study of urban identification does not simply rely on placing cities as spots on their migration routes.

Indebted to the theory of relational space, the perspective of placing cities in life emphasizes how places are constituted by relations in life and how these cities are networked or bundled specifically through relations. From this perspective, we have discussed how Lagos and Gowon Estate are respectively placed in Kusa's and Ada's lives. In Kusa's narrative of life stories, Ile-Ife was seen as a home city and the social relations derived from this city facilitated his migration to Lagos where he managed to settle down by developing and expanding new sets of relations. In Ada's case, the seemingly simple migration from hometown to megacity is complicated by his family relations and social experiences in Gown Estate, and therefore he identified Lagos as a transient home without a sense of belonging. These are their narrative identities of relational places in life and can be related to multiple dimensions of urban identification to which I will return later.

3.1.3 Lagos in Mohamud's Life Trajectory: An Exception of Meaninglessness

In public narratives, the meaningfulness of Lagos is often highlighted for its modernity and diversity. In the ontological narratives presented above, Lagos is important to some extent for its positionality and relationality among other cities and hometowns in life

trajectories. In Kusa's and Ada's lives, its meaningfulness particularly manifests itself in their urban livelihood and social identities. Apart from the narratives of these experiences, there is a small number of informants, for various reasons, denying the existent meanings of Lagos in their lives by claiming "an unimportant place for me". This kind of narrative should not be neglected in a study of urban identification.

Still based on the social space of the central mosque, here I elaborate on Lagos in Mohamud's life. First, Lagos is "unimportant" in Mohamud's experiences which are mostly based in northern Nigeria, including his home state Plateau as well as Kano and Kaduna states where he spent plenty of his lifetime. He obtained a Bachelor of Science in geography at Bayero University Kano and obtained his master's degree from Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. After graduation, he started his career as a civil servant for the Nigerian Immigration Service. Due to strong aspiration to pursue a PhD, he wanted to stay in the North while enrolled in a PhD program at one of the universities in Kano, Kaduna or Plateau states. However, in 2015, he was appointed to work in Lagos. At the beginning, he was inclined to refuse, but his supervisor suggested he take the job because it might be beneficial to his career development. He accepted the suggestion and moved to work in the IT department of Immigration Service at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos. In this new working place, he complained that many colleagues were not focused on work but instead only sought bribes. "In Lagos, people are exposed to more opportunities of corruption," He said, "all of my colleagues have cars, but I never have. They feel surprised that I would spend 40k buying books, given that my salary is 140k a month." He did have a passion for studying, as he attended a distance learning program offered by a college in California. In December 2018, he

finally left Lagos after a three-year residence in Gowon Estate and enrolled in a PhD program in geography at Ahmadu Bello University.

Mohamud is a special informant who constantly complained about his encounters in Lagos and did not like to relate himself to any aspect of “life in Lagos”. Unlike Dick (flat 4) who is also from Plateau and has a resolution to return to the North, Mohamud did not establish his social network in Gowon Estate or even in Lagos as Kusa and Ada did. All his network was based on his workplace in the Nigerian Immigration system. The apartment in Gowon Estate was subleased from one of his colleagues. He lived there with his wife without children. As a Muslim, he sometimes prayed at the central mosque nearby, but he never engaged in any deep interactions with the fellow Muslims in the mosque which is dominated by Yorubas. Only the mosque treasurer Kudus heard of him, and even the active member Kusa did not claim to know Mohamud. Before I finished my fieldwork, Mohamud had already left Gowon Estate with his wife and decided to settle in either Kaduna or Plateau states. In any sense, his three-year experiences in Lagos cannot be compared to his attachment to the North.

From Mohamud’s life trajectory as well as an Igbo young man Price’s (Xiao 2021), we can see that a discourse of “unimportant” is used by them to place Lagos in life, illustrating a commonality in their urban identification processes: they lacked multi-layer interactions with people in the social environment of Gowon Estate, Lagos. Compared to Ada’s (estranged) relationships with other Muslims in the central mosque, Mohamud’s life does not have social connection with the mosque at all. Apart from lacking socially embedded relationships with people in Gowon Estate and in Lagos more generally, his past experiences in other places in the North also led to the disidentification with Lagos.

This still explains the necessity to place Lagos in life trajectories for understanding identification practices beyond Lagos.

3.1.4 Summary

Two in-depth case studies of Kusa's and Ada's life stories not only illuminate and complicate the patterns of rural-urban mobility and migration between home places and Lagos, but also provide a relational rethinking of Lagos and Gowon Estate in individual life trajectories. These examples are *not* presented to generalize any socio-spatial pattern associated with any categories of identity, as the interpretations are also supplemented by Mohamud's story in which Lagos was identified as meaningless. What matters is the narrative identity performed in the life stories where Lagos is not just identified through the livelihood lens by being attached to categories of "settle-down" or "transient". More profoundly, the vivid accounts of three cases inform us that urban identification should be approached relationally.

The case studies of individual life trajectories intersecting through the same social space of Gowon Estate interrogate the categories of place as a fixed, bounded, and always "important" place for its residents. Situated differently in the space of the central mosque, Kusa, Ada, and Mohamud had very different identification practices. The selection of three cases demonstrates the importance of sociality in one's urban identification processes. Moreover, Ada's feeling of exclusion in the central mosque and Mohamud's lack of participation in this Yoruba-dominated social space led me to further explore what is behind narrative identities. Identification and differentiation cannot be simply

attributed to a single individual behavior, such as drinking in Ada's case. To further understand Ada's and other people's identification in the Yoruba-dominated space, not only in the central mosque but also more broadly in Lagos, a performative lens is needed and will be elaborated in chapter 6 and 7.

By placing Lagos in life trajectories, this dissertation sheds light on the sheer variety of the meanings this metropolis has in the lives of residents of an urban neighborhood. This requires detailed examination of how individuals conceptually and practically "place" Lagos among other places, including not only their hometowns but also other regional urban centers. Because "placing" is a perspective that takes the researched subjects" agency seriously, this dissertation advocates a methodology that inductively interprets the meanings of living in cities after assembling particular residents' full storylines, allowing the specific meanings of the city to emerge from this holistic interpretation.

However, only placing Lagos in life trajectories is not enough for studying urban identification, because those ontological narratives of place-identity, either with or against Lagos, are just performances and representations of identity. Apart from subjects' agency of placing, cities are also unintentionally placed through everyday practices and discourses beyond storytelling. This performative dimension of urban identity should not be ignored but specifically examined through an ethnography of socio-spatial practices. In doing so, we "put space back into relation to place in a way that also retains the distinction between them" (Malpas 2012: 227). Furthermore, there is a need to insert temporality into the perspective of placing Lagos in life. Thinking time-space together has been a key tradition in human geography (Massey 1999; 2005; Harvey 1999; 2006;

May and Thrift 2003; Crang 2005). However, Merriman (2012) reminds us of flaws of a prior, primordial, foundational conception of space-time when thinking about the unfolding of events. Accordingly, I propose a time-narration approach to further delving into ontological narratives of how events unfold along individual life trajectories.

3.2 Telling Life Stories: Time-Narration on Becoming "Settled"

Time-narration refers to the temporalities embedded in how informants tell their life stories. Paying attention to time-narration in collecting life stories, we can flesh out the nuances among individuals whose life events unfold differently. After teasing out how Lagos is placed in informants' life narratives, we have understood that Lagos is not simply a bounded city where urban migrants from various parts of Nigeria move to settle down in different times of the city's modernization and diversification processes. Lagos is a relational place that is constantly contingent on the stretched-out socio-spatial trajectories of individual residents, regardless of whether their physical presences in the city are temporary or permanent. To insert the temporal aspect of placing Lagos in life, I will discuss how examining time-narration practices informs us of the generational differences in urban identification processes.

Indebted to Grosz's (1999) conception of time and Ricoeur's (1984) conception of time and narrative, this section will demonstrate that time-narration by the older and the younger generations carries different possibilities of becoming in the urban fabric of Lagos. Compared to "being" that underlines duration of a certain state, "becoming" implies relatively radical change from one state to a new status or identity (Grosz 1999).

In this case, subjects can become “Lagosians” or any status closely attached to Lagos. However, this does not mean that every city resident is on the way to gain a specific identity or status. Grosz (1999:47) has suggested that time during transitions is “a mode of stretching, protraction, which provides the very conditions of becoming, however faltering they may be”. In light of this idea, I suggest exploring in which *conditions*, in other words, in which modes of time are a discourse of becoming being invoked or eroded with respect to specific places and spaces in the city (particularly the neighborhood of Gowon Estate).

To do so, I propose an idea of time-narration, referring to a mundane practice in the life-story interviews where narrators tell the stories with or without consciousness of temporalities in different situations. Ricoeur (1984: 52) argues, time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence. Indebted to this classic account of time and narrative, I have conducted a posterior analysis of my informants’ time-narration practices, through which I seek to interpret narratives of the self in certain social contexts where the research subjects can “envisage subjectivity itself as temporality” (Mbembe, 2001: 15). As my research is not simply based on a structured format of life-story interviews but extends to the daily conversations in which life stories were told or retold in different ways, I observe that time-narration practices are made differently among younger and older generations.

In African studies literature, the idea that generation refers to groups and categories of people *belonging to* a certain period of time, social category, or position in a descent line with specific rules and conventions has been widely interrogated (See Whyte et al. 2008).

I agree with these scholars that generation should be viewed and studied through inter-subjectivity, relatedness, and a sense of creativity and agency. In this vein, the differences between the elder and the younger generations in Lagos do not hinge on age (Cole and Durham, 2007: 13-18; Thieme, 2010) but on progress of becoming settled. Specifically in this section, I will interpret how becoming "settled" is differentially manifested across generations among my informants who engaged in time-narration when telling life stories.

Table 3.1 The First Set of Life Stories

	Ogaba, age 57 Cross River	**Adewunmi, age 68 Oyo**	**Dylan, age 41 Delta**	**Jacob's mother, Delta**
Came in Lagos	1980	1965	2008	1993
Moved to Gowon Estate	1992	2000	2011	1993
Employment (Before)	A state-owned publisher	Nigerian Army	A private engineering company (also now)	Housewife before Jacob's father died
Livelihood (now)	Restaurant, CDA treasurer	Grocery, CDA chairman	Corporate employee	Trader selling peanuts
Children	Four	Four	Three	Four

Here, I choose to present eight people's life stories in six families to analyze the differences and similarities in time-narration practices in accounts of becoming "settled" in Lagos. I do not claim that these eight people represent "Lagosians". Nor do they represent all the informants I met in Gowon Estate, but my deep involvement with their family life and social networks allows me a better understanding of their narratives. In each family, I have conducted in-depth interviews with at least two family members[33],

[33] Other family members not listed in the tables include Ogaba's eldest son Fred, Adewunmi's youngest son, Dylan's wife Lucy, Tom's girlfriend Ellen, Jacob's mother, and Tope's father.

but here I just present two pairs (Ogaba and his daughter; Jacob and his mother). Below, I will divide eight cases into two sets, four in each set, for the sake of comparative interpretation[34].

Ogaba was born and grew up in Obutu, the northern region of Cross River state. After graduating from a Polytechnic in Calabar, the capital city of Cross River, he worked as a teacher in a secondary school. One day in 1980, he saw a job advertisement in the newspaper. He then mailed an application form to the employer, a state-owned publisher in Lagos. He was hired and worked there until his retirement in 2010. In 1992, he was allocated an apartment in Gowon Estate through his employer and later purchased it during the privatization era. In Gowon Estate, he acted as the Central CDA treasurer, while running a restaurant with his wife in the neighborhood after 2009.

Adewunmi is from Oyo state. After finishing his secondary education in 1965, he moved to Lagos with his family. In 1967, Nigerian civil war broke out. Those who joined the army in his neighborhood became privileged, which stimulated him to join the army in 1968. After the war ended in 1970, he was transferred among many places in Nigeria, but his family has been based in the Ojo barracks in Lagos. Before retiring in 2008, he was allocated an apartment in Gowon Estate in 2000 and has lived there ever since. He ran a grocery shop with his wife near his apartment. He also has been engaging in community affairs and was elected as a chairman of Northern CDA in 2018.

Dylan is the eldest son in his family from Delta state. He attended schools late because he hustled for small businesses in his hometown to provide for his family. He

[34] These eight cases from six families are introduced in six paragraphs. In case readers may get lost in vast details in the later parts of dissertation, presenting their short biographies helps to construct full images of these key informants' lives.

was finally admitted to Enugu State University and graduated when he was 29. He came to Lagos for employment in March 2008. He tried different kinds of work, such as insurance sales and teaching, but all the jobs were short-term contracts. Finally, he got a position at an engineering company in 2010 and has worked there since then. In the same year, he got married to his former university classmate Lucy. In December 2011, he rented a two-bedroom apartment and moved with his family to Gowon Estate.

Jacob's mother is from Isoko region in Delta State. She met her husband in Delta when he was appointed as a policeman there. When her husband was transferred to Lagos and was allocated an apartment in Gowon Estate in 1993, the whole family moved in. She gave birth to a daughter and three sons, among whom Jacob is the second. Her husband was shot during a mission and died from injury in the Ikeja hospital. Thus, they moved out from Gowon Estate to a nearby cheaper neighborhood, Jakande Estate, which was a Lagos State Housing scheme. Her first son is a teacher and helped her take care of family. Currently, she only sells peanuts occasionally in the neighborhood.

Table 3.2 The Second Set of Life Stories

	Tom, age 29 Akwa Ibom	**Jacob, age 32 Rivers**	**Tope, age 34 Ondo**	**Mary, age 28, Cross River**
Came to Lagos	2005	1993	Born in Lagos	Born in Lagos
Moved to Gowon Estate	2009	1993	1985	1992
Moved out of Gowon Estate	N/A	2004	2014	N/A
The "significant" year	2007: robbed in Lagos	2002: father died	2012: dropped out from a Polytechnic	2018: got a formal employment
Livelihood	Selling recharge cards	Part-time security personnel	Sales & Church instrument playing	A film distribution company

Tom was born as one of seven children in East Nigeria. As his mother passed away early, he was raised by one of his elder sisters. He graduated from secondary school in 2003 but didn't continue pursuing higher education. In 2005, he came to look for jobs in Lagos. He first worked in a beverage company in 2006 but was let go because of downsizing which was due, in his mind, to discrimination related to his minority identity. Then, he opened a shop selling recharge cards and phone accessories in Ojo. However, he was attacked by robbers twice in 2007, which made him decide to leave for another residence and workplace. He initially stayed with his elder brother in Gowon Estate and later rented an apartment nearby. He continued doing the same business in the neighborhood.

Jacob was born in Delta state and moved to Lagos when he was six years old. His father was a policeman and was allocated an apartment in Gowon Estate in 1993. He attended primary and secondary schools in the neighborhood. In 2002, his father's death completely changed his family's life. Losing the position in the Police system forced them to leave the subsidized apartment in Gowon Estate. They moved to a cheaper apartment in the Ipaja area. To sustain the livelihood and to rear all the children, his mother worked as a petty trader in various markets. Due to lack of financial support, Jacob did not continue studying. He began to work as a fitness trainer and later became a professional security guard. This flexible job completely depends on the contracts with different event organizers.

Tope was born as one of eight children in Ebute Metta of Lagos and moved to Gowon Estate just after his birth. His father served for the Nigerian police, so they got an apartment as Jacob's family did. After completing primary and secondary education in

the area, he went to study in Ogun State Polytechnic. At the end of the second year, his father could not afford his tuition fee, so Tope had to drop out. This was because his father retired and decided to build a house in a rural area of Ogun state. He and all his siblings moved out of Gowon Estate to live on their own. Tope tried many kinds of temporary jobs, but he never secured a stable position. At the time of his life-story interview, he worked as a guitar player in choirs for different churches in Lagos.

Ogaba's daughter Mary was born in 1991 and was raised in Gowon Estate. After graduating from secondary school, she went to study at the University of Calabar. She spent five years in university due to strikes on and off. Since returning to Lagos in 2014, she has been struggling with underemployment for two years. During that period, she learned sewing techniques from a tailor and temporarily worked in a workshop on 34 road in Gowon Estate. Due to her university friend's referral, she got a part-time job at a film distribution company in Lagos in 2016 and eventually acquired a full-time position in 2018.

According to the summary of eight informants' lived experiences, the first set of people are all married, which I tentatively call "the elder" who have settled down as they claimed, while the younger in the second set are unmarried and unsettled. By examining the ways of narrating life stories, I discover that both groups rarely refer to historical moments. In public narratives of Nigeria's history, time is pregiven, associated with transitions from one political regime to another (Falola and Heaton 2008). The major knots in this time-frame include national independence (1960), the civil war (1967-1970), the second Republic (1979-1983), moving the capital from Lagos to Abuja (1991), the

return of democratic elections (1999 and onwards), and Fashola's governance of Lagos (2007-2015). Only Adewunmi mentioned the civil war in his narrative, which relates to his decision on becoming a soldier. Still, political events are not significantly mentioned by these informants. This does not mean that historical and political discourses are not important in their minds; instead, people are very willing to talk about histories and politics in everyday conversations. Nevertheless, the legacies of General Yakubu Gowon, as manifested in this estate's name, were seldom referred to by my informants (Kusa is an exception). Generally speaking, in their narratives of life stories, political and historical discourses were largely dismissed.

To understand the mundane meanings of time-narration practices, I asked them to elaborate on significant events in their lives. Over the course of fieldwork, we discussed the "turning points" in their life trajectories back and forth. Geographers who study life courses of (transnational) migrants have indicated that life may not turn due to one specific event but gradually change in the socio-spatial conjuncture of multiple vital events (Johnson-hanks 2002; Carling 2017), but in this research I particularly paid attention to *how* they narrated those events in *which* periods of time, thereby exploring patterns of time-narration that illuminates generational differences.

For those four elders, time was narrated in active ways—in *that* year, "I(me) *did* certain things[35]". In retrospect, they found that these things have changed their lives. For instance, in 1968, Adewunmi enlisted and became a lifetime soldier; in 1980, Ogaba successfully got a job which made him migrate to Lagos from Cross River; in 2010,

[35] In Nigerian/Lagos pidgin English, there is not any change from present to past tense; some modifiers (e.g., de, def, det) may be added before verbs to indicate the past tense (See Mowarin 2008). To simplify the writing, here I translate all the Pidgin expressions into a transformed verb "did". Also, "I" and "me" are interchangeable in local contexts.

Dylan finally got a position with a stable income so that he could afford a wedding and raise children. These years are also meaningful in Nigerian politics: 1968 is in the time of Nigerian civil war that made the ethnic division deeper (Falola and Heaton 2008); 1980 signifies the end of the oil boom and the beginning of economic decline in the second republic (Apter 2005); 2010 is in the middle of Fashola's regime in which urbanization and modernization of Lagos were expedited (Adama 2018). Jacob's mother did not stress the time of her husband's death which highly impacted Jacob's life experience but elaborated on how a church member helped her overcome the hardship. Regardless of public narratives of time, these narrators actively present their lived experiences within their personal time-frames.

For the younger people, time was narrated in more passive ways—something happened in *that* year, so "I(me) *did/had to/must* do certain things". Compared to the elders who actively inserted "I(me)" in the narratives of events in the years, these youngsters emphasized the events in specific years before elaborating on how their lives were changed accordingly. For instance, the robbery in 2007 made Tom move to this "more secure" neighborhood, though some older residents did not think the environment was secure due to their concerns with "Estate boys". The accident in 2002 made Jacob's family lose their backbone that economically supported the whole family life. In contrast to his mother's plain tone, Jacob said more emotionally, "we are faced with another life entirely. Almost all of us [four children] were at school, my mother was like both mother and father--the only person in the family." Tope's hustling life is very typical among urban youth in Africa who struggle with unemployment (Honwana 2012). Giving up higher education in 2012 pushed him to be independent but also drove him into endless

job-hunting and an unstable make-do livelihood in the city. Mary finally got a corporate position in 2016 after years delayed by university strikes and extensive "boring" (in her words) time at home during underemployment. All these years in their narration do not link up to any public narratives of time but make sense in their lived experiences. However, this way of time-narration by young people does not mean that time does not "take an active part" (Grosz 1999: 4) nor denies urban subjectivity in personal temporalities (Mbembe 2001). In fact, the passive tones do not dismiss the active practices of coping strategies— moving for a new location (Tom) or trying various kinds of livelihood in the city (Jacob, Tope, and Mary).

By comparing two sets of life stories, the difference in time-narration practices is related to the temporality of managing their livelihood—in their words, the timing of "settling down". In the case study of the eight people's time-narration, the elders' narratives of the present overlay with the past, while the younger's retrospect of the "significant" year in the past relates to the passive narration of the present. The nuances of time-narration practices therefore embody subjective juxtaposition of the past, the present and the future while one might overlay, penetrate, and envelop another (Mbembe 2001:15; Goldstone & Obarrio 2018: 8-16). In the narrative aspect of livelihood, the elders have passed the liminal time of "settling down", while the young, even though only a few years younger (comparing Tope to Dylan), are still managing to set up (not merely waiting for) the time of settling down. This exactly echoes Cole's (2011) dialectic interpretation of generation in Africa, thereby paving a path to further discuss the generational differences of practices of home making, unmaking, and remaking in the next chapter.

As illustrated across two sets of life stories, the time-narration practices hinge on the processes of becoming "settled"—a dynamic status that is often associated with home-making that involves obtaining sustainable employment, getting married and renting (instead of buying) a residential space for the core family in Lagos. Not only in Africa, the framing of settling down in the existing literature often focuses on the transitions from one life phase to another in youth's becoming (Hoolachan et al. 2017) or from one place to another in migration processes (Ni Laoire 2008). This framing of settling down is based on a linear line, progressing from one stage to another, but the focus here is not what they have or have not done at certain stages. Their narratives of settling down are filled with repetitive discursive practices, "potentially generative, creative and productive, as well as potentially destabilising" (Harris et al. 2020: 9).

According to my informants' narratives, the turning point of becoming "settled" *can* appear when a young man gets a stable and reliable position so that he could afford bride gifts, a decent wedding, independent housing (usually rent), and more importantly, being able to support children. For a young woman, however, marriage may be a turning point in her life, but employment could make her pursue a "better" life. In Mary's case, after her temporary position was formalized in 2018, she preferred meeting "better men" (in her words) at work and complained about those underemployed youth—"Estate boys"—in the neighborhood, whom she actually mingled with before but then differentiated herself from.

For most young men and women, becoming "settled" is difficult, even if a job is secured or a wedding is held, as they have to face many kinds of uncertainty; becoming "unsettled" is more common as an ongoing, open-ended process. Therefore, in everyday

conversations, I often heard Jacob and Tope saying "I'm not settled" to explain they do not want to engage in a serious relationship and to get married. This explanation does not simply refer to unstable livelihood but implies a performative nature of urban identity, as becoming "settled" is not necessarily related to becoming "urban" (Nguyen et al. 2012). Therefore, "unsettling" is an important status to explore in the study of urban identification among Estate boys in chapter 5.

In sum, this interpretation of time-narration practices through analyzing life stories of key informants demonstrates the significance of narrative nuances in understanding urban identification processes that span time—the time not just framed through public narratives of Lagos and Nigeria but reified through individual experiences encompassing the past, present and future in and beyond Lagos. This interpretation also leads to a question to be examined: if generational difference is a dialectical construct (as Cole and others suggest) that hinges on the timing of settling down and making home, how does "home" become an important dimension of (dis)identification with Lagos across generations?

3.3 Concluding Remarks

By employing the concept of relational space, I propose a perspective of placing cities in life to study urban identification. Based on life-story interviews with three Muslim informants whose life trajectories intersect at the same mosque, this study emphasizes the subject-ontology in interpreting their narrative identities. By conceptualizing Lagos and Gowon Estate as relational places in their lives, I showcase how Lagos and Gowon are

constituted by webs of social relations and are involved with extended social relations. Superficially, three selected life stories demonstrate a diversity of narrative identities of Lagos, namely as a settle-down place, a transient home, and an unimportant place. However, when delving into the relationality of Lagos and Gowon Estate in Kusa's and Ada's lives, I suggest that these narrative identities are very dynamic and hinge on the ways in which individual socio-spatial relations are bundling. Since the shared space of the central mosque in Gowon Estate is mainly frequented by Yoruba Muslims, the difference among their positionality and social experiences in the neighborhood and city life suggests that we should further explore what is behind narrative identities—the power relationships between Yoruba and non-Yoruba residents in the relational spaces.

Moreover, when placing Lagos in life, a temporal dimension is implicated in this perspective of relational space. Due to the subject-ontology I advocate, the way I approach time is to understand how time is narrated by individual subjects in telling their life stories. Specifically, the time-narration on "becoming settled" --one of major concerns in my informants' life trajectories--is revealed differently between the older generation who claim to be "settled" and the younger generation who are in the process of settling. The difference performatively manifests between the active tones in elders' narration and the passive tones in youths' narration. This difference illustrates that placing Lagos in life is not sufficient to shed light on the complexity of urban identification, because it does not attend to the performativity of their identities through discursive practices in multiple places over the time. The narration on becoming settled directs us to further the generational difference of urban identification.

Chapter 4 Feeling at Home by (Re)making It in Lagos and Gowon Estate: Urban Identification between Generations

(Yoruba lyrics)

Ko ma sibi ti mo le f'ori le, ko si o, a f 'Eko ile

Bi mo ba rajo lo London o, ma tun pada s'eko ile

Bi mo ba rajo lo New York o, ma tun pada s'eko ile

Eko o, Eko ile

(English translation)

There is nowhere I can head to, nowhere else, but Lagos home

If I travel to London, I will return to Lagos home

If I travel to New York, I will return to Lagos home

Lagos, Lagos home

------*"Eko Ile", by Fela Kuti, 1973*

In this popular and classic song, Lagos is associated with ideas of home. For Fela, Lagos, especially his residence called "shrine" in Ikeja, is practically his home in his music career, but do people who reside in Lagos feel at home as Fela sang? Although the answer may vary, Lagos as home has been widely debated. Reviewing both public and ontological narratives of "life in Lagos", I found that discourses on home are not merely focused on Lagos as a Yoruba home (as the Yoruba lyrics presented). To a large extent, life-story narratives elaborate on practices of making home in Lagos and senses of feeling

at home in Lagos. The former does not necessarily lead to the latter, but they are entangled in the processes of urban identification.

Making home is typically considered as an “underlying goal of housing processes” (Dayaratne & Kellett 2008: 55) and particularly in African contexts as constructing compound houses for a family (Pellow 2018). In terms of making home in Lagos, according to informants’ ontological narratives, the superficial meaning points to living life in Lagos. Home making, however, is more than constructing a house and living life in a bounding place; it is a process of establishing connections with others (family, community, and society) and creating a sense of belonging as a part of rather than separate from them (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 14-15).

Built on Blunt and Dowling’s (2006) pioneering monograph on the geography of home, poststructuralist geographers further embrace the idea of “unbounding” home in contrast with treating home as a bounding place. This idea of “unbounding” refers to the performative dimensions of homemaking through which home is “made rather than given, performed rather than secured” (Cook et al 2016: 6). In other words, home is never a complete project, and homemaking is never a completed endeavor but involves various processes of un-making and re-making (Baxter and Brickell 2014: 135-136). Therefore, home, as relational space (Massey 1999; Murdoch 2006), is constantly in the making and unmaking through many everyday socio-spatial discourses and practices.

From this perspective, when examining the practices of home making, unmaking, and remaking in Lagos and Gowon Estate, I suggest that the sense of feeling at home should be taken into account, because both practices and feelings contribute to urban identification. The interconnection between home and identity has been widely noted by

geographers with particular attention paid to how "ideas of home invoke a sense of place, belonging or alienation that is intimately tied to a sense of self" (Blunt 2014: 73). In the vein of feminist and postcolonial theories, cultural geographers have explored the complex and contested spatialities of home. These spatialities become important in theorizing identity in relation to the politics of place and social differences in terms of gender, sexuality, race, class, etc. (e.g., Thompson and Tyagi eds. 1996; Pratt 1998).

To add that, I argue that the performative thinking of "unbounding" home-(un)making can deepen our understanding of the interconnection between home and identity by paying attention to feeling at home. As Alam et al. (2020) have shown in their study of informal homes of rural female migrants in urban Bangladesh, there are many subtractive or reverse processes through which material construction and/or imaginations of home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently deconstructed. Through the entangled home making and unmaking practices as illustrated in the case of Bangladesh as well as in this study, urban identification unfolds through both identification and disidentification with the city (Lagos) as "home" and the urban place (Gowon Estate) that people inhabit and feel as "home". In this sense, the performative conception of sticky space, the performative space saturated with emotions (Laketa 2018; or termed as stickiness of emotions, see Ahmed 2004; Laliberté and Schurr 2016), works well to understand Estate boys' residential practices in and out of Gowon Estate.

To better understand how the younger generation (Estate boys) performatively feels at home in the urban place of Gowon Estate, I suggest we should "zoom out" to explore how both older and younger generations feel at home by making, unmaking, and remaking home. The comparative interpretation not only illustrates generational

differences but also contextualizes the youth identification in a diverse urban geography. A generational difference has been illuminated in the study of time-narration on the processes of settling down which involves home making. In this vein, I will further examine how different practices of home (un)making constantly (re)produce feelings of home, thereby entailing different identifications with the city and the neighborhood. This home-related generational difference of urban identification is rarely examined in the existing literature on home and identity (Blunt 2003; also see the review, Blunt and Sheringham 2019). Not only filling this gap, it usefully provides a holistic picture of youths' home-related place-identity formation, therefore paving a way to interpret the making of "Estate boys" in chapter 5.

In this chapter, I will delve into how urban identification is differentially enacted among the older and the younger generations through their everyday discursive practices of home along their life trajectories. According to the subject-ontology, the city and the neighborhood are relationally placed in life, but for the sake of analysis, I will respectively discuss Lagos as home and Gowon Estate as home in their urban identification processes, by showing how home means different things to urban subjects when referring to city life and neighborhood space. In each part, I will include how emotions are embodied in case studies of the elders' and the youths' lived experiences, as home is being made as well as being felt. In the end, I will add an interpretation of hometown in home-making practices, complementing the generational difference of urban identification.

4.1 Home Making, Unmaking, and Remaking in Lagos

Identifying a city as home hinges on making a home in the city and feeling attached to this city as a home, as the city is regarded as "a distinctive location of dwelling, belonging and attachment" (Blunt & Bonnerjee 2013: 221). In addition to domestic homemaking (Tolia-Kelly 2004; Boccagni 2014) and the nation as home or "homeland" (Crang 1999; Stead 2015), the framing of "city as home" constitutes the meso dimension of geographies of home, a dimension which consider memories, ideas and practices that revolve around the city as home (Blunt and Sheringham 2019). Regarding the linkage between home and identity, what is underexplored in this vein lies in how a specific city—Lagos for instance—is made or unmade as home, in which urban identity is formed, eroded, or constantly negotiated through various home making, unmaking and remaking practices.

Making home in Lagos is a complicated process that involves multiple possibilities of becoming. Migrating from hometowns to Lagos through different trajectories, as we have learned (in chapter 3.1), does not mean that urban migrants intend to settle in Lagos, nor mean that they treat Lagos as a transient home for further migration. Since Lagos is a relational place in individual life trajectories, making home in Lagos is not simply a linear process of settling down (becoming settled) but also encompasses the ways in which "home" is imagined and practiced socially and spatially. In this sense, making a home in Lagos may never be "completed" but will constantly be negotiated with the possibility of unmaking a home in the city which may ultimately result in leaving with family for another city. To understand how this interplay between making and unmaking

can affect identification with or against Lagos, I will conduct case studies of an elder's and a youth's ontological narratives of lived experiences, in order to comparatively interpret the generational differences of feeling at home in urban identification processes.

4.1.1 The Elder's Home Making

Patty, a 50-year-old man, migrated from an Idoma village in Benue state to Lagos in 1986 after he finished his secondary education. Unlike those who place their hometown as a significant place in circular migration, Patty took his hometown lightly: "My family is no longer there. Even when I go back, I don't know many people." (Oct 20, 2018). During our conversation in Patty's living room, Obotu, a housing agent in Gowon Estate, came in and asked him questions in the Idoma language, but he replied in English. Later Patty explained to me that someone planned to buy an apartment through Obotu, and Obotu wanted to check the document of that apartment. "I have all the documents of Union Bank apartments. That's why he asked." Patty said proudly. It was possible that Patty performed speaking English in front of Obotu by considering my presence, but after knowing his experience of making home in Lagos and observing his multiple interactions with his hometown fellows like Obotu and his former colleague Ada, it occurred to me that his urban identification is performatively enacted through his practical and ideal construction of a new "home" in Lagos.

When he first came to Lagos in the 1980s, he relied on a two-person network to look for employment opportunities. One was his "village man" (in his words) who was a driver for a government agency. The driver took him to a Hausa man who asked him if he

could speak English. Without realizing what this question implied, he replied "yes". However, the Hausa man argued that this job was not for an educated man and therefore declined Patty. "I regret not pretending. I was so desperate for a job then." He reflected. Afterwards, he turned to another connection, his brother-in-law who introduced him to an hourly position at the Ikoyi Club—a golf club constructed by British colonizers that later became a social space for high-status Nigerians and foreign expatriates. Patty worked as an unpaid caddy relying on gratuities.

While these ethnic relationships with his "village man" and brother-in-law could not help him settle down, his encounter with a banker at Ikoyi Club changed his life trajectory. In 1990 when he worked at the golf course, he came across the banker who was the father of a teenager he used to tutor for a short period. Patty clearly remembered the encounter, "We greeted and he was surprised I had to do this work. He asked me if I have any (educational) diploma. I was embarrassed to tell him (I have) only a secondary school diploma. He asked me to bring it for (an) interview at his bank." When Patty visited the bank, he surprisingly found that the man was actually the chairman of that branch of Union Bank. Given this special connection, Patty was eventually hired as a personal assistant and gradually became a professional banker. In retrospect, he admitted that this Edo man's help changed his life and provided the means for him to settle in Lagos.

His homemaking underwent an uneasy trajectory along with the change of livelihood. When he first came to Lagos, he lived alone in Maroko, one of the slum neighborhoods portrayed in the Nigerian novel "Graceland" (see chapter 1.3). Recalling that experience, he said, "when it was raining, my place flooded. As a young boy [18 years old in 1986], I

cried". That was the moment he felt "homeless", a stranger in the city. When he "luckily" joined the Union Bank in 1990, he moved to Orile, an average neighborhood close to the transport hub Mile 2. After applying for a subsidized staff apartment for a long time, he was finally allocated a two-bedroom apartment in Gowon Estate in 2002. Compared to other government agencies' earlier privatization procedures, Union Bank started selling their three blocks of apartments in Gowon Estate in 2007[36]. Patty became the person in charge of this procedure, so that he was able to have those housing property documents that Obotu asked for. Due to this important position, he upgraded his home by moving from a two-bedroom (valued 1.2 million naira) to a three-bedroom apartment (valued 1.8 million naira). He had paid a certain amount and would repay the rest through monthly deductions from his salary at Union Bank. At the time we met, Patty had become a member of the "upper class" among his colleagues and neighbors in the Estate, though far from reaching the social status of his boss— "the Edo man"—his very ethnic way of calling his boss. "I never belong to them", Patty indicated that he never visited his house and their relationship was restricted to work.

Home-making experiences in Patty's life trajectory manifest the formation of class consciousness in the society of Lagos. Scholars have discovered the interconnection between class identities and housing practices (Benson and Jackson 2017), and Patty's experience informs us of his identification with the city as home, which is understudied in this interconnection. "Home" for him no longer refers to the village where he was born but the apartment that he resides in. Living in this three-bedroom apartment demonstrates

[36] In the Estate, there were four blocks (64 households) purchased by Union Bank in the 1990s. This is a case where housing properties were not owned by government agencies. Union Bank then allocated these apartments to some of their junior staff.

his social mobility from a “young boy” to a professional banker. This sense of belonging and pride is heightened when his role of managing the properties of Union Bank in this neighborhood was expressed to me after the conversation with Obotu. Although he never directly commented on “life in Lagos”, his urban identification with Lagos has been performatively enacted through his class consciousness among his hometown fellows like Obotu.

I later realized that Patty still had family members in the village in Benue State. In our later conversation on Feb 18, 2019, he told me that he married a woman from his hometown in 2001 and they held a wedding both in St Joseph Church in Gowon Estate and in his village. Among five siblings, he was the only one living in Lagos. This information was not revealed to me on Oct 20, 2018, when Obotu visited him. His saying “my family is no longer there” implies that his core family has left the village and settled in Lagos. Also, unlike Ogaba and others who sent their children to enroll in the universities in home states (See chapter 6.1), Patty clearly indicated that he wished his eldest son, who had just graduated from his secondary school, to study in Lagos State University rather than any place in Benue state. In his everyday life, ethnicity is performed in his interactions with Idoma fellows, but his urban identification overshadows the enactment of ethnic identification, particularly through the performance of class consciousness in the home-making process. In many ways, Lagos is becoming his “home”, the idea that he also wanted to convey to his next generation.

4.1.2 Youth's Home Unmaking and Remaking

Eweje, a 33-year-old young man, largely underwent the process of home-unmaking in his hustling life in Lagos and elsewhere. Baxter and Brickell (2014: 135) indicate that home unmaking is experienced by all home dwellers at some point in their housing biographies, including but not limited to forced evictions, homelessness, moving and leaving home, marital breakdown, domestic violence, and death. As I suggested earlier, home making and unmaking are integrative processes in one's life trajectory, but for unemployed hustling youth in Lagos, home-unmaking are more likely experienced, manifesting in the time-narration of "turning points" or "the significant year" in the lives of Tom (violent attack and moving home), Jacob (father's death) and Tope (eviction).

Eweje was also one of them: his life is unstably dynamic among homemaking, unmaking, and remaking in and out of Lagos. He was born in 1985 in Maroko, the place where Patty suffered from home flooding when first migrating to Lagos. His parents were separated during his childhood[37]. As his father worked as a junior staff member at the Department of State Security (DSS), they were allocated an apartment in Gowon Estate in 2002. Like many first-generation residents working for military-related agencies (Adewunmi, Hector, Micky etc.) in the neighborhood, his father's life was mobile. Being the only parent in the family, his father often took the children with him during relocation. Eweje described his childhood lifestyle as "moving, moving, moving". Moreover, his sense of feeling at home was further undermined on the occasion of his father's death. "2012 is a year of miserable [misery]. Dad got sick. His legs can't move

[37] He told me a lengthy story the other day about how his father led him to look for his mother in Rivers State, whom he was disappointed by and even hated at one time.

due to sickness, so he had to leave DSS. Dad is my everything. Things are just upside down. In 2013, February, I lost him." Eweje became emotional and almost cried when saying this. After calming down, he continued to tell subsequent happenings. Without his father's income to pay for the apartment that DSS was privatizing, he and his siblings were evicted from the apartment in Gowon Estate and sent to live with different relatives. He stayed with his uncle in a lower-class neighborhood in Ikotun, Lagos but left his uncle's home due to their estranged relationship. He came back to stay with his former neighbor in Gowon Estate for a period before he rented a small room in a compound near the Estate. Although his father had some savings, his aunt spent the money finishing the construction of his family house—the only legacy of his father—in a village near Port Harcourt, which Eweje had never been to and did not recognize as his home place.

Eweje's experience of home-unmaking results from many events in his life trajectory, through which his identification with home has always been unstable. Massey (1992: 14) suggests, "the identity of home derives precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it". I would add that Eweje's disidentification with home also hinges on his ever-changing open-ended relationships with people around him. The closest relationship with his father ended abruptly, giving rise to fewer communications with other siblings who were sent to live with different relatives in and out of Lagos. Although his father tried to make a home out of the transient career life by constructing a family house in Rivers State, none of the younger generation, including Eweje, migrated to live there. Moreover, when discussing close friendships while we drank beer on Oct 11, 2018, he recalled four friends, none of whom he still had contact with.

Despite these setbacks in the process of home-unmaking, Eweje still made efforts to remake home in his own way. After the loss of his father, he had to rely on himself by hustling for a livelihood in Lagos, including being a worker in a pure water factory and a waiter in a bar & restaurant. With a small amount of savings, he went to attend a part-time program in computer science at Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) in 2015—a popular university in Ogun State where many Lagosian youth enroll (Xiao 2021). On this decision, he explained to me, "In the environment I grew up [referring to Gowon Estate], people take education as a priority. There are peer pressures." This was not the first time I heard from Estate boys that peer social networks in neighborhood life put pressure on them. However, without much finance to continue, he only got a diploma out of this OOU program. He sighed, "if my dad is alive, I won't worry."

In addition to education, he also made progress in intimate relationships in the home remaking process. He dated several young women, including a Yoruba woman for three years, but he had not proposed. "I never care (about) tribes. Never care (about) family. Just love me naturally. I never have money. I'm hustling. But I can give her 100 percent love back." Marriage, family, and home are all in the making along a long journey which he has not fully started. Burrell (2016) suggests that human agency embodied in the process of home-unmaking enhances the feeling that they will leave for a better home at some point in the future. Eweje's struggles in home-unmaking and efforts to remake and to reimagine home and associated relationships illustrate how homemaking and unmaking practices are mutually constitutive in his search for feeling at home in the city.

In this sense, urban identification is enacted in the dynamic social, spatial and emotional processes of unmaking and remaking home in Eweje's life. When I met Eweje,

he no longer lived in Gowon Estate but still occasionally wandered in the neighborhood. Unlike Jacob and Tope who moved out of the Estate while still hanging out with many kinds of peers here, Eweje knew few people in the neighborhood (the only acquaintance was Shawn, a young tenant living in Mama Ebi's apartment). His siblings had scattered all over Nigeria by then. His former neighbor who accommodated him had moved out. Therefore, none of the Estate boys whom I was acquainted with knew Eweje.

Given that his family house was constructed in Rivers State, how does he negotiate his attachment to a place (like Gowon Estate) or more broadly to Lagos? In a case study of street-space of a Nigerian community in London, Botticello (2007) argues that identification with home in the process of homemaking is related not only to domestic space but also to public space where specific forms of sociality take place. Apparently, Eweje's limited spatial practices in Gowon Estate pertain to his engagement with social spaces. In a reflexive conversation about the family house in the village and possible livelihood in Port Harcourt, he said, "I don't know anybody there. I only travel(ed) there [Port Harcourt, not the village] once. We can't sell our family house for living. The village won't allow (it). One day, when I die, in our Nigerian tradition, they won't bury me in Lagos here. They will bury me in my fatherland. The only way I will be buried here is (if) I don't have any family to take me back." Although Port Harcourt is Nigeria's fifth largest city, Eweje did not intend to leave Lagos for Port Harcourt. "In Lagos, there are many chances. There is industry, big companies, small companies. I grew up in Lagos. I'm used to Lagos. I can live without money in Lagos…" (June 18, 2018). In Eweje's case, his urban identification is enacted through his emotional attachment with Lagos rather than an urban neighborhood like Gowon Estate where he lost his beloved

father and social ties. Although his father's homemaking practices involve his "hometown", a place where his father rather than Eweje was born, Eweje's unmaking and remaking practices are largely based in Lagos—the city he temporarily identified as home and felt as a home, and he had nowhere to go as Fela sang.

4.1.3 Summary

Comparing Patty's and Eweje's life trajectories, we can see that home-making and home-unmaking practices are respectively dominant in their urban identification processes, though both practices are mutually constitutive. Africanist scholars have noted the generational difference of making livelihood in different time-frames of African societies for various economic, social, and political reasons. For instance, Cole (2011) argues that young Africans born in the 1980s and early 1990s enjoy neither the same educational nor the same employment opportunities as their parents did, so that the economic and social circumstances compel young people to forge new paths and ways to become adults. In Western cities, Liverpool for instance, generational differences in urban identification often manifest in the perceptions of social change of urban place/space, especially in the changing aspects of race, ethnicity, and class (Frost and Catney 2020). It is true that different societal conditions between African and Western cities lead to different identification processes in individual lives, and based on Cole's argument, I further suggest that the differences between Patty's and Eweje's lives illuminate the specific generational practices of home-(un)making in the urban fabric: Patty was able to make home through a random employment opportunity, while Eweje went through tough home

unmaking and remaking experiences. In a general sense, the generational pattern as Cole indicates is also found among my other informants:many older residents in Gowon Estate, including Obotu, Ogaba, Bawa, Josh, etc., could secure stable employment in the 1980s, while many younger residents as showcased in the urban lives of Eweje, Tom, Tope, and Jacob could not make a home and settle down as their parents' had either through educational attainment or social connections. Interestingly, despite the different home-(un)making practices between generations, both Patty and Eweje identified themselves with Lagos.

However, when further examining both cases through the thick description above, we can see that identification with Lagos is enacted differently across generations, because their feelings with the city as home are different. Patty's sense of pride in his performance of speaking English before Obotu and me results from his class consciousness that is gradually developed through making home and settling in the apartment in Gowon Estate. On the contrary, Eweje's feeling of "nowhere else" to go results from the disjuncture of his socio-spatial relationships with Gowon Estate which his former home used to belong to. Although his father tried to build a family house in Rivers State, that place is not felt as home at all due to a lack of socio-spatial experiences. Therefore, he has no other choice but to hustle in and identify with Lagos, with limited endeavors to remake home in the city. Therefore, the idea of "city as home" (Blunt and Sheringham 2019) has the generational difference in these two Lagos residents' lives. This generational difference cannot be illuminated by only examining what they did in different time-frames in history; the feelings of home through what they did for making, unmaking, and remaking home matter. In this vein, we can observe that Eweje's urban

identification is more passively enacted than Patty's. This is also consistent with the generational difference of narrating time between the elders and the youths in their life stories as illustrated in the last chapter.

4.2 Home Making and Unmaking in Gowon Estate

Making home in a neighborhood is an indispensable urban experience in the processes of urban identification. Based in the place-identity paradigm, as I reviewed in the introduction, urbanist scholars have done extensive research on how urban neighborhoods act as a primary place anchoring people's identities and generating a sense of belonging, though identities and belongings are not always stable (e.g., Martin 2005; Benson and Jackson 2012; Preece 2020). In this vein of place-based ontology, urban identity is just performed in response to changes of neighborhoods. For instance, by examining the residents living in different housing estates in East London, Blunt et al. (2021: 159) suggest that residents' home lives and their wider ideas about the estates, street, neighborhood, or city as home are not often consistent with exterior temporal markers of urban changes but rest on multi-layered temporalities– "intertwining the past, present and future, generations and life courses, and housing, family and migration histories". Similarly, we have learned from the ontological narratives of Gowon Estate that residents' (dis)identification with this neighborhood has not exactly echoed the public narratives of "life in Lagos" but has reified through several discursive practices. What we have not illustrated and discussed is how the experiences of making and unmaking a home in Gowon Estate is related to urban identification. In the previous

section, we saw that the sense of feeling at home through home making and remaking is an important dimension of urban identification. Does the sense of feeling at home in Gowon Estate also matter?

The simple answer is yes, and more specifically for the younger generation, the neighborhood even becomes a "sticky space" of emotions (Ahmed 2004). Drawing on Butler's performativity theory, Ahmed (2004: 24) states, "the impression of a surface is an effect of intensifications of feeling". These intensities of feeling are not simply individualistic psychological emotions but arise through contact and interactions between individual subjects. In this sense, stickiness of emotions to urban space, as socially-mediated intensified feelings, manifests as feeling at home in Gowon Estate. Between the older and the younger generations, such feelings arise differently through their home making and unmaking practices in and around Gowon Estate. Illustrating this generational difference can contribute to the existing research on neighborhood as home and urban identification with the neighborhood and city at large.

In this section, I will first provide an interpretation of two cases, Obotu and Abiola's family (Tope and Porter's father), respectively home-making and home-unmaking by members of the older generation in Gowon Estate. Here "home-unmaking" does not refer to an exclusively negative practice but an active decision to leave Gowon Estate and remake home somewhere else. By comparing making and unmaking practices, I will discuss the ways in which (dis)identification with this neighborhood is enacted, therefore illuminating the specific "bundle" (in Massey's sense) of urban places that include Gowon Estate over the course of individual mobilities and social changes in Lagos and Nigeria. Furthermore, I will move on to members of the younger generation who grew up

in Gowon Estate, including Tope, Henry, and Fred (Ogaba's son) to illuminate the stickiness of emotions in their home-making processes by choosing a residential place in Lagos. The generational differences between the older and the younger generations in Gowon Estate revealed in this section will further echo the comparative interpretations of Patty's and Eweje's cases.

4.2.1 "We Own it!": Making Home in Gowon Estate

According to the brief history of Gowon Estate, making a home in this neighborhood often has to deal with the ownership of an apartment, though many residents have been renting for years. Owning an apartment, however, requires a long process of negotiating with the state as well as managing family and personal finance. Although not every housing resident has purchased or will purchase their housing, they all consider it in their home-making processes. In African studies, scholars have focused on the family compound as an important spatial form of home-making in urban neighborhoods (Pellow 2001), but few Africanist research examines the role of apartment housing in people's identification with home and place, particularly in relation to their ideas about compounds which are the major form of housing in Nigeria (see Chapter 1.2). Particularly for people who are at the crossroads of settling down, the difference between two kinds of lived environment becomes a concern in my informants' narratives of their home-making practices and their feelings of home, partly leading to their decisions to stay in or leave Gowon Estate.

A case study of Obotu's housing experiences gives us an insight into his feelings and identification. This Idoma man who asked Patty about housing documents, had been living in Gowon Estate for more than two decades and was working independently as a housing agent who also played a role in my search for renting an apartment in the neighborhood. Like Patty, he is a first-generation migrant in Lagos. Differing from Patty's uneasy trajectory of making home with a kind of "luck" to settle down, Obotu's life experience is firmly built on his gradual establishment of his livelihood at Nigerian Airways. The earlier years in his village Adoka before migrating to Lagos were tough: "My father died early, and I am the seventh born boy in our family. I had to farm for a long time until my elder brother could sponsor my education." Nevertheless, Obotu had one of the best higher education experiences among my informants. He was successfully admitted to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), the highest ranked university in the Eastern region and among the top five in the nation. After graduation, he came to stay with his cousin in Lagos, while looking for jobs in 1985. His educational background afforded him easy access to an accountant position in Nigerian Airways. After a five-year appointment in Kano, he was transferred to Lagos in 1990, where he decided to make home and settle down. With his family's arrangement, he married a woman from his village. This life event made him leave the transient home close to the airport that he lived in alone for a more permanent home with his wife in a three-bedroom apartment in Gowon Estate in 1994. Everything looked smooth in the home-making process until 2003, the year that Nigerian Airways was liquidated and Obotu lost his job. Although he was able to become a housing agent after a series of training and certification processes,

this liquidation under Obasanjo's regime caused problems of home-unmaking for a number of residents like Obotu.

In Gowon Estate, the unexpected liquidation of a state-owned enterprise that owns the apartments makes the privatization processes complicated. After the economic recession throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the newly elected democratic government in the Fourth Republic (1999- now) was desperate in seeking capital through various channels, including liquidating the largest national airline and selling out their housing properties[38]. In Gowon Estate, those residents having already been allocated apartments had priority to decide if they wanted to purchase their apartments. If they could not pay it off at once, they could negotiate with their government employers to have part of the purchase subsidized through their monthly wages, which most of the apartment owners among my informants chose to do.

Since Nigerian Airways was liquidated, their employees in two apartment blocks—32 households—were asked by the FHA to fully purchase the apartments at once, otherwise they would be evicted. This policy irritated Obotu and his colleagues in the neighborhood, because with a small sum of dismissal wage and pending government pensions, they could not afford to pay off their mortgages. Therefore, they collectively sued the Nigerian government, and Obotu was one of the leaders. "I voted for Obasanjo, but I regret (it). He sells our country!" Obotu complained many times to me when it came to Nigerian politics. The longstanding lawsuit was still not settled at the time of our meetings. When I paid a visit to his apartment on March 30, 2018, he talked eloquently about the lawsuit with various documents shown to me. He indicated that as long as the

[38] By 2019, most of the apartments in Gowon Estate were privatized except those still owned by the Navy.

process was ongoing, he and his neighbors would not be evicted. “We occupy it! We own it!” He said firmly and emotionally, insisting that they would win. A similar situation also happened to the residents (e.g., Idahosa’s father) who used to work for the Nigerian National Shipping Line—another liquidated state-owned enterprise owning apartments in the neighborhood.

In retrospect of Obotu’s life trajectory, Gowon Estate plays a central role in his home-making practices, thereby affecting his feelings of home and urban identification. Obotu’s apartment in Gowon Estate is not simply a “material dwelling” space but more importantly signifies his experiential and “imaginative realms and processes” of urban lifestyle (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 22). It resulted from his endeavors to gain an employment position at Nigerian Airways and to obtain this residential place through workplace welfare. In our various conversations, he expressed his strong feeling of contentment with his career and a sense of being a professional with his position at Nigerian Airways: despite being an accountant, he was able to travel to ten African countries, each of which he proudly detailed to me. Over time, he gradually developed the habit of drinking coffee which is very rare among the residents I knew in the Estate. Therefore, every time I brought coffee to him from abroad, he was extremely pleased and asked me about the origin of the coffee. Moreover, the process of the lawsuit reinforced his attachment to the place of home that he has been making, especially embodied in the feeling of owning the apartment.

His social practices in Gowon Estate further strengthened such a feeling of home. In the neighborhood, Obotu is regarded by many of my other informants as a resourceful person, not only due to his leading role among his former Nigerian Airways colleagues

but also owing to his active roles as a housing agent, a group convener in St Joseph (Catholic) Church and a core member of his Idoma hometown association. As Kalina (2020) observed from elderly residents in a state-subsidized housing scheme in Durban, South Africa, the neighborhood becomes “an extension of home” that contributes to a “greater sense of home”. For Obotu, his lived experiences in Gowon Estate enlarged his sense of home in Lagos.

4.2.2 “Proud of Family House”: Unmaking Home in Gowon Estate

Not everyone sees Gowon Estate as home as Obotu does; some of my informants do not feel at home in the Estate and leave for elsewhere. Although people have various reasons in their relocation decision, including spiritual ones which we will discuss in chapter 7, one of the reasons pertains to the setting of apartments. The materiality of housing regarding the difference between apartments and compounds in this context is discursively represented to justify their residential choice and spatial practice, rather than referring to housing traditions (See chapter 1.2). Therefore, discourses on the “family house” emerged in their practices of home making and unmaking. Drawing on my engagements with Tope’s family, I will shed light on the generational factors in their urban identification related to home experiences.

When the FHA privatized the apartments in the Police block, Tope’s father Abiola did not decide to purchase their apartment and left for suburban Lagos. This 74-year-old man claimed that he was one of earliest residents in Gowon Estate: he joined the Nigerian Police Force in 1981 and was allocated a two-bedroom apartment in 1984. Having lived

there for almost three decades, after his retirement from the Police, Abiola left to construct a compound house in Oyero, an underdeveloped border area between Lagos and Ogun States. On July 3, 2018, Tope accompanied me to visit his parents in their house which was composed of four bedrooms and a spacious living room on the ground floor, surrounded by unfinished fence walls. Speaking of their former home back in Gowon Estate, Abiola complained, “sixteen flats in a block! Too much…My children can’t be proud [that] this is their family house, but they are proud of place here.” The place was strategically chosen by Abiola and his sons, particularly Tope’s older brother Porter. Although Abiola was born in Ondo state, he grew up in Ebute Metta of Lagos. He thought that moving back to his village in Okitipupa of Ondo was not a sensible choice for his family. His children, six sons (Tope is the youngest one) and two daughters, have all grown up, with the majority of them living in Lagos. To be convenient for his children’s visits, constructing the family house in Oyero was more sensible in his opinion. Economically, according to Abiola’s calculation, the housing land and material construction of the house cost more than one million naira, which was almost the same as the price of purchasing the apartment in Gowon Estate. Abiola insisted that this was the right call to remake a home in suburban Lagos.

In the case study of Tope’s life story and his time-narration (chapter 3.2), we can see that this practice of home-unmaking and remaking significantly impacted Tope’s life. He had to leave the home that his parents maintained for years in Gowon Estate to independently live in a studio room on his own. Due to Abiola’s investment in the new family house, Tope lost the financial support for his Polytechnic education and had to drop out—the event he described as a turning point in his life trajectory. Unlike his elder

brothers who had made homes and formed families, Tope hustled for various livelihoods in Lagos. On the day of our visit to his father, transiting from a *danfo* bus to a motorbike (the only public transport to reach Oyero), he suggested we should bring something to his father: bread, rice, palm oil, onion, salt, maggi (a kind of food sauce) and fish, totalling 2,750 naira[39] (US$8.5). Tope told me these are the usual "gifts" his brothers bring to meet the parents. "He [his father] always expects more. That's why I never like (to) go", Tope complained, partly due to his economic status and partly because he was not the son who was "proud of" the house as Abiola expressed to me.

Figure 4.1 Tope Sitting on the Roof of the Compound House in Which He Rented a Room

In Abiola's family, Porter–Tope's elder brother—was one of the sons who encouraged Abiola to unmake home in Gowon Estate. Like Tope, Porter was also born in

[39] I paid for these "gifts" because it was me that proposed to visit his father.

Lagos, four years earlier than Tope, and grew up in Gowon Estate. However, Porter was making home more progressively: he got married in 2007 with three children now. Although his work at the Mosan local council was unstable, based on contracts with local politicians, his wife could provide more for child rearing and family life because she worked as a policewoman in the local area. On December 12, 2018, Tope and I visited Porter's family in Akinogun, a neighborhood adjacent to Gowon Estate. They rented a two-bedroom house in a compound where the landlord also lived next door. Welcoming me at the gate, Porter showed me around and commented on this living space: "This place is better (than Gowon Estate). I close this door, so children play inside. It's private and safe." Although he did not like living in the Estate, I saw him often hanging out with people in the neighborhood. In the Orange Bar on December 20, 2018, the owner Okeme, the 61-year-old former CDA chairman, joked with Porter by calling him "landlord", implying that Porter was one of the earliest residents and a popular figure in Gowon Estate. Therefore, Porter used to be a typical Estate boy before making his home and family life in Akinogun. Speaking of his "family house" in suburban Lagos, Porter was pleased that I visited his father there, "I no see [haven't seen] papa for a while. No money to go. We often go together on New Year… It's a good place to build our family house. If papa passes on [away], he would be buried in the compound. His body wouldn't be sent to (the) village in Ondo because (there is) no house there." Sadly, I heard from Tope that Abiola passed away in 2020 and was buried in the compound.

How to frame the idea of "family house" has been a dilemma for idealizing homes in Gowon Estate. Residents like Obotu, Patty and others tend to treat their two-bedroom or three-bedroom apartments as their family houses, while Abiola and Porter do not regard

the apartment as an ideal space for making home for the whole family, though they have lived in the place for decades. For the latter people, Gowon Estate apartments, at least in their ideals of home, are "unhomely home" (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 100). In African housing structures, the space of the compound defines a homely space for a larger family (Pellow 2018). In Western cities, high-rise apartments were usually built to re-house working classes so that the homeliness of apartment spaces is regarded as a sacrifice for economy and efficiency (e.g., Costello 2005). In Gowon Estate, however, the comments on apartment homeliness exemplified by Abiola and Porter contrast with the nostalgic narratives of Gowon Estate symbolizing the modern infrastructure and environment. Beneath such performances of idealizing homes are their identification with the place of Gowon Estate as home. Thus, the homeliness of Gowon Estate, I suggest, should not be simply attributed to a dwelling structure but understood through the socio-spatial processes of home making and unmaking in which "family house" discourses emerge.

For the older generations who have settled down, home making practices in and out of Gowon Estate are the foundation of their urban identification processes. Obotu's experience of making and contesting for his home in Gowon Estate is a vivid example of how he constructs his personal and social identity through the urban lifestyle he developed in the neighborhood. Owning the apartment reinforces his urban identification, as Patty does. Abiola and Porter chose to leave the Estate and remade their homes that are closely related to Lagos and Gowon Estate, because their social relations cannot be cut off from home remaking practices. Having lived in Lagos and Gowon Estate for a long time, the strong connections with family members in Lagos and people in the neighborhood make Abiola and Porter still identify themselves with the urban. In Oyero,

when Abiola led me to view burgeoning housing constructions in the area, he said, “they all move from Lagos. We come to live in this bush”. The word “bush” was used many times by Abiola in our conversations to jokingly indicate how rural and remote the area is, thereby contrarily implying how urban he used to be.

By comparing Obotu’s home making and Tope’s family’s (Abiola and Porter) home unmaking in Gowon Estate, we can see that although they choose different practices and present different discourses on “family house”, they commonly enact identification with the urban. Obotu’s urban identity hinges on his career at Nigerian Airways and subsequent social leadership role in the lawsuit against the Nigerian government. Even though Abiola and Porter left Gowon Estate, their social engagements with people in the city and in the neighborhood do not fade away. On feelings of territorial belonging, Antonsich (2010) suggests that both personal, intimate feeling of being “at home” in a place and socio-spatial dimension of discourses and practices should be taken into account. In other words, not only do their performances of (not) feeling at home in Gowon Estate matter, but also their socio-spatial relations that are built and maintained in the Estate contribute to their urban identification.

4.2.3 Gowon Estate as a Sticky Space

The older generation’s home making and unmaking practices highly impact the younger generation, as we can learn from Eweje’s case (his father’s ideal family house in Port Harcourt does not help with Eweje’s hustling livelihood in Lagos) and Tope’s case (Abiola’s family house construction directly caused the suspension of Tope’s education).

For these Estate boys, who grew up in the neighborhood, they share the experiences of living in the "family houses" as a residential home in Gowon Estate, however their parents define and idealize "family houses". This shared experience prompts me to further explore the role of Gowon Estate in youths' feelings of home, and these feelings, I find, manifest as the "stickiness of emotions" (Ahmed 2004) attached to Gowon Estate.

To shed light on how Gowon Estate becomes a sticky space for members of the younger generation, it is necessary to discuss their decisions to physically leave the "family house" first. In a review of African youth becoming, Banks (2021: 214) suggests that the home tends to be the most influential support system throughout childhood and adolescence. Therefore, leaving "family houses" and moving into their own homes is regarded as an important step into adulthood, not only for African youth but also for youth across the globe (Valentine 2003; Jeffrey and McDowell 2004). Drawing on a diversity of lived experiences among the younger generation in Gowon Estate, I argue that becoming an independent adult does not necessarily require youths to leave family houses and to make their own homes, because home-making for these urban youths is a precarious, uncertain, always ongoing process in which youth identity is constantly under construction. Below I will elaborate on two young men's home geographies.

Henry's lived experience in Gowon Estate demonstrates how his home was unbounded over the course of becoming unsettled. Born to an Igbo family in 1986 in Isheri, an area close to Gowon Estate, Henry moved into the Estate with his family when he was twelve years old. Although being tenants, Henry grew up and got along with those second generation of apartment allocatees and housing owners, such as Tope, Idahosa, Jacob, and Fred. Therefore, Henry has been also categorized as an Estate boy. After

taking JAMB[40] exams twice, he was finally "admitted" to the University of Benin City (UniBen, a top-ten university in Nigeria), so he left home for university life. "I was so excited about UniBen. It has a big name." However, his university life ended abruptly: after studying for two years there, he was told by the university that his offer was mistakenly given because his name was not found in the admission system. "I plead, but they say you should go home." Back to Lagos in 2008, Henry felt depressed and was almost doing nothing every day—a typical situation that Mary described for "Estate boys". Two years later, Henry began to hustle by doing various informal jobs, including T-shirt printing, barbering, shoemaking, and sales promotion which also involved Tope and Idahosa. During these hustling years, Henry lived in many places in Lagos, including friends' houses and a studio space he and his business partners rented in Yaba. In a strict sense, he has not left his "family house" in Gowon Estate. In recent years, especially when he started dating Stella from 2015, he returned to live with his parents. When I visited his home on March 1, 2018, Stella was living there as well. The three-bedroom apartment was decorated with Catholic statues and family pictures in which Henry and his four siblings were shown. Among them, only Henry still lived in this apartment that his parents had rented for two decades.

Differing from members of the first generation who made their homes by either purchasing or renting the apartments in Gowon Estate, members of the second generation like Henry generally see Gowon Estate as their "base"—the discourse I also borrowed to describe their conceptualization of Lagos. Given the material existence of the apartment

[40] Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). Nigerian universities determine admissions based in part on the results of the JAMB exam that secondary-school graduates are required to take.

and webs of social relationships developed through their childhood in the neighborhood, Gowon Estate is often regarded by Estate boys as a "homely" place, without much reference to a declining environment as described in chapter 1.4. In Tope's and Jacob's reflections on their turning points in their life trajectories, the passive narratives are emotionally focused on unmaking homes in Gowon Estate for different reasons. Compared to Lagos as a "base", the idea of Gowon Estate as a "base" was never explicitly addressed but implicated in the homing experiences of Henry and other youths.

When they encountered difficulties, they returned "home", not simply for material support but also for social and emotional support from people they knew in the neighborhood. More nuanced in Henry's case, leaving home and living independently is a relative process rather than an absolute turning point in a linear trajectory. Although he still lived with parents at home, he thought he was independent because his relationship with Stella was steadily progressing toward marriage, though his and his family's savings have not reached the level needed for holding a wedding. On another occasion when we talked about Idahosa living in his "family house" next to Henry's, Henry expressed his concern: "I told him many times. 'Leave your home and have your own place. You will be comfortable.' But he (Idahosa) never listened to me."

There is a dilemma for members of the younger generation leaving Gowon Estate: whether or not to live nearby. For instance, Tope, Jacob, Porter, Eweje, and others left Gowon Estate to remake their homes, but still chose to live in nearby cheaper areas. On the contrary, Fred, Ogaba's son and Mary's elder brother, has a "family house" that Ogaba owned in the Estate, but he chose to rent a place in Berger, a neighborhood far away from the Estate. Among them, I explored the surrounding areas of Gowon Estate by

visiting my key informants' homes. For instance, from my residence at the American Junction to Tope's "home" inside Akinogun, I need to take two rides of motorbike taxi or walk for 40-50 minutes. Tope used to joke about his home by claiming "this is bush"—the exact word his father Abiola used to describe Oyero in Suburban Lagos. In one sense, Tope's residence as well as adjacent Jacob's is located more remotely than Gowon Estate in an underdeveloped lowland where flooding often takes place. Moreover, the discourse of "bush" in Tope's narrative also refers to the living conditions of domestic space which Tope described as "self-contained": a room containing a mattress, a small sofa, an air conditioner without much electricity supply, a small wardrobe, and a few food vessels on the floor. He also shared the bathroom with three other tenants in a house within a walled compound. The budget was of course a main factor Tope considered when moving to this place, but the underlying factor of making home in this specific place close to Gowon Estate was his social identification with people he mingled with in the neighborhood, including Idahosa, Henry, Olupo and others. The Estate is the place where I first met Tope and I often saw him hanging around. More importantly, this is the place which he had various memories of, relationships with, and homely experience in. In this sense, Gowon Estate can be seen as a "sticky" space for some members of the younger generation like Tope, a notion developed by Ahmed (2004) and Laketa (2018) as a performative embodied space saturated with affect.

For youth like Fred who chose to live far away from the neighborhood, Gowon Estate can also be "sticky" but with more reflexive individuality based on social (dis)identification with peers, especially with those labeled "Estate boys". Fred was born in 1988 in the Obalande area of Lagos and moved into Gowon Estate with his family

(Ogaba is his father). Having lived in the Estate since then, he was very familiar with the Estate boys including Idahosa, Tope, Jacob and others. One thing he remembered about his childhood life was washing second-hand cars smuggled from Cotonou, "These cars just park in this close (street). They are dirty because they come through 'bush'. We small boys wash cars and get money." However, when he grew up, especially after he returned from the university in Cross River—his home state—he became estranged with those "car washing" childhood "boys". He moved to Berger, a place far from the Estate, from his "family house" which Ogaba had purchased from the FHA. Speaking of this decision, he said, "Estate itself has been backward. They (Estate boys) are lazy… Sit down watching. They like enjoyment. I have to progress…. I went to see a friend of mine last night. We are not that close again because he doesn't have the same mindset like me." Fred differentiated himself from his childhood "friends" by emphasizing the difference between "backward" and "progress". Practically, Fred did have some progress in home-making: he lived independently, had a contract job with DHL, and was dating a girlfriend whom he considered marrying. However, the difference he referred to was not about the material progress but the lifestyle, or in his words "mindset". This "mindset" has been widely discussed in the literature on African youth through the framing of coexisting sense of forward momentum and sense of stagnation, usually spatially embodied in a kind of streetspace (Fast and Moyer 2018; also see Hansen 2005; Landau 2006; Weiss 2009). Although Fred expressed his resolution to "progress", he still came back to Gowon Estate every week, not only reuniting with his parents but also socially engaging with some "friends" (though different "mindsets") and a particular group—a church choir in which he has been a youth leader for a long time. In this sense, despite his

differentiation practices, he still performatively associated himself with the "sticky" space of Gowon Estate through various social ties and emotions.

Comparing Henry, Tope and Fred's homing experiences, Gowon Estate is naturally treated as a "homely" urban place, no matter whether or not the "family house" is rented or owned and whether or not there is a "family house". Although they are in the different processes of making their own homes, Gowon Estate is still socially woven into their life trajectories. Existing place-ontology research on neighborhood (dis)identification suggests that residents' intergenerational social networks developed from neighborhood life contribute to identification with and belonging to the neighborhood (e.g., Frost and Catney 2020). If shifting to the perspective of placing neighborhoods in one's life, I add that the effectiveness of social networks is not the only factor evoking residents' identification and belonging; more broadly, the performative "sticky" space of the neighborhood-based social and family life makes the second-generation youths, who not only are/used to be neighborhood residents but also have those embodied experiences with the neighborhood, naturally and unconsciously take the neighborhood as a "homely" place, though they may make homes elsewhere.

Furthermore, comparing the older and the younger generations who make and unmake home in Gowon Estate, we can see that home is unbounding, practiced and idealized differently between generations. Home making, unmaking, and remaking are always intertwined, open-ended everyday practices, through which urban identification is both performed and performatively enacted. More specifically, for the older generation (Obotu's and Abiola's cases), making and unmaking home in Gowon Estate both embodies their identification with *the urban*; for the younger generation (Henry, Tope

and Fred), their "constantly circulated, negotiated and reconfigured ideas, relations and feelings" about home (Brickell 2012: 226) contribute to the identification with *the urban place*—Gowon Estate—through the performative sticky space.

4.3 The Presence and Absence of "Hometown" in Home (Un)making

From the comparative case studies above, we can see the generational differences of making home and feeling at home in Lagos and Gowon Estate, but one of key dimensions of the differences deserve a further discussion—hometown. Here "hometown" refers to what informants describe as their places of origin, instead of a pre-given category–place of birth. As place of origin (or called place of indigeneity) also plays a role in ethnic identification which will be elaborated in chapter 6, in this section I will focus on how hometowns serve as a vantage point to understand home making practices. Specifically, for older generations, hometowns become a present relational space in life; for younger generations, hometowns become an imaginative place, often absent in lived experiences. Teasing out the generational difference of positionality of hometown in life can help us better understand Lagos as a relational place in the processes of home making and urban identification. As we learned from Kusa's and Ada's life stories in chapter 3, the social relations formed in hometowns or home cities facilitated their migration to Lagos. When they settled in Lagos, especially for Ada and Obotu, hometown associations became one of the primary social networks in which they are involved. This phenomenon has been widely studied in Africanist ethnographies (Ferguson 1999; Pellow 2002; Whitehouse 2012). Additionally, based on the circumstance of Gowon Estate residents, a different

mobility pattern draws my attention to the relationship between hometown and Lagos: Lagos serving as a "base" in livelihood for an individual's core family while he or she lives a transient life among various other places including hometowns[41]. Teasing this "bundle" of relational places out can enrich the account of making homes in Lagos and in Gowon Estate.

In 2017, when I first met Ogaba, the 62-year-old man retired from a state-owned enterprise (See chapter 3.2), he was the secretary of the central CDA and eagerly introduced Gowon Estate to me. After I moved to Gowon Estate the next year, I only saw Ogaba periodically. Later I learned that he devoted himself to an agribusiness back in his hometown Obutu in the highlands of Cross River State. I sometimes patronized his wife's restaurant near his apartment block, where his youngest daughter was usually doing homework. The elder daughter Mary and the elder son Fred had established their own lives with respective partners in other areas of Lagos. The apartment purchased from the FHA in the early 1990s was still the home of Ogaba's core family, but their relationships and lived experiences had stretched out beyond Gowon Estate as well as Lagos. I was curious why Ogaba decided to initiate an alternative livelihood outside Lagos while still being based in Lagos. The emerging mobilities in Ogaba's life drew my attention to how life in Lagos is not only focused on Lagos but related to other places as a "bundle" of space-time trajectories.

In the African studies literature, a common mobility pattern is documented as the linkage between hometowns and cities, in which various events, including weddings and

[41] This was especially notable among those Gowon Estate residents who worked for the Customs Service, Army, Navy, or other state authorities, who were usually appointed to work in a given place outside Lagos for no more than a couple of years before being transferred onward to another.

funerals, mandated that they leave the city for their hometowns for a period of weeks and months (e.g., Mercer et al. 2008). In both aspects of livelihood and identity, such temporary, random mobility differs fundamentally from Potts's (2010) conception of circular migration. However, as Ogaba's life experience shows, the mobility between hometowns and Lagos does not simply depend on life events but is regularized and becomes constitutive of Lagos's urban rhythms. This demonstrates that home-making practice in Lagos can incorporate hometowns. The question is: how does this incorporation practice affect one's urban identification?

To better answer this question, I elaborate on Agoro's life experience that incorporates his hometown Oka-Akoko in Ondo State, the rural town I paid visits several times during my fieldwork period. I first met Agoro, not in Lagos but in Oka-Akoko when I attended the community ceremony "Oka Day" in 2018. He was a member of Okarufe Club who sponsored the free medical service for local Oka people for three days. After a couple of conversations, he was surprised that I lived in Gowon Estate, just opposite to his neighborhood Abesan Estate. This encounter made me interested in his life and the reason why he decided to join an organization that contributed to hometown development. We then set up an appointment to meet and talk in Lagos.

Agoro is a 57-year-old man working for the Ministry of Education in Ogun State while residing in Lagos's Abesan Estate. Growing up in Oka-Akoko, he attended a Polytechnic in Ondo State from 1980-1984 and was appointed to Ogun State for the one-year compulsory NYSC internship program. During the internship period, he said, "I became very social and knew many local farmers". This experience enabled him to obtain a position in the local government. He initially coordinated agriculture education and

later moved to work in the Ministry of Education in Ogun's capital Abeokuta. "I was satisfied by this job and did not intend to pursue any opportunity in Lagos. I am a civil servant now. I don't need to work in Lagos. It's one and a half hours from Abeokuta to Lagos, sometimes one hour if traffic is not much. In Lagos, you can even spend three or four hours on roads a day."

The reason why he was living in Lagos was because his wife was working at a hospital in Lagos. He met his wife when studying at the Polytechnic. "I found (that) she is from my hometown, so I invited her to my activities. We started dating after graduation. In 1991, we had (a) traditional wedding in Oka and (a) church wedding in Lagos." Agoro's marriage involves a strong connection with the hometown. Through all my Christian informants' narratives, three kinds of wedding were usually mentioned: court wedding means that they just go to register in the court without ceremony; church wedding does not necessarily take place in a church but hosted by a pastor; traditional wedding must follow the mutual agreement between two families and be held in either brides' or grooms' hometown. Although Agoro did not work in Lagos, Lagos became a site of weddings and also a place where the newly-formed family made a home.

Apart from Lagos and Abeokuta, he recently placed his hometown Oka-Akoko in his life by participating in a social club that consists of all Oka descendants in Lagos. The club's name "Okarufe" means Oka people all come from Ife, the center of Yoruba myth of origin. Besides being an Oka native, one of the criteria to join this club is to be formally employed and residing in Lagos. Therefore, the membership of this hometown association signifies certain social status. Agoro was introduced to this club by his friend and its president Tobi who was also my informant living close to Gowon Estate. As a

lawyer, Tobi indicated that he had a plan to engage in local politics so that he initiated this free health care service as part of Oka Day programs. When I met Agoro and Tobi in Oka-Akoko in 2018, this was the third year they brought club members to the hometown, all of whom were wearing a blue T-shirt with “Okafure” on it. For Agoro, he did not have any political motive; however, he did not simply help Tobi in this regard but came up with his own business initiative. Due to his longtime engagement with agriculture, he invested in a palm tree plantation in the hometown region. He believed that being active in Okafure Club could develop his connections with hometown resources and facilitate his business development.

This new connection with hometown also led to a new mobility rhythm among Lagos, Abeokuta and Oka-Akoko. Commuting between Lagos and Ogun state every day, he went back to his hometown on weekends, once or twice a month. If it was the season for palm oil production, he would go back every weekend. The five-hour trips thus became regular in his mobile life. When it came to how this kind of lifestyle ends, Agoro revealed his retirement plan: “I will probably buy land in Ogun State and live with my wife there. My children all grow up. They may want to live in big cities or even go abroad.” Obviously, his hometown was not included in his home remaking plan. Ogun State, where he has been developing career relationships, became a new relational place of home remaking in his life. This also depends on his ties with children who, as he indicated, did not have connections with their hometown as he did.

Agoro’s life experiences demonstrate that rural-urban mobilities – as opposed to migration which describes more consequential movements from one place to another – are complicated by the multiplicity of socio-spatial relations that encompass more than

Lagos and hometown. Africanist scholars in the field of rural-urban migration have shed light on the use of hometown connections in urban livelihoods, such as in Zimbabwe where Buhera people utilize their hometown networks to mitigate adverse economic circumstances in Harare (Andersson 2001). This is also the case in Agoro's and Ogaba's lives. Although Oka-Akoko and Obutu are located at very different geographical distances from Lagos, long after Agoro and Ogaba migrated to Lagos, they were drawn into these stretched social networks.

In addition to the perspective of livelihood, in terms of urban identification, the multiplicity of place-identities should also be taken into account. Due to his strong belonging to his hometown, Ogaba expected to return to his hometown Obutu with his wife and let children decide on their own, "It's up to them to live in Lagos. They were born here. They must like it". Although both of them expected to unmake a home in Lagos, their homes remain unbound, as their next generations who grow up in Lagos still affect their socio-spatial relations. Unless they all leave Lagos, Lagos was in effect anchoring them and affecting their dynamic mobilities. In a study of Hausa migrants in Brazzaville, Whitehouse (2012) suggests that mobility makes human beings more like nautical vessels: we can remain at rest in certain locations only under the right conditions. In his metaphor, "anchoring" means establishing a connection between our individual and collective identities, on the one hand, and a specific geographic location, on the other (Ibid, 211). The idea of anchoring is very informative, as the informants engaging in the above dynamic mobility patterns are to varying degrees anchoring themselves in Lagos.

For young people who have lived in Lagos for a long time, and who do not have strong or frequent connections with their hometowns, Lagos becomes a foundational place in their lives; and yet, they are not necessarily "anchored" by the city. As the largest metropolis and commercial center in Nigeria, Lagos is from many Nigerians' perspectives a symbol of opportunities, especially for employment. However, its high incidence of underemployment drives many job-hunting young people to despair. Some of them thus become mobile in their search for economic opportunities in other cities within the country. Nevertheless, hometowns were usually not their choices.

My key informant Idahosa, though having a strong sense of attachment to his home in Gowon Estate, often tried to work in other cities than Lagos. After obtaining a diploma in Ibadan Polytechnic, Idahosa went to work in a bank in Ile-Ife, Osun State's old city that Kusa saw as his home city. However, he could not continue working after a short contract ended and returned to Lagos. Throughout the time when we frequently interacted, his livelihood largely hinged on various self-employed "projects" (See chapter 5.2). In 2018, he looked for more stable work out of Lagos by traveling to Abuja and Ibadan, though he did not commit to anything and finally returned again.

Idahosa's friend Abby, a 30-year-old woman, was more mobile, but those places in her life trajectory did not include her hometown in Cross River State. She was born in Maroko district of Lagos and raised in Gowon Estate. We met in 2016 through Idahosa; however, when I tried to revisit her in 2017, Idahosa told me she was working in Taraba State, a place on the Eastern border of Nigeria. In 2018, we reunited in Lagos when she returned to Gowon Estate. She hoped to find a stable job but none of her applications resulted in formal employment. Having lost both parents in her early years, she relied on

an elder brother who was a Navy officer living in Gowon Estate. Without any expectations for jobs in Lagos, she followed her brother to Port Harcourt where he was appointed last year. In this sense, Port Harcourt became another transient place in her life.

For the younger generation who grew up in Lagos, including Eweje, Tope, Porter, Henry, Fred, Idahosa and Abby, the hometown factor is absent in their home making and remaking practices. Therefore, as the former two sections illustrate, they feel at home nowhere else but in Lagos in life trajectories. They can engage in various forms of mobilities, but they identify Lagos as their "base". This does not mean that Lagos is bound to stabilize their identities but allows them to cross various boundaries, thereby enacting "many aspects of identification" (Pratt 1998). More specifically, they develop a kind of stickiness associated with Gowon Estate, though their socio-spatial practices have transcended the neighborhood.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

Regarding the interconnection between home and identity (Blunt 2014), urban identification in this study manifests as identifying the city–Lagos–as a home and identifying the neighborhood–Gowon Estate–as a home. In line with the idea that home is unbounding (Cook et al. 2016), I treat the city and the neighborhood as relational space, that is constantly made and unmade through socio-spatial experiences. Still drawing from the perspective of placing cities and neighborhoods in life trajectories, I have made case studies of several informants' life stories with a focus on practices of home making and the feelings of home along the way. Below I synthesize these case studies to provide a

holistic interpretation of generational differences of urban identification with particular attention paid to those youths who grew up in Gowon Estate.

With respect to the older generation's home making practices along life trajectories, though they differently treat the apartments in Gowon Estate, they all identify themselves with "life in Lagos". Owning a "family house" can deliver their senses of feeling at home, no matter if the house is located in Gowon Estate, in the process of lawsuit, or relocated to the suburban borderland of Lagos and Ogun State. Their urban identification thus is built on a kind of autonomy to navigate between a kind of "localism" back in their early years and a kind of "urban lifestyle" they became used to in Lagos. In this sense, I agree with Ferguson (1999: 110) that "localism" is an urban style, and I would add that only because social milieu in which these elders are situated, as Cole (2011) indicates, they gained the autonomy to not only make, unmake and remake homes but also perform their urban identities through strong feelings of home.

Table 4.1 A Comparison of Feeling at Home by (Re)making It in Lagos and Gowon Estate

	Lagos as home	Gowon Estate as home
Home making, unmaking and remaking	Patty's home making	Obotu's homemaking and lawsuit Abiola's home unmaking
	Eweje's home unmaking and remaking	Porter's, Tope's and Fred's home remaking
Feeling at home	Patty's sense of pride	Obotu's urban lifestyle Abiola's "proud of family house"
	Eweje's feeling of "nowhere else"	Porter's, Tope's and Fred's stickiness

The youths, however, more passively, and performatively enact their urban identification. As many Africanist scholars note, youths' urban livelihoods that involve

home unmaking and remaking are usually unstable and uncertain (Hansen 2005; Di Nunzio 2019; Banks 2021). What I add here is not the generational difference of home making and urban livelihood (also see the UK case, Frost and Catney 2000); rather, the takeaway from this chapter is the changing sense of feeling at home in relation to how they unconsciously identify themselves with the urban place where their "family houses" are or used to be. To some extent, the older generation's home making practices also impact the youths' feelings and socio-spatial practices. The performative approach usefully illuminates the unbound homes and sticky space of Gowon Estate in youth urban identification processes.

Chapter 5 Estate Boys: Young Men's Socio-Spatial Identity in-the-Making

In a foundational collection of essays on African youth, Honwana and De Boeck (2005:2) ask: how can we understand youth in various African contexts as both *makers* and *breakers* of society, while they are simultaneously being *made* and *broken* by that society? (Italicized by the authors) This paradoxical situation of African youth has been extensively discussed for two decades, especially after Diouf's (2003: 10) eloquent stress on the significance of youth in African societies: "young Africans symbolize the uneven trajectory of an Africa in search of its rhythm and its identity". In this vein, an array of anthropological ethnographies has contextualized the paradoxical status of youth in various urban livelihoods and urban spaces (Weiss 2009; Cole 2010; Newell 2012; Mains 2012; Smith and Mwadime 2014). This ethnography follows this line to enrich our understanding of paradoxical identification processes with attention specifically paid to the dynamic place-identity in young men's social world.

In Gowon Estate of Lagos, young men live not only uncertain and precarious lives as elsewhere (e.g., in Niger, Masquelier 2019; in Ethiopia, Di Nunzio 2019) but also a kind of stereotyped life under the label of "Estate boys" (with quotation marks) in this particular context (See chapter 1.4). The existing research on youth identity in Africa largely focuses on the temporality of youth transition to adulthood and how this temporality (often framed through "waithood") reflects and results from social change (Hansen 2005; Honwana 2014; see the review, Banks 2021). This strand of scholarship has illuminated the dynamics of African youth identities as a consequence of urban

livelihood insecurity in the processes of settling down, and it could be further developed by paying attention to place-identity in youth becoming, the paradigmatic nexus human geographers have worked on for a long time. Moreover, drawing on the performative approach taken in this project, this study of Estate boys (without quotation marks) will delve into how young men's urban identification is performatively enacted through everyday practices of constructing place-identity.

The subject of young men in this study is very loosely defined. As illustrated in the showcase of eight informants of the older and the younger generations in chapter 3.2, "youth" do not simply refer to a fixed range of physical ages but to the very dynamic status of people seeking to settle down in their life trajectories. The timing of settling down varies so that young men can be in their 20s, 30s, or even 40s. Compared to the older generation (e.g. Adewunmi and Ogaba), youth (e.g. Dylan and Tom) are faced with more difficulties resulting in their different ways of narrating time and place.

My earlier interpretation of placing cities in life emphasizes that conceptualizing a city like Lagos as a place of settling down is only a partial lens to explore urban identification because Lagos is relationally conceived with many other places and in a constellation of social relations in one's life. To further understand youth urban identification in relation to the specificity of place, I will make two kinds of performative intervention to the place-identity paradigm. The first (in section 5.2) is to interpret how two everyday practices among Estate boys performatively construct the emotional stickiness in their identification with Gowon Estate (as introduced in the previous section 3.2). These practices include "project" counseling after bluffing and "relationship" counseling after *flexing*. The second (in section 5.3) is to draw on a performative frame of

aspirational unsettling to interpret how Tope's social identity materializes through not only these social practices of counseling but also wider socio-spatial practices in his urban livelihood. Before these, I will first introduce how the place-identity of Estate boys is socially constructed along with other discourses on scam-related "yahoo boys" and "big boys". In this chapter, the term "Estate boys" is used in two ways: One is a label "Estate boys" affixed to those young men born or raised in Gowon Estate by the older generation and some tenants, and that some of the younger generation also use to label scammers; the second way is to explore the performative enactment of place-identity of Estate boys among the young men born or raised in Gowon Estate.

5.1 "Scam" Practices and Discourses around the "Estate boys": Stereotyping Young Men in Gowon Estate

On the afternoon of Oct 6, 2018, when I walked along 34 road, I was called over by a group of young men in their 20s sitting on an iron bar while chatting and laughing, among whom was one of my key informants, Williams. This social activity of killing time is a typical practice of "Estate boys" mentioned by Mary. It was obvious that my identity from the U.S. was known. "Which bank are you using in America?" One man asked. I felt confused about this question at the moment. Another man added, "Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo…" I was surprised then, "wow, you know all the banks! You 'big oga' [meaning boss in pidgin]". They all laughed, surprised by my language and tones. At another time, Williams explained to me privately that they knew many

American banks because they had to know how to transfer scam money from U.S. accounts to Nigerian ones.

Online scams conducted by underemployed youth in Africa have been closely studied in Burrell's (2012) ethnography of the Internet Café in Accra. Similar to Smith's (2007) take on everyday corruption in Nigerian society as a result of larger global inequality, Burrell suggests that young Ghanaians experienced "a kind of social and international marginalization online" through the interactions between Ghanaians and foreigners. Their research has shed light on scamming strategies employed by youth, which Williams' narratives below also partly illustrate, but these interpretations primarily treat scamming as a behavior under certain socioeconomic conditions (neoliberalism for instance). In addition to understanding scamming in youth livelihoods, I suggest that youth identification should also be taken into account. In this context, I not only showcase some strategies in response to Burrell's work but further explore how practices of scamming and associated discourses of "yahoo boys" affect everyday becoming, especially the becoming of Estate boys.

Although the identity of Estate boys is also attached to other "misbehaviors" such as smoking, scamming is regarded as a key practice characterizing "Estate boys", not only by the older generation but also by members of the younger generation who often said, "in this Estate, many boys scam". In Lagos, people often use "boys" to refer to young men, as we learned from the infamous label of "area boys" (Momoh 2000; also see chapter 1.3). The usage of "boys" is also found in the usage of "yahoo boys" which refers to those young men engaging in email scamming in Nigeria (Smith 2007: 40). However, the young people I know did not like using "yahoo" because it implies that yahoo boys

not only scam but also engage in witchcraft (as I will elaborate on in chapter 7). Therefore, the social construct of "Estate boys" in Gowon Estate is highly related to how the younger generation conceive of scamming.

For Williams, scamming constitutes both social and material dimensions of becoming. Born in Gowon Estate in 1998, Williams did not start scamming until he graduated from secondary school in 2016. He learned the scamming skills from "big boys", a term also widely used to describe young men who started earlier and had made fortunes from scamming. Their lifestyles motivated Williams to follow this path: "some made plenty of money and bought luxury cars. Some are already married with kids." A typical strategy of scamming is to pretend to be a person with certain status in the U.S., such as a HR manager, in order to lure "customers" into a scam (Smith 2007: 44). However, Williams's interaction with his first "customer" was completely based on reality. "She is white and calls me 'Will'. Actually, I told her everything true, about my mom's shop, 411 road and my life". This young woman from Florida often chatted with Williams via WhatsAPP where he could show his lived experiences in the neighborhood. Williams admitted that this self-presentation was a strategy to earn her sympathy so that he could ask her for financial support. She did send money to Williams on three occasions, totalling around $1,000. She told Williams that if he came to the US, he could stay in her house. In the video chats, she showed Williams her house, school, and her father's working place. "The roads are very neat, not like Nigerian dirty roads." Williams commented. This self-presentation strategy is what Burrell (2012: 73) called "manipulating representations of Africa for the foreign gaze".

Williams had a completely different strategy, described as “gender swapping” (Burrell 2012: 67), to scam his second customer, Timothy, an older, “clumsy” (in Williams’ words) man living in Minnesota. Williams pretended he was a young lady by showing Timothy pictures of a sexy white woman which he downloaded from the Internet. Williams prepared a whole story of this pseudo figure’s life in the U.S. Oftentimes, he asked his younger sister Fiona to talk with Timothy via WhatsApp. She even learned American accents to make the act seem more real. In this way, Timothy was completely taken in and voluntarily sent him $2,500 in total to buy gifts. When I left Nigeria for the United States in 2019, Williams was still engaging in this scam with Timothy, and joked with me “maybe you will meet Timothy on American streets someday”, revealing a sense of achievement to me. Since he recognized my identity as a foreigner in the United States, he showed off that he was able to make money from Americans. Over the time when we got close, especially when I contextualized his U.S. impression and imagination via Google Maps, the intersubjectivity between us was embodied not only through our shared knowledge about America but also our similar positionality in the process of youth becoming. That was why our conversations were not limited to scamming practices but extended to how he makes sense of scamming and the associated social identities of “yahoo boys” and “Estate boys”.

One of the ways he made sense of scamming was to explain how he used this “informal income” to change his livelihood. In addition to a brand-new iPhone and organizing a birthday party for Fiona at a hotel in 2018, Williams paid his admission and tuition fees with this money, when he was not admitted to Kogi State University and chose to study in Cotonou. Similarly, his friend Zack accumulated all his scam money to

purchase the apartment that his parents could not afford during the housing privatization processes in Gowon Estate. Although Williams and Zack asked me not to tell their parents about their scams, they expressed pride that the scam money was spent "legitimately". They contrasted this with the illegitimate ways of obtaining money (e.g.,"money ritual", discussed below), and spending it lavishly as the "big boys" did. Therefore, Williams and Zack identified themselves as "yahoo boys" rather than "big boys". However, I found that Mama Ebi (Williams' mother) and Ada (Zack's father) both knew about their sons' scamming and indicated that they could only pray for their sons[42].

The narratives of "legitimate" usage of scam money in Williams' and Zack's cases enrich our understanding of the meanings of scam practices in youth becoming. Both investments on education and housing are crucial aspects of becoming settled, though Williams and Zack have not achieved that status by engaging in scams. Burrell (2012: 79) interpreted these practices as "an attempt to secure material gains" and as the "empowerment of marginalized groups through new media technologies". Although I admit the intentional usage of these strategies for material and monetary ends, I do not tend to overemphasize or romanticize the technologies but rather call attention to the ontological narratives of life stories in which these scamming practices are contextualized. In doing so, we can better understand how the practices together with discourses of "yahoo boys" serve to stereotype "Estate boys", thereby othering the younger generation born and raised in Gowon Estate.

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[42] The unsaid part of this narrative is that they believed that their sons might risk being involved in harmful spiritual practices when scamming, so that they prayed through "good" religious practices to counter them. More on "money ritual" will be elaborated in chapter 6.

The relationship between othering "Estate boys" and scamming is subtly implicated in the narratives of social changes in Gowon Estate, as many members of the older generation complained that the life had become more "corrupt", but this kind of labeling and othering has different impacts on the young men I knew. For those who were not engaging in scamming, such as Tope, Jacob, Idahosa etc., they were concerned about being labeled as "Estate boys" because they thought "Estate boys" became equivalent to "yahoo boys" which they disliked. In other words, the label of "Estate boys" does not simply refer to young people who were born and grew up in the Estate. Those who were engaged in scamming like Williams and Zack self-identified as "Estate boys" and recognized the correlation between this label and scamming, but they only talked about scamming privately (like to me in this circumstance). Moreover, they do not acknowledge that their scamming strategies involve any "illegitimate" or "immoral" spiritual practices, so that the term "yahoo boys" for them only literally means "scamming". This was also part of the reason why Williams detailed his scamming strategies with me. From his viewpoint, scamming is only a way to partly materialize his aspiration before he finds a better way to settle down, and he understood that he would never become a "big boy" one day. As Davin, a 38-year-old former "Estate boy" said, "we become old. If your children already play around and you still scam, people judge you and leave you." Davin now engages in a legitimate business–running an open-air neighborhood bar "Car Wash" on 41 road--and he plans to marry his girlfriend soon.

The emergence of discourses on "big boys" therefore becomes a "constitutive outside" of the fluid identity of "Estate boys". As identity constitution takes place against a "radical outside, without a common measure with the inside" (Laclau 1990: 18; Mouffe

2000), the dynamic identification with or against "Estate boys" hinges on how "big boys" are socially constructed. Generally speaking, when some "Estate boys" made a fortune from scamming, they became "big boys", but making a fortune from Internet scams is very difficult. In my circle of "Estate boys", I never met a single "big boy", but I heard about their mysterious and lavish lives from various people, younger and older, men and women. The economic inequality between "big boys" and ordinary "Estate boys" gave rise to various narratives about their lifestyle: they do not live in the Estate anymore; they only live in hotels, even for years; they have enough money for their family over their remaining lives. The most frequently-heard narrative pointed to their roles in organizing Gowon Estate "carnivals"—large-scale open-air concerts on 41 road usually held on December 26 every year. Almost every informant I know believed that this annual event was sponsored by "big boys", though they could not specify their identities. Speaking of the 2017 carnival, Davin affirmatively told me, "Those big boys—yahoo boys—spent five million naira sponsoring it, five million, just for fun!" In Gowon Estate, the so-called "carnival" symbolized the lavish lifestyle of mysterious "big boys", to some extent luring some young men like Williams and Davin to engage in scams.

As events often contribute to the construction of (stereotyped) images of place and people (Boland 2008), to explore the larger implications of this event in constructing the place-identity of Estate boys, I felt obligated to participate in the social atmosphere of the 2018 "carnival". Before December 26, 2018, Estate streets were all quiet without any sign of an impending large event. When Tope heard I planned to watch, he warned me, "Are you sure, Kolade? You must take care of your phone." Many other neighbors also mentioned the security problems on the site to me. Jacob thought if I still wanted to go,

he and Tope would accompany me. I did not imagine how insecure an open-air concert would be except for pocket picking. On the afternoon of December 26, I began to see a wooden stage was being set up and several people were moving sound system equipment to the stage. The road was blocked by dumped vehicle tires, only allowing motorbike taxis and passersby to come through. It looked just like a normal neighborhood show to be held in the center of the crossroads. At around 8 PM., I texted Tope but he replied "it's early. Let's meet at 10." I then walked around alone to observe the event site: a technician was checking the sound system; several dozens of white plastic chairs were placed before the stage; along the road, some stalls were set up, displaying all kinds of alcoholic drinks.

Figure 5.1 The Crowd at the 2018 "Carnival"

After Tope, Jacob and Idahosa came, we were seated with beer bottles. The loud music drew more and more young men and women in (in a random estimate, I would say 70-80 percent were men, while women were often accompanied by men). The singing performances began at 10 P.M. and peaked at midnight while all of the participants were vibrantly dancing to the music, including me and my fellows. I asked Jacob which band was performing then. He could not tell, but from his eyes and movement as well as Idahosa's and Tope's, I could tell this music performance was what they aspired to. I suddenly realized what Jacob meant by "event management": he aspired to become a person who could organize and more importantly, sponsor this kind of event. Although he was concerned about being called an "Estate boy", the status of "big boy" was what he wanted to achieve.

Everything I experienced was not beyond my expectation until more violent incidents happened. Around 1 AM, I heard several people fighting ten meters away while the agitated crowd around us started running. Without realizing the situation, I heard Tope calling me "Go Kolade!" and my arm was pulled by him to run. Extracting ourselves from the running crowd after about 50 meters, we stopped and looked back: the crowd swiftly re-gathered and returned to the stage area. In the whole process, nobody shouted or screamed but continuously sang in the loud music. When Tope checked me, I just realized that one of my shoes had come off and was lost in the darkness. Although Tope suggested I should get another pair of shoes from my flat, I insisted on returning to the concert. Jacob reunited with us and explained, "some bad boys from outside just tried to spoil (sabotage) our party. Now it's okay." Whatever factor triggered the incident, I could tell that Tope, Jacob and others took it very lightly, though Tope alerted me of the

danger. It was truly dangerous to run in the middle of a crowd, especially if someone fell down. However, I returned with the belief that this was an accidental happening, though becoming more alert by sitting at the road curb. Just after half an hour, I found I was wrong: seemingly without any trigger, another running crowd happened. This time, I even heard beer bottles being broken. Considering my bare feet, I decided to leave the scene for my apartment. After walking me back, Tope returned to join Jacob, Idahosa and other Estate boys at the concert.

The next morning, Gowon Estate returned to a quiet neighborhood. When I woke up and walked back to 41 road, the stage and tires were removed, leaving glass and food debris on the ground, signaling a large "party" had taken place. The most interesting thing was that in the usual social spaces, such as Mama Ebi's grocery, Olu's workshop, or the Car Wash, nobody actually talked about the event. Even after I met with Tope and Jacob, they did not talk about their activities after my departure or if there were other incidents. For them, the 2018 carnival was as ordinary as previous ones. By the next day, they had moved on: Jacob was still Ah-bouncer; Tope rehearsed at the church choirs; Idahosa hung out with his "omoge" (girlfriend). When I came across Williams, he was curious if I met any omoge at the carnival. After I said I went home early and slept well, he expressed a sense of pity. In everyday conversations, the Pidgin-Yoruba mixed word "omoge" is widely used by these young men to literally refer to a pretty young lady. Additionally, the expression of "omoge" also implies that the relationship with this young lady is not serious enough to evolve toward marriage[43].

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[43] Otherwise, the Yoruba word "iyawo" (meaning "wife") is used to describe a serious relationship.

Being at the event site made me realize that the place-identity of Estate boys is not a static category but dynamically materialized through various discourses around scams. What those Estate boys performed on the night of December 26, 2018 resulted from the mundane experiences in the neighborhood so that those happenings by which I as an outsider was surprised were taken naturally by them. Kaiser (2014: 123) reminds us that "the past itself is continually remade as events are retro-fitted into what has occurred". From this perspective, the "carnival" event prompts us to further explore the socio-spatial norms that naturalize the identities of Estate boys so that we can challenge the stereotyping labels associated with scam discourses in the understanding of dynamic identification processes.

5.2 Idahosa's Bluffing and *Flexing*: The Social Practices of Counseling in the Affinity Group

As the construct of place-identity by Estate boys is related to but does not match the "Estate Boy" stereotypes, drawing on the performative approach, I suggest further exploring the everyday social practices that help construct youth identity in Gowon Estate. In other words, instead of focusing on the narratives that particularize the label of "Estate boys" (with quotation marks), I explore how the performative enactment of the place-identity Estate boys (without quotation marks) materializes through their mundane discursive practices. The objective of this section is to articulate what those discursive practices among Estate boys are and to elaborate on how socio-spatial identification is enacted through everyday sayings and doings.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Gowon Estate becomes a "sticky space" for feeling at home among the younger generation. By specifically drawing on their dilemma of choosing residential places, I explored the stickiness of emotions in the youth's lived experiences regardless of the geographical distance of their temporary residence to Gowon Estate where they used to or still have a "family house". To understand how and where the emotional stickiness comes from, further exploring the specific social practices in the place is needed.

In this section, I will elaborate on two kinds of local social practices in the neighborhood: project counseling after bluffing and relationship counseling after *flexing* with *omoge*. Here the word "counseling" does not refer to professional advising and treatment in the fields of social work and psychology; it is derived from my informants' choice of word in their conversations: many people described the role of close friends as "counselor" who provides various kinds of advice and emotional support. Of course, the social lives of Estate boys are not restricted to only two "counseling" practices. Scholars have emphasized the spatiality of social practices in creating stickiness, especially the spatial barriers to socialize with people across normed categories (Cloke et al. 2008; Laketa 2018), but in this Gowon Estate context, spatial fixity of daily mobility is very habitual, hinging on each group's or couple's personal preferences. Therefore, I will focus on the connectedness of social relationships among young men with attention paid to the spatial registers of their social activities in Gowon Estate. In doing so, I will elaborate on a case study of one Estate boy—Idahosa—and his social interactions with 3-4 people in his affinity group with whom I often socialized from 2016 to 2019.

5.2.1 Bluffing and "Project" Counseling

In the first place, through participant observation at particular sites in the neighborhood, usually in the late afternoon or early evening when the electric power was not supplied, I was able to capture nuanced interactions that are frequently performed among young men—bluffing, and more importantly and the counseling that follows. For instance, several wooden benches outside Olu's tailor workshop at the junction of 412 road is one of the sites where Tope, Olupo and those Estate boys in their early thirties hang out. The iron bar behind Mama Ebi's convenience shop is another site where Williams, Zack and those "yahoo boys" (called by other residents) in their twenties sit and chat. There is no reason given by my informants why these sites become social spaces for their group. Socially, both Olu and Williams are not the central persons in their affinity groups; therefore, a social space close to their shops is more likely a space of habitus that has crystallized over the time. There is also no cost to gather at these sites.

A typical interactional mode of bluffing unfolds in this way: a man tells the group an idea of initiating some projects with an anticipated outcome, while the others do not believe in the outcome or even the whole project by calling the man "bluffing" or "lie lie" (in pidgin, a soft expression of lying behavior without pointing to the character of being a liar). Here "bluffing" is not simply the act of artifice through which young men and women project the appearance of success (Newell 2012) but also the "act of anticipation". According to Kemmer and Simone (2021): residents in Rio de Janeiro and Jakarta "stand by" the promise, not of passive waiting, but as maneuvers of either staying tuned to or as way of tactical detachment from the multiple trajectories which have been

conjured up in the here and now. This idea of “standing by” reminds me of not only examining “bluffing” as a conversational performance at that moment in that space but also extending the attention to the bluffer’s actions and maneuvers beyond the moment.

In *The Modernity Bluff*, Newell (2012) illustrates that Ivoirians used the word *bluff* to describe the act of artifice through which young men and women project the appearance of success. In Lagos, “bluff” has a similar meaning to “brag”, according to my informants’ interpretations: when people see or hear someone bluffing, they usually think the person (bluffer) is not taking it seriously. However, in my observations through daily conversations, bluffers do not aim to exaggerate or cheat people for the purpose of their pride or anything else; many of the young men I know actually believe in the subjects of bluffs and claim that they are just on the way to materialize their belief and aspiration. Thus, the bluff is a performance of telling others their aspirational future.

Also, bluffing here does not mean that they do nothing about their aspirations but orally bluff among peers; bluffing is sometimes backed by certain inputs that they managed to make out of their uncertain and precarious livelihoods, therefore the subsequent counseling is necessary for them to achieve something. This is a back and forth process in youth becoming. I examine below how Idahosa “bluffs” his peers with his anticipated project ideas and how his affinity group responds to his bluffs. I found that although all his anticipation turned out to become “unfinished projects”, he did make efforts to materialize his ideas; although his peers verbally categorized Idahosa’s talking as bluffing, they still engaged in providing advice (counseling) about Idahosa’s “projects”.

As one of earliest informants I had known since 2016, Idahosa is a famous as well as disreputable figure in Gowon Estate: born in Lagos and growing up in the Estate, he has established a wide social network that includes his family friends, as his father was the Central CDA chairman; among his acquaintances, however, his reputation was not very positive (c.f. chapter 2, Henry's critique of living with parents at the age of 31), particularly about his overstated bluffing. The most common narrative from Idahosa's affinity group points to his bluff by commenting, "Idahosa is not serious," because Idahosa liked to phrase his projects in a fancy way. But the major concern raised by Tope, Henry and many others was that he did not persist with what he was doing but flexibly changed to anything new he came up with. Over the three years, I witnessed that his businesses evolved from grilling catfish (in 2016) to running a smoothie stall (in 2017), both in the Estate, from a branding strategy company to a domestic cleaning team (in 2018), the latter two remaining simply at the idea stage with unfinished websites. Whatever business he did, he always painted a flowery picture of business growth to his peers during the social hours.

For instance, on May 15, 2018, when Idahosa, Tope, Henry, Jacob and I got together in a bar & restaurant on 41 road, Idahosa announced his new project: "I'm selling fish again. I have plenty of fish. Good price!" Differing from his grill business in 2016, this project focused on live catfish that he traded from a wholesale market. I asked Idahosa, "how many fishes?" He blurted out, "400!" People all laughed out, implying that this number is his buff. Jacob replied coldly "lie lie." Idahosa refuted, "Come to my house! Plenty o! You will see my fish all over these bars." All others also took this as a bluff. At that time, Jacob had friction with Idahosa because of some trivial matters, but later in our

conversations, Jacob still briefly mentioned that he knew someone who might be interested in buying live catfish. Three days later, I followed Jacob and Tope to Idahosa's home. To my surprise, there were really "plenty of" live fish in a sink: of course not 400 but at least 200, I estimated. Idahosa's father was taking care of them. So, this might be his father's business rather than Idahosa's. However, Jacob and Tope did not care about the earlier bluff, the number of fish or the ownership of this business; they talked continously to Idahosa about where and when to meet potential customers.

This project did not last long because they found it difficult to build long-term partnerships with bars & restaurants in this area. On November 18, 2018, when Idahosa bluffed another project in our group, he tried to explain why this fish business was not continued. "I'm not interested in fish or smoothies. What I want to do is this [showing a website on his smartphone]: branding and marketing. I will set up an office in Lagos. Once we have stable income, I can open another one in Abuja. Along the way, I can have side projects like fish or smoothies." This "branding" project was never put into practice. Even before this started, Idahosa turned to the next one: home cleaning service. As his close peers, Tope and Henry did not confront him but complained in private by indicating Idahosa's plans were not realistic. Nevertheless, both Tope and Henry actively participated in Idahosa's projects: Tope often assisted Idahosa to grill fish, while Henry introduced many other Estate boys to patronize Idahosa's smoothie stall that was located at Henry's residential block. The cleaning team was composed of these same three people and had only provided service once before I left the field in 2019.

It was seemingly contradictory to see how Jacob, Henry and Tope expressed their opinions about Idahosa's bluffing while still actively engaging in those never-to-be-

finished projects. In Henry's and Tope's narratives of close friendship, Idahosa, the man whom they hang out with almost every day in Gowon Estate, was not there. As Tope put it, "Idahosa is my top 10 (close friends), but not top three, maybe number five or six" (Feb 21, 2019). Even Henry and Tope were not close to each other in their narratives, but they socialized through Idahosa's projects very frequently. Such paradoxical sociality results from the social practice of counseling, no matter whether or not the person listens to the counselor.

For Tope, becoming a counselor in the affinity group is one of things that he was proud of. For more than half a year during my fieldwork, Idahosa and Jacob had been accusing each other of not exchanging reciprocal gifts. Tope was the one who mediated this tension and counseled both Idahosa and Jacob. He believed this is what he was "good at". From Olupo's perspective, another key member in the affinity group, Tope also played the role of counselor in his life, "I call Tope not for money, but for advice or encouragement." Indeed, Tope could not provide any financial support. This also reveals that counseling does not require any material and monetary input. In Idahosa's cleaning teamwork, both Tope and Henry contributed their manpower instead of any capital or material.

In the everyday life of Estate boys who often socialize with their affinity groups, bluffing becomes a common social practice on the surface, but the social practices of counseling is more likely what created the social glue. Many Africanist scholars have illustrated how urban youth failed to realize their aspirations through the urban informal economy, thereby affecting their transition to an imagined future of "adulthood" (Frederiksen & Munive 2010; Mains 2012). Bluffing is thus discovered and interpreted in

this scenario (Newell 2012). I found that this interpretation of youth aspiration and identification is nothing but rephrasing my informants' reasoning: they believe in a certain input they have made to materialize their aspirations and attribute the limited extent of their success to the lack of resources (usually money). However, what underlies their performances of bluffing and critiques of bluffing are their counseling practices that involve them in the "bluffed" projects. That said, the subsequent counseling practices are important for understanding how social identification is enacted within the affinity group and how stickiness to the place—Gowon Estate—is performatively constructed through socio-spatial practices. In this sense, I would suggest bluffing and counseling is a mutually constitutive performance to exchange aspirations as a way out in young men's precarious and uncertain urban life; what is performative in this scenario is the social identification with this neighborhood-formed affinity group in which each one can be another's "counselor" on the matters of aspirational projects.

5.2.2 Flexing with Omoge and "Relationship" Counseling

The second social practice that contributes to the stickiness of emotions in Gowon Estate is the assemblage of *flexing* and counseling. The pidgin word *flexing,* widely used by Estate boys, is derived from English "relaxing". In the local context, *flexing* can unfold in many scenarios, one of which involves a mixture of young men and women: a group of 3-4 Estate boys, some of whom are accompanied by one or two *omoges* (young ladies), sit in the open-air bars or restaurants. *Flexing* requires certain monetary input (on beer and snacks usually) and being comfortably seated in a space filled with loud music;

therefore, sitting on the iron bar or wooden bench at the roadside cannot be called *flexing*. Given the monetary input and more enjoyable environments, on some occasions, Estate boys like to bring young women who are in a relationship with them (there are occasions when Estate boys *flex* with their own *omoges* alone, such as going to the cinema). In other words, their practices of *flexing* with *omoge* in the affinity group provide other group members with chances to counsel, therefore letting me observe and understand *flexing* and counseling.

In the ethnographic research on young men's dating relationships, scholars would interpret the practice of *flexing* with *omoges* as the performance of manhood (Newell 2012: 99-138; Smith 2017: 86-120). Subsequently, I will discuss this interpretation in the case study of Idahosa's relationships. More importantly, by conducting participant observation on how his *flexing* practices were discussed in his affinity group, I discovered that what infused the social interactions within this affinity group was not the performance of *flexing* but the ways in which young men weighed in to counsel Idahosa regarding his behavior and attitude toward the relationships. Therefore, as with the "project counseling" practices following the bluffing in the group, I suggest that social practices of "relationship counseling" are equally important for understanding how social identification with the affinity group is performatively enacted by Estate boys.

Throughout the period of my fieldwork in Gowon Estate, Idahosa's relationship with Ngozi had been a central topic in the circle of the young men I often hung out with, including Tope, Jacob, Henry, and Olupo. Born in an Igbo family in Lagos, Ngozi met Idahosa in a church in Ikeja, the central business area of Mainland Lagos. Given that Ngozi lived in Iyana Ipaja, the transport hub close to Gowon Estate, and was running a

small shop selling necklaces and accessories on 51 road in the Estate, Idahosa could date Ngozi frequently in the neighborhood. While Idahosa fell in and out with Ngozi during this time, he also kept relationships with other "*omoges*". Observing how Idahosa bluffed his aspiration (as I elaborated above) and performed his *flexing* with Ngozi in front of his male peer group, as well as how these men openly and privately narrated and commented on Idahosa's relationships provided me with insight into the performative enactment of place-identity in this urban context.

Their primary narratives center on Idahosa's relationship with Ngozi pertaining to money and love: if Idahosa should spend a sum of money with his *omoge* Ngozi and if Ngozi should materially contribute to this relationship. The discussions were especially heated after Idahosa spent four nights with Ngozi in a hotel to celebrate her birthday. On the evening of March 30, 2018, before Idahosa and Ngozi arrived at our dinner, Tope calculated Idahosa's spending with us, "he could earn 60 or 70k this month. This is good, but he spends 40k on her birthday. It's not worth it." Having been in the same underemployed status for a long time, Tope, Idahosa and Henry all worked temporarily[44] as sales promotion men for a milk company at that time. Based on his sales performance, Idahosa's earnings were considerably improved from his previous ones, which were usually 20,000-40,000 naira. Both Tope and Henry thought that Ngozi was too dependent on Idahosa's money which they all knew was not much. "She has income; she should also contribute." Tope suggested. Henry agreed and used his own example to criticize

[44] This job only lasted for two weeks and was not always available every month. The availability of temporary work is contingent on the call from the company who wants to launch a promotion campaign in a particular area. Throughout 2018, Tope was called three times, while Idahosa was called four times.

Ngozi, "like Stella (Henry's *omoge*), she always brought some food to my house. I never see Ngozi cook for Idahosa."

These conversations to some extent echo Smith's (2017) argument but also raise some issues of social identity that are not addressed in his ethnography. Smith suggests, "poorer men spend much more than they can afford… And the very same poor men who criticize the ostentatious behavior of the rich would condemn them even more if they failed to spend in this way. Money is integral to how men perform their manhood" (Ibid, p. 119). Idahosa indeed spent more than half of his earnings to please his "omoge" and to perform his manhood, but can this behavior be defined as "ostentatious" and *only* be attributed to a way of performing manhood? Can other people's social engagements only echo Idahosa's performance?

Examining other young men's counseling practices for Idahosa provides us with an additive view of the affinity group in the local context. When his relationship with Ngozi underwent an ebb period in July 2018, Tope and Henry thought that their counseling had had an effect. When we met on July 18, Idahosa was accompanied by Precious, a young woman whom he called "my *omoge*". Three days later in our peer group gathering, Henry explained to me privately that Precious was one of Idahosa's former *omoges*, so she was not completely new in this circle. In two months, we found that Idahosa restored his relationship with Ngozi while still dating Precious. Then, Tope, Henry, and even Jacob weighed in again to express their opinions about the differences between Ngozi and Precious, which Idahosa listened to but did not always agree with (Idahosa also consulted with me about his relationships).

Their discussions still centered on money and love which they thought should be decoupled, especially when they saw Idahosa tended to *flex* with Precious as he did with Ngozi. However, in the case of the Gowon Estate carnival, all these young men implicitly expressed their aspiration to the materialistic life that "big boys" lived, though they also criticized the ways in which "big boys" accumulated the wealth (not simply scams but also the spiritual practices associated with scams, to be analyzed in chapter 7). That said, why did they criticize Idahosa's behavior while performatively appreciating big boys' lavish lifestyles through the event of "carnival"? We may interpret this divergence from an economic perspective: the former is practically based on their vulnerable economic status; the latter results from men's perceptions of economic inequality and social status, as Smith (2017) suggests. However, the case study of Idahosa's relationships and counseling practices from his affinity group illustrates a social dimension of this divergence. Having known Idahosa's economic status well, those peers did not recognize the performance of materialistic consumption as a form of aspirational love; instead, this performance, often categorized as bluffing, created a certain level of peer pressure among young men, as showcased in Henry's narrative of comparing Ngozi with Stella. Therefore, decoupling love from money becomes reasonable in their counseling practices in the case of their peers who are in a similar unsettled situation. Given that those rich "big boys" do not have any interaction with this affinity group, the Estate boys did not care about the ostentatious behaviors (in contrast with their deep concerns on Idahosa's); they only performatively embodied their aspiration to that kind of life at that particular moment of the year.

Drawing on a case study of Idahosa's *flexing* with *omoges* in the affinity group that he identifies himself with, I have shed light on how this socializing practice serves to create a conversational space in which money and love are discussed by young men. Idahosa's ostentatious consumption with his *omoge* was not merely performed to show his manhood (argued by anthropologists like Smith) but more likely judged and counseled by other men in the group. A kind of aspirational love that decouples money and love was socially constructed in the affinity group. Over the time when these young men all brought *omoges* to *flexing* sites and counseled each other's relationships in one way or another, their stickiness of emotion to this social group was reinforced through "relationship counseling".

In sum, the interpretation of two kinds of counseling practices that follow bluffing and *flexing* in the affinity group sheds light on the social mechanism of stickiness of emotions among Estate boys. To further develop the scholarship on urban social spaces that stick or become saturated with affect (Laliberte and Schurr 2016; Laketa 2018), this research emphasizes specific social practices through which these coagulations are forged. Moreover, I suggest, despite those emotional and social tensions among Estate boys in the affinity group, the social identity is still performatively enacted through those counseling practices. The performativity of place-based social identity, in this sense, makes Estate boys sticky not only with social space but also with the subjects of peer groups in the place. This is how Gowon Estate becomes young men's sticky space.

Moreover, two series of social practices are respectively built on ideas of work and love, leading to employment and marriage—the two dimensions of settling down

processes as we saw in chapter 3—so that these two practices are actually entangled in youths' becoming. In other words, Estate boys' bluffing, *flexing* with *omoge* and subsequent counseling practices often took place at the same time and in the same space; there is no distinct boundary between these performances. To better understand the relationship between project and relationship counseling practices, I suggest we should situate them in a larger picture of one's urban experiences in and out of Gowon Estate.

5.3 Tope's "Bad Cycle": Spatializing Aspirational Unsettling

As we have learned that the spatial dimension of stickiness is not only bound up with specific sites in Gowon Estate but is reified through habitual practices within affinity groups, we may want to further ask how the social stickiness with Gowon Estate articulates with urban identification. After all, urban residents do not usually identify themselves with a single neighborhood they inhabit. That said, we may ask, how important the place of Gowon Estate is for these young men who were born or grew up in the Estate; alternatively speaking, is there any other place in Lagos also invoking Estate boys' stickiness of emotion. To answer these questions, I suggest we zoom out to place the social practices of affinity groups in the larger map of lived experiences in Lagos and in the longer processes of settling down.

My earlier interpretation of placing cities in life (chapter 3.1) emphasizes that conceptualizing a city like Lagos as a place of settling down is only a partial lens to explore urban identification because Lagos is relationally conceived with many other places in one's life trajectory. In this section, I will further flesh out this perspective by

suggesting a concept— "aspirational unsettling"—to explore young men's urban identification in relation to their social identity-in-the-making. Derived from Kraftl's (2007) performative approach to utopia, the idea of aspirational unsettling not only acknowledges the unsettled and unsettling experiences of young men's livelihood but also emphasizes the aspirational dimension of the lived experiences filled with contingency, anxiety, and uncertainty.

Kraftl (2007) argues that traditional utopias are often characterized by a pervading sense of comfort, while in the open-ended, poststructural utopias which are concerned with differences and deconstruction of binaries, an unsettled discomfort might become desirable. Although I would not completely follow Kraftl's optimistic, or "romanticizing" tones to reframe youth experience in Africa, I admit that the binary conception of utopia and dystopia of African megacities and urban life is less useful for understanding the complexity of youth desires and agency so that urban identification is reduced to interpreting the implications of diverse youths' living strategies and practices under societal constraints (neoliberalism for instance). This tendency is obviously embodied in the ethnographic studies of "life in (African) cities" (see the Introduction). In the popular narratives of life in Lagos, for example, Nnodim (2008) draws on realist portraits of Lagos in popular novels, arguing that urban identities of youth subjects were woven through emerging subjectivities of crisis that configure responses to contemporary realities experienced as dystopian where "individual agency no longer produces expected results and where dreams and utopias can no longer be realized" (Ibid, p. 323). Instead of using the strong word "utopia", I suggest that urban youth's lived experience is more

likely "aspirational" than "utopian"; in the open-ended aspirational urban world, the unsettled status is normalized.

On the surface of everyday ontological narratives, what people aspire to is always focused on the aspects of comfort, homeliness and settlement, but I suggest that the boundaries of utopia and dystopia and of despair and hope are blurred (Grosz 2001; Pinder 2002; Kraftl 2007). Aspiration is in fact contingent, unpredictable and profoundly unsettling, and our work is to explore the extent to which the unsettling is ingrained into aspiration. In other words, for those young men who perform bluffing and *flexing* in longtime unsettled processes, the contingent and unpredictable nature of youth aspirations makes them verbally express an expected outcome–by bluffing a "project". Practically, however, they are more interested in the extent to which they could socially engage in the "project" through counseling. The ideas of "*omoge*" and "*flexing*" also hinge on open-ended unsettling experiences rather than an enclosed, settled, and linear ending—marriage. Putting this all together, we can suggest that Estate boys in these two scenarios are becoming unsettled and this process, together with their unfinished projects, contribute to urban identification.

Youth aspiration has been widely studied in African contexts (Weiss 2009; Frederiksen & Munive 2010; Mains 2012). In Brad Weiss's (2009) ethnography of urban young men's global fantasy in Tanzania, he observed and suggested that these men's short, frequent, and practical haircuts (once a week or every other week) display the "qualities of toughness and hardness essential to struggling and surviving" while offering "a performative confirmation of the truth that reality as imagined and engaged holds in urban Arusha" (Ibid p.91). Therefore, the spaces of barbershops become nodes in an

explosion of popular culture that appropriates images drawn from the global circulation of hip hop music, fashion, and celebrity. Weiss (2009: 94-95) frames young men barber's fantasy and imagination as "thug realism", the real, poised fantasies in Arusha, at the intersection of global possibility and local limitation. Compared to the popularity of barbershops in Arusha, barbershops in Gowon Estate do not become a primary social space for the Estate boys I knew; haircutting is also not a key concern or an aspirational practice among them. Nevertheless, the idea of "thug realism" conveys a perspective of approaching aspiration ("fantasy" in his account) which is not simply ideal but socially accepted by urban youth. As Weiss (2009: 95) put it, "it is only by inhabiting these imagined worlds in the intimacy and concreteness of specific social frameworks that locality is produced, global forms are constituted, and fantasy is brought to life".

There are multiple ways of bringing "aspiration" to life: apart from barbering, the illicit practices of scamming were known from Williams' experiences and widely discussed by the young men in Gowon Estate. As elaborated above, scamming could not be just treated as a phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria (Smith 2007), but more likely as mundane discursive practices that serve to socially construct the place-identity of Estate boys and the categories of "yahoo boys" and "big boys". In the narratives of how "yahoo boys" become "big boys" through scamming, Estate boys performatively expressed their aspirations to affluent lifestyle at the "carnival" event, though their comments on "yahoo boys" sound very negative. In a long process of becoming settled, their aspirations are socio-spatially embodied through unsettling experiences.

Among these Estate boys, my key informant Tope's life illustrates a fuller picture of how young men aspire to a way out while being stuck in the sticky space of Gowon

Estate. In terms of two social practices, Tope did not often bluff but liked being a counselor (considering Idahosa's, Olu's and Olupo's narratives of Tope's role in their lives); Tope did not usually bring *omoge* for *flexing* but he tended to discuss with other young men about Idahosa's and Jacob's relationships. In chapter 3.2, we learned about Tope's life story of (not) feeling at home in Gowon Estate (also with reference to his father Abiola's and his brother Porter's home unmaking and remaking practices), and to further explore how Tope's stickiness of emotion relates to urban identification and how the idea of "aspirational unsettling" helps to understand this relation, below I will elaborate on Tope's everyday spatial practices in and out of Gowon Estate. In doing so, we can situate two kinds of neighborhood-based social practices in a longer life trajectory and in a wider mobility experience in the city.

Throughout 2018 and 2019 when I stayed in Gowon Estate, Tope worked between three and ten days per month for a milk powder company, earning 5,000-15,000 naira monthly. His sales job was to promote trial products to customers in a market on Lagos Island. This job was so informal that he could only work upon receiving calls from his supervisor. Sometimes, he was not called for a whole month. From September 11 to September 25, 2018, he only worked two days. Over the course of these fifteen days, I invited him to participate in my project "mobility and sociality". In doing so, he wrote in a notebook about his interactions with people in his life, including both virtual and physical meetings, regarding whom he talked to and when and where these conversations took place.

From table 5.1, we can see that when not working in Lagos Island, Tope's mobility is largely based on Gowon Estate and surrounding areas. Among these fifteen days, three

days were completely spent indoors if he did not meet me, and for five days he hung around in the neighborhood by meeting people, going to the bank, or having a haircut. Moreover, going to church in Ikeja also constituted a major part of Tope's mobility map. This does not simply mean that Tope is a devout person who goes to church regularly; instead, Tope usually goes to different churches to play guitar in the church music groups. This is a part-time job providing Tope with a small sum of money, about 1,000 naira (no more than $3) per week after deducting transport and food expenses on those days. Given the unstable income from the sales job, playing instruments at churches became a primary additional source of income in his livelihood since I knew him in 2016. According to his explanation of his mobility, "I just don't want to be bored at home" (September 13, 2018). In fact, he spent quite an amount of time staying at home or in the neighborhood, partly because his earnings could not afford him a larger-scale mobility in the city[45]. This mobility pattern is also found among other Estate boys. Thus, without specific working engagements, underemployed young men would primarily hang out around the neighborhood.

In addition to this economic perspective, Tope's aspiration to life progresses lies in his social interactions with the affinity groups, including Idahosa, Ngozi, Henry in one group and Jacob, Edith (Jacob's *omoge*), and Steve in another, who all lived in or around Gowon Estate[46]. Like many other Estate boys, Tope did not have only one affinity group and managed to meet different groups at different times and locations even on the same

[45] Roundtrip between Gowon Estate and Ikeja would be 300-700 naira; to Lagos Island, 1,000-1,200 naira.

[46] In November 2022, when I revisited Tope, Idahosa, and Jacob, the affinity groups did not exist anymore due to disputes and conflicts among them. Nevertheless, they still lived around Gowon Estate and hung out with other people to form new affinity groups.

day. On September 12, for example, he met both Edith and Saul in his residence in the morning and went to meet Henry at a bank in the afternoon. In the group with Idahosa, despite his concerns on various projects Idahosa proposed, he still actively participated in those projects. His role of "project counseling" for Idahosa was more likely embodied as a social and emotional support than practical advice. From Idahosa's perspective, Tope could not make any financial contribution, but "he is always with me. He is an all-arounder". Tope actually did not stick with Idahosa, as we can see from his patterns of mobility and sociality (Table 5.1), but this feeling of being "with" people was recognized and highly valued by Tope. In his reflective narrative of his participation, he admitted that he was also self-interested, "I wish he succeeds; if he succeeds, I can also make progress." In his mind, Idahosa's efforts, though some of which were bluffed and unrealistic, carried their aspirations to make progress in life. Along the way, his participation could potentially be rewarded–his work with Idahosa and Henry on milk powder sales was an example. That was why he seemed always to be "with" or "around" people (if not Idahosa, they would be others). This is not based on instrumental calculation of success probability but his feelings of social connectedness and aspiration to a way-out.

Moreover, Tope's aspiration to "true love" lies in his role of mediating romantic relationships in his affinity groups. As discussed above, Tope and Henry provided counseling for Idahosa in his relationship with Ngozi. In another group, Tope also had similar social practices of relationship counseling for Jacob and Edith. Although he did not develop any personal romantic relationship then, he took seriously his role of mediating Idahosa's and Jacob's relationships with their *omoges*. Given that Tope rented

a single room alone, his place was often used by these two couples as a temporary space for making out. Both Idahosa and Jacob lived with their parents, so Tope's residence became a special space for *flexing* with their *omoges*. To some extent, Tope enjoyed offering this help which he saw as a kind of "relationship" counseling as well, though he sometimes expressed a sense of embarrassment[47]. Despite his concern on Ngozi being "an ideal wife", which he constantly mentioned to Idahosa, he did not intend to intervene or jeopardize any relationship Idahosa or Jacob brought to the affinity groups. What he always tries to do is to advise them to pursue "true love" instead of being spoiled by a dating relationship. One day, Idahosa wanted to bring another *omoge* to Tope's home, Tope refused, "if it's Ngozi, she is fine. Because Ngozi is a friend. But with another girl, I don't know her; why I should let her come." Here Tope thought he was responsible for the relationship he counseled. Tope had his principle, a principle not based on his friendship with Idahosa but his counseling role in Idahosa's relationship. In doing so, his pursuit of "true love" could never be stopped.

Tope's social practices in the affinity groups strengthened his daily immobility that is restricted to Gowon Estate areas. If we zoom out to look at Tope's life trajectory, which we have partly done in analyzing his life story in chapter 3.1, we can see that after his family house moved out of Gowon Estate to suburban Lagos and he was forced to drop out from the Polytechnic, his livelihood became more and more unsettled. In his reflection, he expressed being stuck in a "bad" cycle: "I have my plan early on, but because of my education, I can't finish it and get the certificate, so I can't be hired for a decent job. So, I can't have money; without money, I can't continue my education."

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[47] Tope complained they kissed in front of him, and this embarrassment was laughed by Olu who taught Tope a new Yoruba word (See chapter 6.2)

Table 5.1 The Mobility and Sociality of Tope's Life

Date	Places	People Met in Person
9.11	Estate	Steve, Jacob and Edith (Jacob's *omoge*)
9.12	Estate	Edith, Steve, Henry
9.13 (work)	Lagos Island	Supervisor and customers on the street, me
9.14 (work)	Lagos Island, Ikeja	Supervisor and customers on the street; Church music group
9.15	Estate	Idahosa, Henry, me
9.16 Sunday	Ikeja	Church people
9.17	At home	Me
9.18	Estate	Barber's shop
9.19	Estate, Mile 2	Idahosa (deliver things for him to Mile 2)
9.20	Ikeja	Church music group
9.21	Ikeja	Church music group
9.22	Estate	Henry, Idahosa, Ngozi
9.23 Sunday	Ikeja	Church people
9.24	At home	Nobody
9.25	At home	Me

This kind of "bad cycle" also applied to his love life. Unlike Idahosa and Jacob, Tope did not usually *flex* with *omoge*, at least in public where we could see. He did have romantic relationships with some women, such as a former classmate known through the Polytechnic and a friend he knew through the sales job. As they did not live nearby, Tope could not meet them as frequently as Idahosa met Ngozi and Jacob met Edith. On September 17, Tope told me secretly (without telling Idahosa or Jacob) that a waitress at the open-air bar where we often hung out asked Tope for his phone number and indicated that she would like to come to Tope's house. Tope turned this down and explained to me, "I'm not ready. Money no dey [Pidgin, money does not arrive]". This discourse of money-and-love cycle was widely circulated among Estate boys: they assume women are only attracted by money rather than love; if they do not have money to marry, they do not date, so that they never encounter a "true love" and have to only *flex* with *omoge*.

Although Tope's "bad cycles" in both work and love are consciously represented in his life story of "becoming unsettled", those everyday practices of counseling in and across affinity groups performatively construct his social identity, through which "the unsettling are engrained into hope" (Kraftl 2007: 128) and aspiration. In other words, by examining those socio-spatial practices, our question is directed to the extent to which those young men might aspire to the unsettling. Although not as much as Idahosa bluffed, Tope did express his aspiration to travel abroad (he has a Nigerian friend working in Ecuador) and to join a music band as a guitar player. But according to performative theories, these verbally expressed dreams were just performances of his aspiration. What is performative lies in his everyday socio-spatial practices in the affinity group, leading to this paradoxical combination of "aspiration" and "unsettling".

From the analysis of Tope's project and relationship counseling for Idahosa, we can see that his aspirations to life progresses are not achieved or explicitly expressed but unconsciously embodied through constant participation in the projects and mediation for the dating relationships. Only in this unsettling status, his fellow Estate boys initiated projects and *flexed* with *omoges*, allowing him to aspire to a way out or a true love that decouples money and love. Subjectively, Tope never claimed that he liked being stuck in the unsettling "bad cycle", but he could make sense of it. The performative approach to his everyday discursive practices in affinity groups and broader lived experiences in the city informs us of the importance of aspirational unsettling in his sense-making.

Furthermore, by spatializing his social interactions on a larger scale, I argue that the aspirational unsettling results in the formation of the sticky space of Gowon Estate in Tope's life. Although this unsettling process is subjectively undesirable, his aspiration

unknowingly materializes through counseling practices for one person or another, spatially attached to Gowon Estate. In this sense, despite living outside Gowon Estate, he still identified himself as an Estate boy. In his lived experiences, what is aspirational is not a finished status but an ever-changing process of unsettling in which his socio-spatial identity is formed.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

The fluid place-identity of Estate boys is socially constructed in the shadow of scam discourses and practices. Beyond the literal meaning of second-generation young men born and raised in Gowon Estate, "Estate boys" are gradually othered and stereotyped not only by members of the older generation but also by young men who differentiated themselves from "yahoo boys" and the mysterious label of "big boys". Instead of a coherent, bounded, and pre-given category of identity, "Estate boys" are individually, dynamically defined by the "constitutive outside"—those who are not socially and emotionally tied to the place of Gowon Estate, such as "big boys" in myth. The unstable nature of identification with Estate boys seems to contradict their strong sense of stickiness to Gowon Estate, regardless of their residential locations in or out of the neighborhood. Such a seeming "contradiction" cannot be fully explained through the place-identity paradigm that emphasizes how identity is shaped or negotiated according to social changes of urban place (e.g., Martin 2005; Burrell 2016). The performative approach to sticky space (also see Laketa 2018) usefully sheds light on the everyday reiterative practices that enact the social identity of Estate boys.

This study thus demonstrates how a performative approach can contribute to understandings of youth social identity in urban Africa. As the existing ethnographies show, bluffing and *flexing* with *omoge* (in the framing of performing manhood by Smith) are very meaningful social practices among young men (Newell 2012; Smith 2017). My additive interpretation of counseling practices following bluffing and flexing enriches the accounts of social dynamics in the affinity groups. Both types of counseling are important in addressing two major concerns in youth becoming and settling down processes. Moreover, through reiterative counseling practices (e.g., money and love), those Estate boys performatively construct their sticky space—they feel sticky with the place of Gowon Estate that is saturated with emotions *and* relations.

Moreover, another performative conception, aspirational unsettling, that is built from the seemingly paradoxical idea of utopian unsettling (Kraftl 2007), further helps us understand the relationship between young men's social identity in-the-making and their urban identification processes. By delving into one single young man's mobility and sociality in and beyond Gowon Estate, we understand that sticky space does not restrict the young man to an enclosed place or a single affinity group. Tensions among unsettling young men in and across groups of Estate boys provide space for counseling practices, therefore bringing up aspiration and hope at the time. Such entanglement of emotions and relations manifests itself in the spatiality of social lives. In other words, Estate boys socially want to and emotionally have to identify themselves with life in Gowon Estate and Lagos.

Chapter 6 Performed and Performative Ethnicity via "Lagos in Life": The Entanglement of Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness

In public narratives of "life in Lagos", discourses of ethnicity manifest in the Yoruba expression of "Eko Ile" (Lagos home) as well as the pidgin phrase "No man's land". On the surface, the former phrase is used by Yoruba people to categorize Lagos as a Yoruba place; the latter is used to reject the idea that Lagos belongs to an ethnic group–Yoruba in this context. This binary categorization, however, only reveals a tip of the iceberg of how ethnicity is performed in Lagos. Although Lagos residents tend to carefully talk about ethnicity to avoid being judged as "tribalists" (see chapter 1.3), the relationships between life in Lagos and Yoruba-ness are extensively narrated in everyday life. Thus, to study urban identification in Lagos, ethnicity is an important dimension. Instead of superficially analyzing how residents narrate ethnicity/Yoruba-ness in life in Lagos, this chapter will examine the underlying normative structures that inform the doing of "ethnicity" via the lens of "Lagos in Life".

In African contexts, ethnicity is often treated as a dynamic category that is subject to negotiations and contestations over political citizenship (Lynch 2011; Paller 2019), resources (Obi 2001) and land (Spear and Waller 1993; Lentz 2013). This constructivist view of ethnicity lies in the ideology of groupism derived from Barth's (1969) concept of ethnic group: Barth does not distinguish sharply or consistently between categories and groups, and his central metaphor of "boundary" carries with it connotations of boundedness, entitativity and groupness (Brubaker 2002: 169). Therefore, in this study, I

do not frame Yoruba-ness (and other ethnicities) in terms of an ethnic group. In individual cases, when I write a person is Yoruba (or Idoma, Hausa, etc.), this does not mean that this person belongs to any group of people called Yoruba; instead, Yoruba here is a category self-identified by the person in our interactions.

The framing of ethnicity in African studies, if not taking the groupist perspective, can also take ethnicity as a pregiven category of analysis, according to Brubaker and Cooper's (2000), a category brought by researchers to the research subjects. In Africa's rural-urban interface, for instance, scholars have indicated that ethnic identification is reinforced through ties to ethnic homelands and home villagers' associations (Englund 2001). After migrating to cities, such home associations serve to construct urban ethnicity through spatial agglomeration, such as Hausa migrants' living enclave "Sabon Zongo" in many West African cities including Accra (Pellow 2002). Although these works have shed light on the dynamic of ethnicity in the mobility experiences between hometowns and cities and the immigration processes in the cities, I suggest that we should not always presume that ethnicity has been a pre-existing issue in migrant and urban experiences. This foundationalist approach to ethnicity in urban Africa, I argue, should be complemented by a performative intervention to everyday life in the city.

The way I approach ethnicity is first to understand ethnicity as a category of discursive practice in everyday life, or more vividly, as "ways of seeing (and ignoring), of constructing (and misconstructing), of interfering and (misinterferring), of remembering (and forgetting)" the social world (Brubaker 2004: 17). This cognitive perspective can help us avoid the analytical ‘‘groupism" --the tendency to treat ethnic groups as substantial entities to which agency can be attributed. In this sense, not only

can Yoruba-ness be seen as ethnicity, but also Lagosian-ness is conceptualized as ethnicity in the cognitive sense. Accordingly, Lagosian-ness and non-Lagosian-ness do not represent binary categorization but convey the ways of categorizing people. In other words, ethnicity (of Yoruba-ness or Lagosian-ness) is fundamentally not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world (Brubaker et al. 2004: 32; originally italicized).

This approach to ethnicity is consistent with the performative lens taken in this dissertation. In other urban contexts than African, scholars have demonstrated how ethnicity (of Irishness and Arabness, for instance) is *both* performed and performative: while "actively" and consciously engaged in constructing and performing ethnicities, subjects also "passively" follow discourses that they are unknowingly helping to construct (Sullivan 2015; Aly 2018). In this sense, although ethnicity is performed, it is inherently performative, being the result of the "stylized repetition of acts through time" (Butler 1990: 140).

In this chapter, I elaborate on two performative enactments of ethnicity in the scenarios of the performance of ethnicity—Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness—going back to study in home places and learning to speak Yoruba in Lagos. Each of these discursive practices are repetitively enacted in my informants' (the older and the younger generations) everyday life, regardless of their experiences. I suggest, the intersection of performance and performativity of ethnicity materializes not only through entanglements of Lagosian-ness and non-Lagosian-ness, Yoruba-ness and non-Yoruba-ness in the specific urban conditions of Lagos life, but also through some mundane "doings" of ethnicities in the life trajectories that encompasses Lagos and home places.

6.1 Going Back to Study: Performed and Performative (non-)Lagosian-ness

The discourses of "Lagosian" not only involve the binary categorization of "No man's land" and "Eko Ile", as illustrated in chapter 1, but also more politically hinge on the institution of indigeneity in Nigeria. Since the 1980s, Nigerian local governments have begun to produce "certificates of origin" (or called "certificates of indigene", depending on different local authorities) to identify the place of origin of their holders. Drawing on how the certificates were officially issued in Ibadan, Nigeria, Fourchard (2015: 46) indicates that an interview with an applicant for the certificate is usually conducted by local officials "to check whether the ancestor of the applicant is a 'true indigene' and what his or her origins are. This is why the two terms – 'certificate of indigene' and 'certificate of origin' are used interchangeably". This kind of interview is very dynamic across different local governments and does not follow a very strict procedure[48].

After democratization in 1999, the new constitution[49] formalized the right held by officially certified indigenes of preferred access to opportunities and resources than non-indigenes in the states, such as admission to state subsidized educational institutions and political rights in state voting and election. Due to these privileges, the place of indigeneity, which is certified through the above administrative process, is more important than the place of birth. In other words, although a person was born in Lagos,

[48] The interview questions may include family name, location of family house, names of *baale* (senior chief) or *oba* (king), characteristics of the place (schools, churches, mosques etc.), and traditional festivals (see Watson 2003). On some occasions, the applicant's father or relatives are also called for more information, and a written attestation from a local chief may also be required (Fourchard 2015: 47).

[49] Sections 147 (b) of the 1999 Constitution and 4 of the Federal Character (Establishment etc.) Act, 2004

the person does not usually have a certificate of origin in Lagos and has to be interviewed and certified by the local government where the person's father's place of origin is located. However, the existing research on this system of indigeneity indicates that the Lagos "quota"—the slots reserved for "Lagosian" indigenes—are often widely used by non-indigenes (Mile 2013; Animashaun 2020). For instance, a report covered the public discontent toward a politician as a non-indigene of Lagos, representing Lagos State in the federal cabinet, though he is a Lagos-born Yoruba[50]. Furthermore, a number of complaints about Igbo residents taking important roles in Lagos State government are also noted (Animashaun 2020: 63). This phenomenon thereby caused many kinds of disputes and debates over the "No man's land" discourses[51].

Given that the indigenous "Lagosians" in a strict sense (usually referred to as Awori people, a sub-group of Yoruba) have demographically become minority (Aworawo 2004), the identification with "Lagosian-ness" in this new political and legal circumstance seems to involve two factors: Lagos as the place of origin/indigene imprinted on the certificate and contestations surrounding the Lagos "quota". The contestation is usually practiced not by ordinary Nigerians but by higher status people, such as those politicians who have the power of political connection to help them secure the "quota", despite the public discontent. There is a way for ordinary Nigerians to combat an unfair system–engaging in corruption as Smith (2007) discovered. Given that the certification process varies locally, there are gray zones where local officials

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[50] Nwachukwu, J. O. (July 28, 2019). Buhari, APC under fire for allowing non Lagosians represent Lagos as governors. The Daily Post. https://dailypost.ng/2019/07/28/buhari-apc-fire-allowing-nonlagosians-represent-lagos-governors-senators-reps-ministers/

[51] Njoku, D. (May 29, 2017). Lagos History Lecture and no man's land exponents. The Guardian. https://guardian.ng/features/lagoshistory-lecture-and-no-mans-land-exponents/

manipulate the power to issue the certificates. It was reported that people can "buy" certificates of origin in some local government areas of Lagos State with only 3,000 naira ($8.3)[52], while risks of being caught also existed[53].

Among the informants I know living in Gowon Estate, only one formally claimed to be indigenous to Lagos, and the rest identified their places of origin with other states (I did not check their certificates for privacy reasons). Lacking political resources and unwilling to take the risk, my informants usually do not want to compete for the "Lagos quota". For instance, when it comes to higher education admission, there is a tendency for the second-generation youth to leave Lagos for their "place of origin" to be admitted more "easily" or "cheaply". Instead of focusing on their strategies in the institution of indigeneity, in this chapter, I use this mobility phenomenon to explore their identification with "Lagosian-ness".

Drawing on mundane lived experiences, the framing of Lagosian-ness here lies in the everyday ethnicity as "ways of seeing (and ignoring) and of constructing (and misconstructing)" individual social worlds, according to Brubaker and Cooper (2000). Specifically, Lagosian-ness is not simply a pre-given category imprinted on the certificate of origin but a category of practice by which Lagos residents construct their identities in the processes of engaging with or avoiding the "quota" system. On the surface, their actions and strategies seem to be influenced by the institution of indigeneity; however, what I am interested in is the experience of everyday Lagosian-ness, "sometimes palpable and immediate, more often indirect and attenuated" (Brubaker 2006: 16). This framing of

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[52] See the report: https://tribuneonlineng.com/how-council-workers-falsify-information-get-paid-to-issue-state-certificates-of-origin/

[53] A student who forged the certificate of origin was arrested. See the report: https://punchng.com/student-arrested-for-allegedly-forging-local-government-certificate/

Lagosian-ness thus does not refer to a question of whether or not a person is Lagosian but signposts the ways of categorizing the self and others as Lagosian in specific situations.

One of the situations is admission to higher education institutions, through which Nigerians are all faced with the systems of “quotas”. Various public narratives of corruption have pointed out the unfairness of this institution (see Smith 2007: 53-87); my informants also complained about being unfairly treated and about the considerable delays in the admission processes. Nevertheless, what intrigues me are the enactments of Lagosian-ness and non-Lagosian-ness in their life experiences. This is an inevitable situation that many youths graduating from secondary school have to deal with in their life courses, regardless of their decisions on whether or not to pursue further education.

Conceptually, this ethnography treats Lagosian-ness and non-Lagosian-ness as normative practices significantly actualized through both the performance and performativity of ethnicity in processes of getting admitted and going back to study in home places. This performative lens, I suggest, can complement the studies of power relations between indigenes and non-indigenes through the analysis of representations of corruption in the “quota” system, as this study pays attention to the discursive practices of normed “Lagosian” and “non-Lagosian” identification. Nevertheless, people’s representations of their places of origin and justification for their choices can inform us of the disjuncture between performance and performativity of identities.

6.1.1 "Why Go back": Performed Non-Lagosian-ness

After JAMB[54] results were released in May 2018, many youths and their families in Gowon Estate liked to talk about which universities they wished to go to. Mama Ebi's convenience shop at the "American junction" was a popular social space for such conversations especially among the Estate boys in their 20s, including her son Williams (the yahoo boy mentioned in chapter 5). Claiming that they are both from Kogi (place of origin), Williams and his younger sister Fiona both chose Kogi State University. After several weeks of anxious waiting, it turned out that only Fiona was admitted. While Mama Ebi continuously complained about the "corrupt" admission system, Williams decided to go to a private English-instruction university in Cotonou, Benin. Throughout the process, it was surprising to me that studying in a Lagos-based university was never discussed in Williams's family and social circles. This prompted me to closely examine the life trajectories of (young) informants who pursued higher education (either university or Polytechnic).

In doing so, a salient mobility pattern was discovered: Lagos-raised youth go back to study at universities or polytechnics in their home states or regions. The definition of home state here is based on a self-claimed place of origin. More specifically, some informants did not go back to study in home states but in a broader sense of home regions that incorporate the home states. For instance, Ekiti State used to be part of Ondo State from 1976 to 1996; Edo and Delta States merged into Bendel State from 1963 to 1991. In

[54] Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). Nigerian universities determine admissions based in part on the results of the JAMB exam that secondary-school graduates are required to take.

some cases, people whose place of origin is Ekiti went to study in Ondo state. Here I categorize this mobility pattern of going to the places with historical and cultural connections as "to home region". Among 43 informants who had pursued or were pursuing higher education (See the Table 6.1 below), almost two thirds went back to study in home places (including both to home state and home region). It should also be noted that seven chose to study at Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) in Ogun State, the university that is regarded by informants as less expensive and has more relaxed admission criteria. Its close distance (two-hour drive time) to Lagos is also regarded as an advantage.

Table 6.1 Places of Study in Life Trajectories

Educational Mobility	Exemplar Places	Number of Cases
1. Stay in Lagos	Unilag, Yaba Polytechnic	8
2. To Ogun State	OOU	7
3. To home state	Benue, Calabar, Jos	17
4. To home region	Ekiti-Ondo, Edo-Delta	11

While exploring the practices of "going back", I paid particular attention to how my informants narrated why they were going back: they are performing non-Lagosian-ness through the discursive representations of their choices of going back to home places and their intentions to explore their "homelands" which they had hardly experienced while growing up in Lagos. Common narratives in this scenario include: "I am not from Lagos, so it's difficult to enter Unilag [University of Lagos]" (Fred, back to Cross River), "Lagos is too expensive and corrupt" (Ogunje, back to Benue), "I want to be close to my culture and language" (Lulu, back to Delta) and "I want to see my father's place" (Betty, back to Rivers). To better understand the meanings of these home place narratives, below

I will elaborate on how these ontological narratives are contextualized in Lulu's and Betty's life stories.

Lulu was born in Gowon Estate in 1988, the last of five children. She did not go to university directly after graduation from secondary school, because her father (Josh) wanted Lulu's older sister to start first, and couldn't afford to send both at the same time. While working temporarily at different places in Lagos, she developed her social networks through a church fellowship. "We are all young people from different churches. We gather at an appointed church at a fixed time every week. We were singing, dancing, and performing drama. This is how I met my husband. We were in the same drama department." Lulu expressed her happiness at socializing with young peers when recalling that "unsettled" period. In 2010, she was finally able to pursue her higher education at Delta State University (DELSU). When it came to the reason why she chose to study in her home state, she said "I want to be close to my culture and language". In her family, she said her parents did not teach her the native language Urhobo.

Her narrative of reasoning is not persuasive because studying at DELSU does not necessarily mean immersion in the Urhobo culture and language. In fact, she admitted that she only picked up some Delta pidgin English instead of fluent Urhobo. Nevertheless, she tended to perform her non-Lagosian-ness by presenting how she became more conscious of Urhobo characters: "I don't want to marry Urhobo men because they are very stubborn. My father is very stubborn." She got married in 2015 after graduating from DELSU. Her husband is a Yoruba man "originally" from Ekiti State and grew up in Lagos as well. She then moved out of her family house (Flat 13 in my block) and lived with her husband in a rented place near Gowon Estate. She was

working in a microfinance bank opposite Gowon Estate. This demonstrates that going back to study in Delta State did not help her develop a social life there; instead, the dating relationship and social experiences in Lagos drew her back to marry her boyfriend and resume her social life around the Estate.

In the second case, Betty described her choice of River State University (RSU) by narrating her earlier experience of moving to Lagos from Bayelsa State. Born in 1994 in Bayelsa State adjacent to River State which is her father's as well as her place of indigeneity, Betty moved to Lagos with her mother in 2000. Although reaching the age required for primary education, she was not admitted because of lack of "formal education" (in her words). Reflecting on why this happened, she said, "then education was mainly for the people with money… Bayelsa State is a village[55], not a city where you have so many schools to attend… So, I have to start from nursery [school]. I was already older than my classmates [when entering primary school]. I tried to catch up. It was hard because my classmates already knew some stuff." This strong sense of difference reveals that her explanation on why go back to study in River State is an intentional performance of non-Lagosian-ness. Similar to Lulu's emphasis on culture, Betty said "I go back to my homeland because ever since we came to Lagos, we didn't go back. I learned about culture and how we lived a life there, (but) the transportation (to my hometown) is high [expensive]." But differently, Betty further justified her choice from an economic perspective. "(at RSU) you pay less school fees. If you are indigenous to the state, you pay 40,000 something a year. If not, 70,000 (naira)". That said, Betty was quite aware of the "quota" system factored in her choice of university. Her performance of non-

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[55] Bayelsa State is a state located in the Southern Niger Delta region. Calling it "village" demonstrates Betty's thinking of the societal difference between Balyelsa and Lagos.

Lagosian-ness in the name of culture and homeland is related to her strategy of navigating the educational system.

Despite cultural discourses associated with the place of origin in the "fatherland", both Lulu and Betty still remain highly involved in Lagos social life. For Lulu, she kept a long-distance relationship with her then-boyfriend who was working in Lagos and they were married soon after her graduation from university. When choosing DELSU, she even considered universities in Ekiti State—her husband's home state. This means "language and culture" was not the primary driver for her temporary educational migration as she described. For Betty, though she had her first formal relationship with a local man during her study at RSU, she did not stay to look for jobs in Port Harcourt, the fifth largest city in Nigeria. She was pleased that she was able to transfer back to Lagos through the NYSC internship program[56]. She was appointed to the receptionist position at the front desk in a tax department in Lagos State Government for a year. "I'm happy I can work in Lagos, close to my family," she said.

From Lulu's and Betty's experiences, we can see that the performance of non-Lagosian-ness may overshadow their Lagosian-ness that is constantly constructed through maintaining their social relations in Lagos. The discourses of justification were only used to represent pregiven identities of places of origin, especially when being asked (by me and other acquaintances) about their choices of "going back" to universities in home places. However, their practices of "coming back" to Lagos after graduation without any further stay in the home places including even the third largest Nigerian city

[56] The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is a program set up by the Nigerian government to involve Nigerian graduates in nation building and self-development. The one-year working experience in an appointed place is compulsory for all the university and Polytechnic graduates.

were unjustified by themselves and taken naturally in their narratives of life stories. This disjuncture between discourses of justification and practices of returning prompts us to further explore how Lagosian-ness is naturalized through the socio-spatial practice of "going back" by employing a performative perspective. Scholars have studied how youth mobilize identities along with rural-urban mobilities (Skelton 2013; Deuchar 2019), but without a performative intervention, these works remain at the level of understanding the intentional strategies of "performing urban identities in rural areas or vice versa" in order to realize certain status or goals (Deuchar 2019). This limitation can be resolved by paying close attention to the performativity of identity and everyday ethnicity in lived experiences. To further understand their performances of non-Lagosian-ness simply as a justification for going back to study in home places, I suggest we should further examine their studying experiences while going back.

6.1.2 "While Going back": Performative Lagosian-ness

In the shadow of performed non-Lagosian-ness, performative Lagosian-ness materializes through the lived experiences of going back to study at the universities in home places. As indicated above, the decisions and choices of "going back" and narratives of why go back, particularly at the moment when the JAMB scores were released, embody a spontaneous performance of non-Lagosian-ness (as shown in the Williams and Fiona's case). By extending our attention to various life-story narratives of social lives "while going back" to study in the universities/polytechnics in home places, we can discover, to varying degrees, a sense of belonging and attachment to Lagos. However, I do not frame

the ontological narratives simply through conscious representations of sense of place or place-identity (Rose 1995; Pratt 2002; Carter et al. 2007) but treat them through the lens of everyday ethnicity that is performatively enacted through individual socio-spatial practices. In other words, Lagosian-ness is not just presented verbally as a status of identity but becomes performative when those young returnees having studied in home places narrate their social experiences in which the differences are both consciously and unconsciously constructed.

While going back to Cross River State, Fred's university life was not described as close to the culture of the fatherland as Lulu and Betty were; instead, he met many different friends from Lagos, whom he called "Lagos students". "We hang out together… It was fun… They are from different parts of Lagos… We sometimes speak Yoruba, because we learn it at primary schools as a course." Fred knows a little Efik from his mother, the local language where the University of Calabar is based, but he did not improve his speaking of it while studying there. He admitted that local students can tell the differences between Lagosians and Riverians, but when I asked how, he replied, "I don't know. They (can) just tell. Maybe we can learn things fast? More intelligent?" Fred left Calabar immediately after graduation and was working as a DHL staffer in Lagos (see chapter 4).

Ogunje's narrative of going back was filled with ambivalent emotions. Although born in Gowon Estate, he was asked by his parents to choose Benue State University in Makurdi (BSUM), the place of indigeneity. In the first two weeks when he arrived there, he recalled, "I feel very sad. It's so quiet." Throughout his narration, he never directly indicated Benue or Makurdi as his home; instead, he indicated that every time when he

came back to Lagos during holidays, he did not want to leave. He said, while studying there (BSUM), "people know I'm from Lagos…I think it's because Lagos boys are outgoing and like to make friends." Gradually, his connection to Lagos, both emotionally and materially, enabled him to enjoy his university life in Benue. He bought clothes at wholesale markets in Lagos and brought them to sell to other students at BSUM. Those local students were fascinated by the styles of clothes from Lagos, according to Ogunje, therefore reinforcing his image as a "Lagos boy".

Regarding Fred's and Ogunje's earlier justifications for going back, both have negative comments on being admitted to higher education institutions in Lagos, but in their experiences "while going back", their Lagosian-ness is performatively reified through particular socio-spatial practices—(for Fred) hanging out with "Lagos students" who can occasionally speak Yoruba and share learning experiences; (for Ogunje) trading clothes from Lagos to Makurdi at the time of holiday travels. In this sense, Lagosian-ness is recognized as a category of "Lagos students" or "Lagos boys" by other peers. Only through the narration of university life does the performative Lagosian-ness unfold. So, examining the mobility pattern of going back to study and the personal justification discourses is not sufficient to understand the variegated urban identification processes.

Going back to home places for university admission is found not only among so-called ethnic minorities such as Ogunje and Fred but also with Yoruba people who often claim Lagos as their home city. After all, the institution of indigeneity is based on place—specifically the administrative township. To be more easily and cheaply admitted as they claimed, many Yoruba informants still go back to their home states in Yorubaland. Although growing up in Lagos is associated with Yoruba-ness in some

living conditions, such as learning Yoruba in primary schools, those Lagos-raised Yoruba youth do not necessarily identify themselves with Yoruba-ness, especially when temporarily going back to study in home places.

Figure 6.1 An Exam at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba

Lily's life story illustrates her performative Lagosian-ness in the temporary migration to her home place. She was born in 1984 in Bonny Camp of Lagos and moved to Gowon Estate with her parents and four older siblings a few years later. Like Fred's experience, she had to take Yoruba class at school, but she said she was personally not interested in it. "My parents usually speak English to us; My sisters pick up [Yoruba] by themselves." After studying at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA) in Ondo State—her home state, she still spoke English to her classmates and kept using her name "Lily" rather than her Yoruba name in daily conversations. "I don't think there's a difference (between me and locals)". Despite this saying, she did not identify herself with her home

place; nor did she claim that studying at AAUA brought her closer to her culture. In fact, her local place of indigeneity—Oka Akoko—is a 15-minute drive from AAUA. In the first year of her university life, she was not assigned a university dorm and had to live with her grandmother in Oka-Akoko from which she commuted to the university every day. This was described as the most "unhappy" experience "while going back".

Living in the hometown also did not evoke in her a sense of place or even any intentional performance of emotion associated with the place as shown in Lulu's and Betty's narratives. When it comes to Oka Day, the community ceremony event I followed for four years in her hometown, Lily just indifferently said, "I knew the 'yam festival'. I [am] just not interested in going back for that." However, Oka Day is not a "yam festival" but a series of political and cultural ceremonies derived from "new yam festival" in Yoruba (and Igbo) traditions (See Xiao and Ogunode 2021). The point here is not whether or not she could articulate this locally important annual event; what matters is her standpoint when narrating it. Her expression of "going back for that" has unconsciously placed her in Lagos, without thinking of the four-year university experience in the home place from which she did not have to "go back" for the ceremony. Such a township ceremony was held annually for decades, not just in Oka but also in Akungba where her university is located.

Sure enough, like many returned Lagosian youth mentioned above, Lily came back to Lagos as soon as she finished her university study and NYSC program. Except for several part-time teaching jobs in surrounding schools, she has not found any formal employment since then. After she married Philip (whom I will introduce in detail in chapter 7) in 2013, she primarily stayed home (flat 9 in my block) to take care of two

daughters. In this sense, the performative Lagosian-ness in Lily's life trajectory has been thus operating naturally without question, ingrained through her socio-spatial experiences. This performativity of Lagosian-ness materializes through not only life in Lagos but also the experience of going back to study in her home place.

In some circumstances, the performative Lagosian-ness does not necessarily manifest through going back to study in home places; even at the moment of performing non-Lagosian-ness when choosing universities and trying to get admitted, Lagosian-ness is also performatively enacted. Amir's struggle vividly reflects such entanglement when he knew his JAMB results. He is a 20-year-old man born in Agege, a historical Hausa community in Lagos, and grew up in Gowon Estate where his father is the imam of the "old mosque".

During 2017-18, he was struggling to get admitted to a university in Kano (his mother's indigenous place) and later a university in Sokoto (his father's place of indigeneity). First, he applied for Bayero University Kano (BUK), one of the best universities in northern Nigeria. He and his father believed that the admission should not be a problem, because his family was from the North and his mother was from Kano State. However, the university did not admit him, even though his JAMB score was higher than its admission threshold. He elected to spend another year preparing and took the JAMB a second time. His father asked him to apply to Usmanu Danfodiyo University (UDUSOK), in his paternal ancestors' home state of Sokoto, instead. The admission was initially successful, according to Amir's narrative, but he was asked to pay a "deposit" to secure his "quota". His father did not want to pay this "bribe" because of his "integrity". So, Amir felt very upset, because he did not imagine this kind of difficulty and dilemma.

"That's my hometown, my home state. They need to give it to us first before any outsiders." Despite disappointment, he could not argue with his authoritative father. His way-out strategy then turned to earning a livelihood in Lagos: he applied for the Police Academy in Lagos. "If I successfully get the place, I will forget about university… In the future, my junior ones would say, yes, my brother is a government officer. They can get admission anywhere! They can get jobs anywhere! It's not that I like the place… In this country, no one likes the police, even me. But I have no choice."

Amir initially performed his non-Lagosian-ness by explaining to me how he and his father believed that university admission in Northern Nigeria would be easier, according to their understandings of the Nigerian politics of indigeneity. The failure of his first application to BUK was attributed by Amir to the "wrong" identification strategy and made him turn to his fatherland Sokoto, though he did not have any evidence that indigeneity is the factor affecting his admission. Under the educational system that distinguishes indigenes and non-indigenes, his claims of "hometown" and "home state" reveal a self-constructed non-Lagosian-ness without citational daily enactments of a hometown identity; since his birth in Lagos, he only occasionally visited either Sokoto or Kano. Given that most of his daily life has been based in Lagos and particularly in Gowon Estate, it was not surprising that he ended up with a path to become a policeman in Lagos.

His repetitive social practices in the neighborhood and at schools bring about the performative Lagosian-ness that he unintentionally performs and naturalizes in everyday life. When I first met Amir, he was a shopkeeper in his father's store next to the old mosque, selling drinking water to prayers. Also due to his father's role as imam, he was

very popular in the Muslim community. When I regularly visited the old mosque, I often chatted with Amir about his life experiences at school. Two kinds of social relationships stood out in his life stories: one is his romance with an Igbo female student in secondary school. He dared not tell his father about the identity of this young woman, and even told me this story only after knowing me for a while. The other is his friendship with a Yoruba young man also named Amir. As neighbors, fellow Muslims, and schoolmates, they were very close and called each other "me-or-me". When Amir struggled with university admissions, he also told me that the Yoruba Amir had similar troubles and might finally choose Agriculture University at Abeokuta in Ogun State. These Lagos-based stories dominate his ontological narratives of his life trajectories, in which his connections with Kano and Sokoto were only briefly mentioned when it came to university admission.

In retrospect of those youths' experiences of studying at home-place universities, Lagosian-ness is performatively constructed through materializing borders between "Lagosian" and "non-Lagosian", though the narratives of what Lagosian-ness is like vary across different experiences. Butler (1993: 187) reminds us that a category such as Lagosian-ness can also "fail to secure the very borders of materiality" that constructs and maintains it (Also see Kaiser 2012; Aly 2015). That said, Lagosian-ness is not a completely or permanently closed category, but always open to change along people's life trajectories. It is through the spatial-temporal practices of "going back" that those Lagos-born and -raised youth unintentionally perform their Lagosian-ness; in return, the performativity of Lagosian-ness also manifests through their eventual "coming back" to Lagos after the period ends. Nevertheless, this does not mean that only through such

practices is Lagosian-ness performatively enacted. Amir's case supplements the interpretation of this kind of youth mobility in relation to urban identification.

Drawing on all these cases, I argue that Lagosian youths' temporary migration to home places for university study should not be simply interpreted through the representation of politics of indigeneity or ethnicity in the "rural-urban migration" paradigm (Njwambe et al. 2019; See the review, Banks 2021); the temporary nature of such movement in one's life trajectory (from the perspective of placing cities in life; also see Xiao 2021) can hinge on everyday ethnicity that specifically manifests as the interplay between the performance of non-Lagosian-ness and the performativity of Lagosian-ness. However, this is not a binary interaction between enclosed categories; as briefly addressed in Fred's and Lily's cases, Lagosian-ness is also entangled with other norms and categories such as Yoruba-ness on which I will elaborate next.

6.2 Learning and Speaking Yoruba in Lagos: Performed and Performative Yoruba-ness

As briefly addressed in chapter 1, Lagos is historically situated at the intersection of Yoruba migrants from the hinterland and various ethnic groups from other parts of Nigeria. There are public narratives, such as "Eko Ile", associating Lagos with Yoruba-ness. So, what is Yoruba-ness? Adebanwi (2014: 185-188) suggests that Yoruba-ness is a kind of *iwa* (character or conduct), politically constructed and culturally created by Obafemi Awolowo and his followers to unite various ethnic groups in Southwestern Nigeria. To complement this constructivist interpretation of ethnic politics which has

been dominant in Yoruba studies, I suggest interpreting Yoruba-ness as everyday ethnicity that is both performed and performative. The performative approach can help us shed light on specific reiterative everyday discursive practices—speaking and (not) learning to speak Yoruba language–through which Gowon Estate residents unconsciously (dis)identified with Yoruba-ness

Drawing on the concept of narrative identity (Somers 1994) that I used in the earlier chapters, I explore how the urban residents in Lagos "construct their personal stories" of speaking (or refusing to speak) Yoruba *and* learning (or refusing to learn) to speak Yoruba in Lagos where Yoruba people are often perceived as the majority. In doing so, I will pay close attention to "the performative acts of speech" by my informants through participant observation. This approach to everyday ethnicity can also enrich the performativity scholarship that emphasizes narration in story-telling (e.g., Gilmartin and Migge 2015, on immigrant home stories in Ireland; Ridanpaa 2017, on humor in minority language use in Sweden). Overall, I argue that Yoruba-ness is intentionally performed by migrants only when speaking it in the public while (non)Yoruba-ness becomes performative in their narratives of the learning experiences of speaking and hearing Yoruba.

However, I am not claiming that Yoruba ethnicity can be reduced to language use in everyday life. What I emphasize here is that within the urban socio-linguistic context of Lagos,Yoruba language is more saliently used than other Nigerian languages (along with pidgin English). Given the perceived power status of speaking Yoruba in Lagos, some people especially from minority regions perform Yoruba-ness by speaking it in public, while being critical of Yoruba-ness in more private space. Moreover, the power of

institutional arrangements that make the Yoruba language required courses in many Lagos primary schools (and now secondary schools) result in the performativity of (non)Yoruba-ness, materialized through individual experiences of learning Yoruba. Especially for second-generation youth growing up in Lagos, performativity of Yoruba-ness is entangled with Lagosian-ness and contributes to urban identification.

6.2.1 Performing Yoruba-ness by Speaking It

In chapter 3.2, we learned Tom's life trajectory of migrating from Cross River to Lagos in 2005 and moving to Gowon Estate in 2009 after being robbed in Satellite Town. This 29-year-old gradually established himself in Gowon Estate by wholesaling phone recharge cards to convenience shops. When I first encountered him in July 2017, he greeted me in Yoruba. A few minutes into the conversation, I found that he could not continue and had to turn to English. After knowing his migratory experience, I realized that he just spoke Yoruba in daily greetings in order to facilitate his interactions with those shop owners who are usually Yoruba elders. A year later when we talked about our first encounter, he laughed and explained why he usually greeted people in Yoruba, "You know Alhaji? He can speak English very well, but you need to greet him in Yoruba. This is Lagos for me." The Alhaji he mentioned is Ajayi, the chairman of the governing committee of the central mosque in Gowon Estate. As a first-generation migrant in Lagos, Tom came to learn the influence of Yoruba-ness in city life.

After all, language is a manifestation of power worldwide (Desbiens and Ruddick 2006). According to the narratives of their encounter with Lagos by many non-Yoruba

speaking migrants in Gowon Estate, greetings in Yoruba with Yoruba-speaking people is regarded as an unwritten rule. As Tom felt and also my residential experience in this diverse neighborhood shows, whether or not greeting in Yoruba affects Lagos residents', particularly minorities', senses of social recognition in Lagos life. Historically, the conflicts between Yoruba residents and non-Yoruba migrants (particularly Igbos) in Lagos have been documented (Aworawo 2014). Contentious discourses on Yoruba dominance in electoral politics in Lagos State persist to this day[57].

In my informants' life stories, social differentiation based on perceived ethnicities has been intentionally denied by claiming "I am not tribalist" or "I don't see any problem with Yorubas or Igbos" when being asked to talk about ethnicity directly, as we learned in chapter 1. However, such nuanced power relationships were experienced and narrated by Tom and many other minority migrants as complaints about Yoruba people's "pride"—a negative view of Yoruba character. Therefore, without language skills, some informants feel a sense of exclusion. Dylan, a 42-year-old man migrating from Delta State, whose biography was also detailed in chapter 3.2, used to comment on his Yoruba-dominated workplace: "Because of (Yoruba) language barrier, friendship is not there. They see me as a threat to take their positions."

This is much like what Bourdieu (1991) describes of how language use is a way for local cultures to remain distinct, while also providing a means for one group to maintain power over another. Nevertheless, I do not tend to attribute this power dynamic to an "urban ethnocracy" where a dominant group appropriates the city apparatus to buttress its domination and expansion (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003: 673). I agree with Vora and Koch

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[57] A report that refutes *Oba* Akiolu's threat to throw Igbo people into Lagoon if they do not vote for Ambode. See https://guardian.ng/opinion/many-are-willing-to-jump-into-lagoon/

(2015), who argue for the need to move beyond the framing of ethnocracy to everyday geographies of inclusion (and exclusion) --in the Gulf states, *both* nationals and foreigners are called into service of the broader political projects of creating nations. In this sense, not simply examining the moments of greetings between Yoruba and non-Yoruba, I suggest delving into both groups' life experiences in which the entangled Yoruba-ness and non-Yoruba-ness are unconsciously and performatively enacted. This is how power works, not just manifests, throughout a citational chain of performances.

To better understand the intersection of performativity and performance, I delve into the family life of the informants who performed speaking Yoruba on a daily basis. The citational performances in neighborhood life are not simply observed among Yoruba native speakers but also among migrants from minority regions, such as Edo, Delta, and Cross River where Tom came from. Two neighbors' performances in this scenario intrigued me. Every time I stepped out of my flat, it was common to see Bawa (Flat 16, from Edo) standing in front of his apartment greeting Josh (Flat 13, from Delta) in Yoruba on the other side of the corridor. From some people's perspective, such as my landlord Goodman (from Benue), Bawa represents Yoruba and embodies the "pride" of being Yoruba. However, both Bawa and Josh distinguished themselves from Yoruba-ness in certain ways when I knew more of their family lives. Below I elaborate on their cases of how the entangled performance and performativity of Yoruba-ness intersects with first-generation migrants' urban identification.

Bawa came to Lagos in 1975 directly from his hometown, Igarra in Edo State, when he was 21 years old. He lived in Obalende, which he described as "a very good place" then (nowadays Obalende is a large transport hub discursively associated with robbery by

"area boys"). He wanted to become a driver but driving in such a complicated and strange city was difficult for him. "I drive in my hometown, but Lagos is too much for me". He hustled for a living while learning from an experienced driver. He finally got his first job as a company driver in 1978. Now he has settled in Lagos and feels content with his decision to leave his hometown. "Lagos belongs to nobody; Lagos also belongs to everybody," he maintained. Here, the discourse of "No man's land" is used by migrants like Bawa to justify their decisions to move to Lagos. Gradually, he was able to speak Yoruba fluently and often conversed in Yoruba with neighbors, including his fellow Muslims in the central mosque which is dominated by Yoruba-speaking neighbors.

During the time that I got to know Bawa, I discovered that his identification with non-Yoruba-ness was enacted naturally when it came to his marriage and tradition. In the early years when living in Obalende, he lived with many Yoruba neighbors. "I thought I would marry a Yoruba woman because I was used to them. They were very nice to me…My brother said, 'you should not lose yourself here [in Lagos]'…So, when I see somebody from my hometown, they [my family] are very happy." Bawa ended up dating and marrying a Christian migrant from his hometown Igarra, who later converted to Islam. In this instance, Bawa emphasized his wife's ethnic and religious identities to me with reference to his earlier interactions with Yoruba women, as he was proud of his wife's conversion. On another occasion when Bawa knew I was going to attend Oka Day, we talked about its difference from the New Yam Festival (*ijesu* in Yoruba cultures). He said, "in my region, *ijesu* is no longer a tradition. We are not Yoruba people". However, *ijesu* is still widely practiced by different cultures in Southern Nigeria. In this context,

Bawa personally equated such traditions with Yoruba-ness, with which he disidentified himself.

Bawa's neighbor Josh is a 62-year-old man born in Ikorodu, a suburban area of Lagos, who, as described earlier, moved between the city and his family's village in Delta State. Due to the large size of his family--12 children--his mother took care of five of them by living in the home village while his father hustled in Lagos with the rest, including Josh himself who also often visited his mother and relatives in Delta. Only when his father's livelihood was stabilized was the whole family reunited in Lagos. Growing up as a Lagosian with strong ties to his home village, Josh was able to speak Yoruba as well as his native language Urhobo, but as Lulu (Josh's daughter) described, Josh did not allow his children to speak anything but English in the house. After marrying a woman from northern Delta State, Josh initially lived with his core family in FESTAC Town and then moved to Gowon Estate in 1987, as one of earliest residents. Since then, Flat 13 has been his family house.

Living in this environment for a long time, Josh always greeted people in Yoruba. He even taught me some Yoruba idioms that he thought I as a Yoruba enthusiast should know. Nevertheless, according to Lulu's narrative, Josh strongly identified himself as non-Yoruba: "I sometimes mixed English with Yoruba. Once, I said 'o ya' (quick), my dad shouted to me, 'What's o ya? Is it English?'…" This attitude toward Yoruba contrasts with his performance of speaking Yoruba voluntarily and cordially with neighbors including me. It was thus not surprising that he allowed and even encouraged Lulu to go back to study at DELSU. Similar to Bawa, Josh also enacted his disidentification with Yoruba-ness when we talked about marriage and weddings. When

he invited me to his son's wedding, he commented on the bride price, "I will be the one doing the payment (bride price). Because he is marrying a Yoruba. And (for) the Yoruba I have to do the payment." He later explained the ways in which weddings are organized in his hometown in South Delta are different from Yoruba's. This was the moment I first heard about his judgment on Yoruba-ness and the border he clearly drew against Yoruba-ness.

Both Bawa's and Josh's cases demonstrate that if we only examine the performance of speaking Yoruba, we may fail to understand the performativity of non-Yoruba-ness. Both dimensions of everyday ethnicity are entangled throughout life trajectories in which urban identities are gradually formed and constantly negotiated. Ignoring the performative enactment of ethnicity is commonly found among ethnic geographers and urban sociologists who employ the theory of ethnic choice to interpret minority group practices–a limited version of optional ethnicity–while attempting to reshape the image of their ethnic identities (e.g., Forest 2002; Song 2003). This strand of empirical work based in Euro-American contexts, usually drawing on Goffman's concept of performance, only emphasizes that ethnicity is consciously constructed and performed, through which language serves as a key mediator of power dynamics. In the urban society of Lagos where Yoruba-ness has historically influenced city life, speaking Yoruba has become a way of "everyday inclusion" (Vora and Koch 2015), though we cannot equate everyday Yoruba-ness only with speaking Yoruba. Compared to Tom and Dylan who only migrated to Lagos for a decade, the older Bawa and Josh realized the implications of being able to speak Yoruba from longer life trajectories and more proficiently performed Yoruba-ness in daily conversations. Nevertheless, these are still conscious and agentic

performances in the power dynamic of inclusiveness. A more nuanced dynamic unfolds through the performative (non) Yoruba-ness elaborated below.

6.2.2 Performative (non)Yoruba-ness in Learning to Speak It

The performative approach to ethnicity examines the acts of ethnicity as not "freely chosen" but rather the outcome of discursive practices (of Yoruba-ness in this case) stemming from "citational chains" or a history of repetitive acts and sedimented practices (Pratt 2009: 527; see also Lloyd 1999). According to this framing, different from conscious and intentional usage of Yoruba language by non-native speakers like Bawa and Josh, performative Yoruba-ness, I suggest, manifests in the practices and discourses of learning (to speak) Yoruba, through which norms of Yoruba-ness are assumed and enabled.

It should be noted that examining the practices of learning to speak Yoruba as a performative enactment of everyday Yoruba-ness in this study is mainly used to understand the "doings" of ethnicity in urban identification practices. Of course, Yoruba-ness is performatively enacted through a wide array of everyday sayings and doings. For instance, Nwafor's (2021) historical study of *aso ebi* (Yoruba family dressing) in the urban setting of Lagos indicates that a circuitous transaction among photographers, fashion magazines, textile merchants, tailors, and individuals in the capitalist system reinvents *aso ebi* as a product of cosmopolitan urban modernity (for more on changing Yoruba cultures and identities, see Falola and Genova eds. 2006). Adebanwi (2014: 59) also indicates that Yoruba identity and nationalism are politically constructed via

multiple means[58], one of which was to formulate the orthography of the Yoruba language based on the Oyo dialect. The effect of this political movement by Awolowo's party can be detected in the performance of everyday Yoruba-ness, especially when people judge that one person is more Yoruba than another (see Olu's case later). Thus, based on the subject-ontology emphasized in this dissertation, instead of going deeper into the constituents of Yoruba-ness, I will explore how individual subjects' performances of Yoruba-ness involves their urban identification.

Two kinds of learning practices act as "citational" and "sedimented" through everyday life, thereby enacting the performativity of (non)Yoruba-ness. The first is learning Yoruba in primary schools in Lagos. In 2017, the Lagos State House of Assembly passed a bill making the teaching of Yoruba language compulsory in schools in the state[59]. Before this law, learning Yoruba in primary schools was one of the required subjects (though in a few schools, Yoruba courses could be replaced by French or Igbo). Now, more and more primary and secondary schools require students to take Yoruba language courses, otherwise these public schools will face a fine or even closure. In other words, up to the time of this study, those who underwent primary education in Lagos more or less had shared experiences of learning Yoruba language in classrooms.

In retrospect of this experience, my informants often took it lightly and simply as an ordinary school experience without much importance, but there are a few cases in which this learning experience was bothersome. For instance, Julian, a 44-year-old man born in

[58] Other means include the establishment of the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme to "produce an authentic history of the Yoruba" in 1956, and only one of three planned volumes was eventually published in 1973 (Adebanwi 2014: 60).

[59] The bill indicates any school in the state which fails to comply with the law faces closure and a fine of 250,000 naira. See a news report: https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/246709-lagos-assembly-passes-bill-making-yoruba-language-compulsory-schools.html

Delta State, moved to Lagos when he was nine years old. He was delayed in entering secondary school because he failed the Yoruba course and had to repeat taking it for another year. Speaking of this penalty, he felt ridiculous, “I think they are joking”. Nevertheless, he did not relate this result to his minority identity. As far as I know, Yoruba native speakers also had similar uneasy experiences. Jacky, a 32-year-old man born in Ekiti State, moved to Lagos with his older sister when he was nine years old. He described his grades as always good except for Yoruba language. “Maybe it’s because I never received much training (in Yoruba) at primary school. They know I am a Yoruba boy.” However, Jacky does not always behave like a “Yoruba” boy, especially when he introduced himself as Jacky instead of his Yoruba name, similar to how Lily insisted on using her English name at school.

The direct effects of learning Yoruba at school vary individually, but through such citational experience, Yoruba-ness is constantly constructed and negotiated, therefore leading to the ways of socializing with Yoruba people. For Julian who has been living in Flat 1 in my block since 2016, I barely saw him greet neighbors in Yoruba. Given his life experiences in Lagos, I knew he was able to speak Yoruba, at least to greet people in Yoruba as Tom did. However, he intentionally did not engage in this performance of Yoruba-ness, even with his Delta fellow Josh (Flat 13), let alone with his next-door Yoruba neighbor Mama Nan. In my interview with him, he socially disidentified himself with Yoruba-ness. “I do have Yoruba ‘friends’, but our relationships are conditional… Suppose in a company where the boss is Yoruba, the rest of Yoruba staff would take advantage of this connection… Yes, Dipo [pseudonym] is my close friend, but if there is a Yoruba man in front of us, Dipo will be close to that Yoruba man *pass me* [closer than

me]". His views of Yoruba-ness reveal his social identification and differentiation. Although he did not perform Yoruba-ness by speaking it, the bordering practices he has done through his life trajectory in Lagos necessarily involve Yoruba-ness.

In more subtle ways, Yoruba-ness can be entangled with Lagosian-ness, as learning Yoruba at schools becomes one of the shared experiences among Lagos-raised youth who go back to study in home places. In Fred's experience at the University of Calabar, learning and being able to speak Yoruba contributed to his social identification with other Lagosians. This does not mean that they identify themselves as Yoruba, nor do they try to intentionally perform Yoruba-ness as minority migrants Bawa and Josh do in the neighborhood. For these youth temporarily migrating to study in home places, the ability to speak Yoruba, more or less, and experiences of learning Yoruba performatively enact their identification with Lagos.

Therefore, Yoruba learning in Lagos schools, though perceived differently by individual residents, facilitates the performative materialization of Yoruba-ness in life in Lagos. The power of Yoruba dominance in everyday life can be interpreted to varying degrees through performances of speaking Yoruba, by Tom who greeted older customers and by Rosemary who encountered a Yoruba trader on the street (chapter 7.1), but the performativity of power manifests itself through schooling experiences in Lagos. Like Julian and Jacky, many second-generation migrants related their academic performances to Yoruba language skills: especially for those who were not satisfied by their academic results, they tended to attribute the results to lack of competence in Yoruba learning or in communicating with their Yoruba teachers. This does not simply result from the recent legislation that elevates the status of Yoruba language in the Lagos school curricula.

Much earlier on in the 1970s, for instance, when my informant Tracy (age 59, from Adamawa) tried to enroll in a primary school in Lagos, she addressed the factor of Yoruba language: “At that time, if you are not a Yoruba, it’s difficult (to enroll). My father lets a teacher teach me Yoruba every day under a tree.” It was doubtful that only this experience of learning Yoruba enabled her to enroll or prevented her from enrollment, but her narrative, together with many cases of recent schooling experiences, demonstrates that Yoruba-ness materializes more subtly through the learning experience that constructs their perception of power of Yoruba-ness in living life in Lagos.

The second type of practice is learning Yoruba in everyday conversations. In Lagos, the Yoruba-English bilingual environment has been formed through a considerable measure of stability: English remains the language of official and formal communication, while Yoruba language serves more vernacular purposes (Adedun and Shodipe 2011). However, the more worldly lingua franca in Lagos life has been Pidgin English. A sociolinguistic study of language use in Adegunle, the slum neighborhood of Lagos, found that pidgin English, which is a mixed and adapted usage of English and Yoruba in a local sense, has become a primary medium of communication in everyday life (Mazzoli 2017). This is also true in my fieldwork in the diverse environment of Gowon Estate. In other words, engaging in everyday conversations with neighbors can be a way to learn to speak Yoruba (though not always, if one like Ogaba refused to learn or speak any Yoruba).

Among the Estate boys I often hung out with, Jacob was the one who spoke pidgin English eloquently, so the first time I heard him speaking Yoruba, I was impressed. On May 16, 2018, Jacob came with his *omoge* (girlfriend) to our gathering. Being asked

when he started this relationship, Jacob blurted out “mo gbagbe” (I forget). People seemed to take his Yoruba expression naturally and continued their conversations, but I felt surprised and followed up with my joking comment: “first time I see you speak Yoruba.” Jacob then counter-questioned me, “How long I have been in Lagos? Since 1992! Why can’t I speak [Yoruba, as I have been living in Lagos for 26 years].”

This is a common narrative that associates speaking Yoruba with living in Lagos, usually followed by the narrator’s explanation that he or she just does not *want to* speak but is *able to* speak. For Jacob, however, his blurting out is not simply an explanation but a performative enactment of the entangled Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness, though he consciously identified himself against Yoruba-ness. In other words, becoming a Lagosian, in these people’s minds, means being able to speak Yoruba and knowing how to interact with Yorubas. He claimed that he does not usually speak Yoruba because “it’s not my language”. “My language” did not refer to his native language in Rivers State, which Jacob does not speak according to his mother when I visited her. “My language” was actually pidgin English which he preferred speaking and is occasionally mixed with Yoruba as I heard. Working as an “A-bouncer” (his self-identity) providing customized safeguard service, he actually traveled to many places in Nigeria, but every time he finished a job, he returned to Lagos immediately. Regarding this rush, he used to joke, “I just can’t leave Lagos for one day.”

Non-native speakers like Jacob could learn to speak Yoruba by “living in Lagos”; for second-generation Yoruba native speakers like Tope, he also learned Yoruba words and phrases in everyday conversations, though his family language is Yoruba. For instance, sitting on Olu’s shop’s benches one day, Tope came to chat with Olu. He complained that

Jacob and his *omoge* were kissing in front of him. Olu laughed and joked, "you're apon", Tope did not get this Yoruba expression (mixed with English though) until Olu explained, "a bachelor without wife and house". This explanation suddenly clicked with Tope and made us all laugh out loud. On another occasion, Tope admitted that his Yoruba has an accent. "People think I am from Delta. I grew up among people from North and South (referring to the social environment of Gowon Estate)." However, Tope does frequently speak Yoruba together with pidgin English and keeps using his Yoruba name "Olutope" (in short Tope") instead of Emmanuel[60] which is his formal name printed in his passport. In this sense, speaking Yoruba on a daily basis becomes a way to (re)produce as well as self-discipline Tope's Yoruba-ness.

Nevertheless, everyday ethnicity of Yoruba-ness is dynamically negotiated among individuals who judge one's Yoruba-ness to varying degrees. Such subjective judgment can be based on Yoruba words people (do not) know and the accents people have. Also, there is so-called orthodox or authentic Yoruba language based on the Oyo dialect in the cultural institution established by Obafemi Awolowo's party during and after the Independence era (Adebanwi 2014: 31-70). The effects of such institutions can be reflected in everyday Yoruba-ness to some extent. Regarding the conversation between Olu and Tope, it seems that Olu is more "Yoruban" than Tope as he knew the word Tope did not know. However, on another occasion when Olu told me about his proposal to his girlfriend, he complained that his father-in-law did not consider Olu "Yoruban" enough, because Olu's family is from suburban Lagos rather than Oyo State which is his

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[60] To protect his identity, I use "Emmanuel" as a pseudo English name.

girlfriend's place of origin. This demonstrates the fluidity of everyday Yoruba-ness in life in Lagos.

In this sense, Yoruba-ness is discursively involved with place-identity, and particularly the identification with the place of Lagos. For first-generation migrants like Rosemary, Dylan, and Tom as well as second-generation Lagos-raised non-Yoruba native speakers like Jacob, living in Lagos more or less involves Yoruba-ness by learning to speak Yoruba in everyday conversations (for Jacob, also learning at schools). For some Yoruba people, such as my neighbor Gbala who migrated from his hometown Ijebu Ode, though only a two-hour drive from Lagos, living in Lagos means losing Yoruba-ness to some extent. In everyday conversations with me, he often complained that many members of the younger generation in Yoruba families in Lagos cannot speak Yoruba and they would lose their Yoruba identity in the future. However, he only referred to Yoruba-ness as speaking the language, without addressing other discursive practices associated with Yoruban identity. Speaking Yoruba in Lagos, after all, becomes a salient signifier of performing Yoruba-ness, while the performativity of (non)Yoruba-ness is enacted through doings of everyday ethnicity— learning to speak it at school and more likely in everyday conversations.

6.3 Concluding Remarks

Drawing on Brubaker's (2004; 2006) idea of everyday ethnicity, this chapter does not treat ethnicity of Yoruba-ness as a bounded, pregiven category of analysis but understands both Yoruba-ness and Lagosian-ness through everyday discursive practices

of categorizing self and others. In this vein, this chapter pays particular attention to ordinary social activities not only in neighborhood life but also along individual life trajectories that are narrated in life stories. To further develop Brubaker's everyday ethnicity, I suggest that a performative approach can usefully enrich our understanding of the interplay between everyday Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness in urban identification processes.

The major contribution of the performative approach is to prompt us to distinguish performance from performativity. In doing so, we not only examine what individual subjects do, say, "act out" but also delve into the citational practices which reproduce discourses of ethnicity. It is not a new viewpoint that ethnicity is both performed and performative in everyday life (Sullivan 2012; Aly 2015; Allegretti 2018); what is new in this context is how everyday ethnicity specifically manifests itself through the entanglement of Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness, in which performance and performativity of ethnicity materialize. This specificity seems to only relate to Lagos, but I suggest that it should also be translated to other contexts where a dominance of a category of ethnicity in ethnically and religiously diverse city life is perceived and experienced by a variety of city dwellers. Thus, the performative approach is usefully employed to shed light on how ethnicity articulates with urban identity.

Based on the empirical experience in Lagos, I discovered three ways of "doing" ethnicity in urban identification processes (See figure 6.2). First, the performativity of Lagosian-ness contributes to Lagos-born and -raised youth's urban identification, especially when they pursued higher education in their home places, though they performed non-Lagosian-ness situationally to navigate the "quota" system. Second, the

performance of Yoruba-ness by some non-native-speakers can overshadow their disidentification with Yoruba-ness, and the performing to speak Yoruba results from their identification with Lagosian-ness as they want to feel included. Third, whether or not growing up in Lagos (alternatively speaking, regardless of the generation of residents in Gowon Estate), the entanglement of Yoruba-ness and Lagosian-ness is performatively sedimented and naturalized through the practices of learning Yoruba in primary schools, or learning to speak Yoruba in everyday conversations, or both. These are the specific ways in which different categories of everyday ethnicity—the categories of discursive practices rather than categories of analysis—are imbricated with urban identification.

	Lagosian-ness	Yoruba-ness
Performed	Non-Lagosian	Yoruba
Performative	Lagosian ⟷	Yoruba Non-Yoruba

Figure 6.2 Ways of "Doing" Ethnicity in Urban Identification Processes

The way I shed light on the specifics not only relies on the performative approach but also benefits from the perspective of placing cities in life. The practice of going back to study in home places was discovered by understanding Lagos as a relational place in individual life trajectories, which is detailed in chapter 3. The experience of learning Yoruba in Lagos is also mobilized by some youth temporarily back to home places; therefore, the performativity of Lagosian-ness serves to construct urban identity. This combination helps us shift from place-ontology to subject-ontology in studying urban identity. Moreover, it prompts us to pay more attention to how power works in everyday

reiterative practices in which ethnicity and identity are naturalized. Looking at Lagos in life, in addition to effects of indigeneity in the higher education admission processes and Yoruba language instruction in primary education systems, we understand that power implicitly works through the everyday entanglement of Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness.

Chapter 7 Performed and Performative Spirituality in Urban Social Identification

After employing a performative approach to ethnicity, I study spirituality in the same vein to understand how spirituality is performed and is also performative in urban identification processes. In geographies of religion and spirituality, scholars argue that religion, faith communities and spiritual values create new possibilities for urban citizens to socially relate to one another. These opportunities are seen to emerge out of both the new accommodation between the secular and the sacred and also the specific social and political responses to crises in neoliberal cities (Beaumont and Baker 2011; Cloke and Beaumont 2013; also see Kong's review 2010). This strand of scholarship emphasizes everyday *performances* of spirituality with little critical engagement with the performative enactment of spirituality and its implications for urban identification. Nevertheless, performativity as a conceptual tool has been usefully employed to illustrate the idea of (ritualistic) repetition that reinforces religious meaning and (re)produces sacred space and time (Holloway 2006; Finlayson 2012). In other words, the performative approach has not been sufficiently extended to the spheres of "everyday spirituality" (MacKian 2012; also see Bartolini et al. 2017). Bringing these two strands of scholarship together and contextualizing performative spirituality in everyday sociality among residents in Lagos, I suggest, can deepen our understanding of how spirituality, intersecting with performative ethnicity, serves to shape individual (dis)identification with people and places.

This performative intervention can also help complement the studies of spirituality in Africa in two ways. First, it theoretically advances the articulation of everyday socio-spatial practices that naturalize spirituality and, in this context, spiritual sociality. Africanist scholars have paid attention to the embeddedness of religious and spiritual thoughts and discourses in daily life (Ellis and Ter Haar 2012; Smith and Mwadime 2014) and the effects of spiritual practices and institutions on everyday sociality (e.g., Haynes 2017). Through a performative lens, these ethnographic details can be reconceptualized to interpret the nuances of urban social identification. Second, it empirically grounds the analysis of the interplay between spirituality and politics in Africa. Existing research on religion and spirituality in Africa, especially on thriving Pentecostalism, focuses on how the religious institutions are specifically constructed for political ends (Marshall 2009; Vaughan 2016). The processes of constructing political spiritualities also involve cultural elements of ethnicity, such as Yoruba-ness (Peel 2003; Brennan 2018). This study does not deny the contentious politics of the ethno-religious nexus in Nigeria and Lagos as introduced in chapter 1. It calls for increased attention to the performative enactment of individual spiritualities, and when and how they intersect with ethnicities. The social lives in ethnically and religiously diverse places like Gowon Estate provide an excellent vantage point to conduct this study.

To do so, I contextualize Dewsbury and Cloke's (2009) framing of performative spirituality in social identification processes. Accordingly, the spiritual is not confined to religious experience, but rather "denotes the non-material virtual world, constitutive of a mixture of representational and non-representational registers" (Ibid 697). Through spiritual landscapes that encompass religious spaces as well as non-religious urban spaces

in Gowon Estate, residents consciously and unconsciously identify themselves with or against people around them, thereby affecting their identification with the place. This is especially true for the Estate boys (note: without quotation marks). This chapter seeks to illuminate the entangled performance and performativity of spiritual sociality by examining specific practices of living with neighbors and hanging out with “friends” in this environment, and the specific discourses of normed moralities that constantly reproduce and regulate spiritual sociality. Throughout this chapter, in the framing of discursive practice as detailed in the Introduction, practice and discourse are viewed as mutually constitutive aspects of spiritual sociality.

7.1 Churches and Mosques: Spatializing the Performance and Performativity of Religious Practices

The entangled performance and performativity of ethnicity mainly manifests along life trajectories in which Lagos and home places are relationally experienced. Within the urban landscape of Lagos, I suggest, the entanglement of performance and performativity more likely manifests in the spatialities of both religious and non-religious practices through which ethnicity is naturalized. Geographers of religion have increasingly studied the affective and performative dimensions of personal spirituality and the ways in which specific forms of affect, emotion, and practice help construct spiritual spaces (Holloway 2006; Finlayson 2012). From the perspective of subject-ontology emphasized in this research, this chapter pays particular attention to how individual subjects spatialize their performance of religious practices and explores what kind of performative dimensions of

socio-spatial religious practices are involved with their urban identification. In this section, I will first elaborate on the spiritual sociality that is performed by my informants in places in Gowon Estate as well as in the larger context of Lagos. Furthermore, drawing on religious lives across two mosques and in one church in Gowon Estate, I demonstrate how ethnic identification is performatively enacted and intersects with urban identification.

7.1.1 Performing Spiritual Sociality in Religious Spaces in Gowon Estate

The concept of spiritual sociality incorporates the idea of religious sociality that largely rests on the religious institutions of Christianity and Islam, while spiritual sociality also involves non-institutional spiritual ideas and norms. Anthropological research on religious sociality in Africa, featured by Haynes' (2012; 2017) work on Pentecostalists' social life in urban Zambia, argues that the material aspects of religious practices foster the integration of believers in social networks that extend beyond the boundaries of their religious cohort. This pattern has also been observed in Tope's livelihood as well as many other underemployed youths who seek limited economic support from multiple religious institutions. In this sense, to understand how spiritual sociality is performed, we should not simply focus on the bounded religious space of the church or mosque but explore the socio-spatial dimensions of members' religious engagement and disengagement-- why and how residents of Gowon Estate choose to stick with a particular religious place (regardless of the geographical distance to their home residence) and why some may switch from one place to another in Lagos.

In the cityscape of Lagos, the increasing number of religious places including various churches and prayer camps has drawn great scholarly attention (Ukah 2016; Brennan 2018). Anderson (2004: 4) describes Lagos as "arguably the most Pentecostal city in the world", pointing to the materiality of Pentecostal religiosity in the city, ranging from huge billboards advertising religious entrepreneurship and miracle makers to massive worship camps, primarily constructed along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway in the past two decades (Janson and Akinleye 2015). The parallel development of mosque construction and Islam expansion in Lagos has also been noted, especially through the activities of the Nasrul-Fatih Society of Nigeria (Adetona 2012). For instance, the Lagos Central Mosque was established in 1988. During that time in Gowon Estate, the old mosque was also built, and the construction of the central mosque had begun.

In this religious landscape, sociality is a key factor that draws urban residents into religious spaces. In Gowon Estate, I was often asked by Christian neighbors who returned from their church congregations, "Did you go to church? Which is your church?" Going to churches is a self-evident activity for them. For a Christian, Sunday's worship congregation is the most important event in a week. Additionally, other activities such as Monday's fellowship gathering, Wednesday's bible study and Friday's overnight vigil, are also important social occasions. If members play a role in choir, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday are usually scheduled for rehearsals. For a Muslim, praying five times a day is a required practice. In both mosques in Gowon Estate, the call for prayer was broadcast through their loudspeakers, five times a day. Since some Muslim residents worked during daytime, it was observed that more people gathered in the evenings, Friday afternoons, and weekends in both mosques. For those elders who retired and had roles on the mosque

governing committees, praying in the mosques became a routine, usually followed by a brief gathering of their small circles. My neighbor Bawa, who retired but was not on the committee, usually prayed in the central mosque four times a day, as he greeted me every time he passed my window.

The performance of spiritual sociality not only takes place in the religious space but also extends to more private home space. In the branch of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) on 34 road, one of the popular churches in Gowon Estate, Greyson is an active member and leads a weekly bible study in his apartment, Flat 10 in my block. Every Sunday at 5 PM, a group of 10-20 people, including Greyson's whole family, Odedeyi (Flat 3) and others from another block, gather in Greyson's living room. They follow a specific procedure of "RCCG house fellowship program" in which each week's theme has already been arranged. On June 17, 2018, Greyson's wife hosted the meeting which 7 adults and 9 children attended. The theme was domestic violence. After she read some quotes from the Bible and offered her interpretation, adults began to share their experiences and opinions in response to specific questions written in the RCCG program. Although the agenda was quite formatted, in the process, they incorporated their neighborhood life into the sharing. For instance, on that day, they discussed an example of family violence on 34 Road in the Estate, which I also heard about from Adewunmi at the CDA meeting earlier that month. This demonstrates that the religious space of house fellowship also serves as a social space connected to other social spaces where neighborhood stories were circulated. Apart from this discussion, we also sang Christian songs, held hands to pray, and made monetary contributions. The amount of each contribution (from adults only) was small, 50 or 20 naira placed in a basket, which

was collected by Greyson. Beyond this weekly house fellowship, I also observed that Greyson's family and Odedeyi's family became closer, as their children often visited each other's homes. Thus, through these religious practices, neighborhood-based sociality is performed to circulate money, emotion, and stories.

The spiritual sociality is also performed across gendered religious groups. In the central mosque, for instance, the governing committee consisted of all senior male Muslims, including my informants Ajayi, Kosola and Kudus. During praying time, women prayed in a separate space of the mosque while youth were organized on their own. In the Ramadan period every year, it was evident to observe a socio-spatial division. Around 7:30 PM when the fourth prayer (Maghrib) finished every day, a row of boys queued for free food offered by the mosque, including bread, Ankara, moi moi, and a cup of tea. Senior men were seated at the table, and I was also invited to sit with them. For females, only young girls were offered food while older women ate at home. Similarly, gendered group activities were also found across churches in the neighborhood. On January 27, 2019, for instance, I was invited to a men's house fellowship in Saul's apartment on 412 road, which gathered around 20 people as another social group within the RCCG church. I saw many familiar faces, including Greyson. Since it was held from 3 to 5 PM, Greyson was able to organize the fellowship gathering at his own apartment in time. Differing from Greyson's circle, Saul's group discussed management issues in the church, including position vacancies, elections, and membership. In the RCCG church, there is also a women's house fellowship that I did not attend.

In the social spaces of churches and mosques, with connections to religious leaders, a limited number of religious followers, especially underemployed youths, can gain certain

financial and material support to facilitate their urban livelihoods (also see Swindell 2019). With respect to my informants' life stories, many of them related their experiences of temporarily working in churches and mosques, though only a few (e.g., Boye) financially benefited significantly from religious organizations. As a 34-year-old Yoruba woman migrating from Ogun State to Lagos in 2006, Boye's experience in Lagos vividly demonstrates the significance of sociality in her church. When I first met Boye in 2017, she told me she was staying with her "spiritual father" and she was his "only child". When I became familiar with Boye's life, I realized that Boye's parents and siblings were still living in her hometown Ilaro, Ogun State. Desperately looking for employment opportunities in her early years in Lagos, Boye became a part-time secretary for pastor Adeyi in the church she usually attended. In 2011, Adeyi and his wife Shagama invited Boye to live with them in their house in Gowon Estate; that was why Boye told me she was the only child of the "spiritual father" Adeyi. In Adeyi's church, Boye played a central role in organizing the choir. In 2014, Adeyi and Shagama started a pharmacy business in Gowon Estate, and Boye was also fully involved. From 2014-17, with Adeyi's partial sponsorship, Boye was enrolled in a Higher National Diploma program at Yaba Polytechnic. On November 22, 2018, I was invited to attend Boye's graduation ceremony together with her biological family members (mother and brothers) traveling from Ogun state as well as Adeyi and Shagama. Knowing that Boye's livelihood in Lagos largely hinged on the spiritual sociality developed through Adeyi's church, it made sense to me why she performed her identity and sociality with Adeyi in that way at our first encounter.

From the perspective of urban livelihood, generating "informal income" does not necessarily require fixing spiritual sociality at specific religious places as Boye does. As Tope's lived mobility shows in chapter 5.3, some Estate boys utilized their connections to multiple churches in the city to earn small sums of money. This kind of mobile spiritual sociality is consistent with aspirational unsettling as discussed before. In this scenario, Idahosa tends to switch between churches, including the one in Gowon Estate (Glass house) where Fred acted as a choir leader and the one in Ikeja where he met his *omoge* Ngozi. He later also brought Tope to the Ikeja church where Tope acquired a temporary working position as a guitar player. Idahosa's decision on which church to attend depends on whom he goes with on that day. Therefore, Idahosa's mobility among these churches demonstrates that the ways he performed spiritual sociality is not simply driven by urban livelihood but by the youth becoming processes.

In sum, spiritual sociality is performed through religious spaces that encompass churches and mosques and extend to home. The ethnographic account of religious practices in Gowon Estate seems to echo the study of religious sociality in Africa (Haynes 2017), but by specifically examining the spatial practices among the youth, especially among new migrants like Boye and the second-generation Estate boys, we can see that both the spatial fixity of spiritual sociality on a specific religious place and the spatial flexibility of spiritual sociality across different religious places in the city intersect with their performances of urban identity.

7.1.2 Performative Ethnicity in the Religious Spaces of Gowon Estate

In some socio-spatial contexts, ethnicity becomes performative in the performances of spiritual sociality in the religious spaces of Gowon Estate. In the previous chapter, I elaborated on the performative ethnicity of Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness through going back to study at home-place universities and learning to speak Yoruba in Lagos. In the public narrative of Gowon Estate as a "United Nations of Nigeria", this neighborhood is discursively associated with co-habitant multi-ethnicity. In the religious spaces of churches and mosques, many attendees expressed their acceptance of Christians and Muslims from all kinds of ethnic backgrounds and places in Nigeria. Nevertheless, still based on the concept of everyday ethnicity (see Brubaker 2006; Sullivan 2012), I have found the performative spatialities of ethnic differentiation and identification in two exemplar religious places.

The first kind of spatiality manifests itself in the differences between two major mosques in the neighborhood. The one at American Junction is called the central mosque by residents, which was built in the late 1990s and was renovated in 2013. The other one on 51 road is the oldest mosque (called the old mosque in this study), built in the early 1990s. At the old mosque, I often sat at the imam's shop beside the mosque, observing his son Amir selling water and interacting with a variety of Muslims. Due to its closeness to my flat, I visited the central mosque more regularly, where I was even taught to pray and sat with people inside the mosque. Yoruba is commonly spoken in the central mosque, while Hausa serves as lingua franca in the area of the old mosque, including surrounding shops.

When I further knew the social networks and the governing committees of both mosques, ethnic differentiation was more clearly revealed, though none of the informants claimed that this is a Yoruba mosque and the other is a Hausa one. On the one hand, the central mosque is managed by a committee of eleven elderly Yoruba Muslim residents, according to Kudus. He said he was invited by Alhaji Ajayi to be the treasurer on the committee and has held this position for almost ten years. On the other hand, the old mosque's governing committee, according to Saku, consists primarily of "people from the North" together with one Yoruba member and one Edo member who he emphasized that he had lived in the North for a long time. In Saku's narrative, ethnicity does not manifest itself simply as Hausa but a more vague idea of "North" (versus "West" referring to Yoruba). Having sat in both religious spaces for periods of time, I never witnessed their social networks overlapping. The only clear connection between the two committees, as I observed and recounted by informants, was maintained by Alhaji Ajayi, who used to be the chairman of the central mosque and then became the chairman of the Muslim association of the entire Gowon Estate area. In 2017, as he took me to meet the imam (Amir's father), he suggested I should greet the imam in Hausa and taught me a few words "sannu, yaya aiki" (hello, how's work). However, in Tom's narrative of encountering Alhaji (chapter 6.2), greeting in Yoruba became a necessary socializing action. The difference between Alhaji's greeting languages demonstrates that everyday ethnicity is performatively enacted through his social experiences across religious spaces in Gowon Estate.

Figure 7.1 Elders Eating at the Table in the Central Mosque on Eid Al-Fitr

Performative ethnicity is particularly constructed in the event space of both mosques. On June 15, 2018, a large-scale Eid al-Fitr congregation was held on the ground outside the old mosque. Around 9 AM, my neighbor Bawa in white traditional clothes called me for this event. When I arrived there, Muslims socially congregated in smaller groups: men and women were separated; Bawa and those senior men from the central mosque stayed together. One of my key informants, Adeyinka, Ajayi's son, socialized with the old mosque Muslims by speaking a little Hausa. As the public relations officer (a voluntary role on the governing committee), Saku was busy with managing the flows of people. Around 9:45 AM, Muslims started praying. Saku told me there would be a sermon later, but after the main prayer ceremony ended, many people from the central mosque I knew began to leave. The central mosque did not hold any activity until 4 PM.

After prayers, they began to distribute food, including gari, meat and soup, which were different from the supply of bread, ankara, moi moi and tea on usual Ramadan days as described above, signifying the special day. Elder Yoruba people sat at the table, but I went to chat with two elders sitting on the floor without being offered food or being approached. Sensing that they might not speak Yoruba, I greeted them in English. Sure enough, they told me they were from Borno (in Northeast Nigeria). Regarding my offer to bring them some food, one of them replied, “(we only eat) if they give us. We don’t ask.” The other added, “it’s not like this is our place”. The ethnic inclusiveness claimed by Kudus who was sitting at the table was certainly inconsistent with the spiritual sociality performatively enacted within the religious space.

By comparing socio-spatial practices in the religious space of the two mosques, we can see that although multi-ethnicity is performed on occasions especially when I asked, ethnic differentiation and identification are performatively enacted through the social interactions in and across the two mosques. This is another example of how a performative approach enables us to discover the nuances in everyday experiences that are often overshadowed by the framing of urban multiculturalism that supposedly integrates religion and ethnicity in Western cities (e.g., Naylor and Ryan 2002). As Peach (2002) suggests, the new cultural geography paradigms, including performativity scholarship, enrich the social geographies of religion and ethnicity.

In this vein, drawing on Rosemary’s migrating and lived experiences with Hekan church in Gowon Estate, I continue by discussing the relationship between performative ethnicity in religious space and urban identification processes. The Hekan church is located at the back streets of Gowon Estate. On its blue gate, the church’s name is written

in both Hausa and English. According to my informants, the congregation mostly consists of Christians from Northern Nigeria, including Adamawa, Nasarawa, Plateau and Kaduna where its headquarters is based. Although Jackson (from Nasarawa), the head of the music department in the church, told me that they welcome all Christians, their religious practices still demonstrate the styles that differed from other churches in Gowon Estate. For instance, their services are performed in both English and Hausa: the latter certainly does not apply to Yoruba-speaking Christians.

Hekan church plays an important role in Rosemary's life trajectory. This 42-year-old woman migrated to Lagos when her husband Joey got a police job in 1997, and they moved to the current flat on 411 road in 2000. Speaking of her first encounter with Lagos, she said, "here women don't wear proper clothes, but in the North, women covered themselves very well." Meanwhile, she also admitted, "as we came here, we also adapted to their own lifestyle" (July 15, 2018). Her adaptation was mediated through her interaction with neighbors, especially in the Hekan church whose activities are scheduled every day of the week: Monday evening, general pray meeting; Tuesday, women's group rehearsal; Wednesday, pastor's sermon; Thursday, choir rehearsal; Friday, Bible study; Saturday, women's group rehearsal; Sunday, major congregation. As a lead performer in the women's group, Rosemary spent quite an amount of time in the church: she usually went to the women's group rehearsal on Tuesday and Saturday, and sometimes went to the pastor's sermon and Bible study. Depending on the content of the performance on Sunday, she only joined choir rehearsal when necessary.

Through the regularly-performed spiritual sociality in the church,Rosemary's ethnic identification with the "North" is performatively enacted. On Sunday congregations, even

though most parts of the service were delivered in English, there was a part called "cultural performance" performed by the women's group in the Hausa language, which I never saw in other churches in the neighborhood. When Rosemary explained their performances to me by watching my recordings, she emphasized that they tried to bring some characteristics from the North here. "This song is called 'God can change you'…this sentence, 'if you're a witch, God can change you.'…This song is about how we serve God…" She also added that those songs and lyrics were not unchangeable; group members could bring new songs for discussion, and they practiced them together before performing them at the church.

Figure 7.2 Cultural Performance at the Hekan Church

Furthermore, in Rosemary's everyday life, ethnic identification and differentiation are also performatively enacted through her interactions with "Yoruba" people. Since I met Rosemary through her former next-door neighbor Tope, she initially did not comment

much on Yoruba-ness. Over the time when I often attended her church activities and she became familiar with my research, she began to naturally relate her differences from Yoruba people. When talking about her shopping at Oshodi, for instance, she said "my son touched a Yoruba woman's goods. 'Hey, olochi, bulubulu,[61] abuse abuse abuse…' This is how these [Yoruba] people behave. I never *hear* [pidgin, meaning understand] Yoruba at all… These people are not friendly at all. In the North, we don't do (this) like that. We know this is a child." This was not the only occasion she differentiated her "North" from Yoruba-ness in Lagos. Even when talking about religious practices, performative ethnicity was also embodied. She suggested that Yoruba Christians often pray very loudly, "I always want to ask them 'are you fighting with God?'", she laughed. Nevertheless, praying is a personal style, and I knew my neighbor Philip, an Edo man, also prayed very loudly every morning in my block. In Rosemary's mind, this behavior represents a difference she constructed for the "other"—Yoruba people.

The religious space of Hekan church not only illustrates how performative ethnicity materializes through reiterative religious practices every week but also provides urban migrants/residents like Rosemary with a venue through which ethnic differentiation intersects with urban identification. Migrating from a village in Plateau State to Lagos, she differentiated life in Lagos from her place in the "North" by emphasizing the Yoruba-ness she encountered, in terms of the way of speaking Yoruba and the way of praying. Her performance in the women's group in which her spiritual sociality is based is inseparable from her performative enactment of non-Yoruba ethnicity. All these are performatively ingrained into her urban identification process.

[61] These words were what she remembered, but the words are not Yoruba and do not have any meaning.

In sum, performed spiritual sociality and performative ethnicity are entangled in the religious spaces in Gowon Estate as part of the religious landscape in Lagos. With frequent and reiterative religious practices in everyday life, sociality is performed in and across religious spaces, while ethnicity is performatively constructed. For the latter, I suggest that the framing of a multicultural ethno-religious nexus in Western metropolitan studies, African studies and especially in the context of Lagos (see chapter 1) is not sufficient to help us shed light on the performative enactment of ethnicity. In this particular neighborhood, such performativity is spatialized through managing two mosques, socializing at events and performing in the church. Only by examining the spatial dimension of performativity as informed by Gregson and Rose (2000), can we discover how the specificity of entangled performance and performativity (in Rosemary's case, the place-identity of "North" and non-Yoruba ethnicity) can be ingrained into urban identification.

7.2 Neighbors and Friends: Performative Spiritual Sociality in Everyday Urban Spaces

In this section, I move beyond religious practices by examining the everyday repetitive practices of spiritual sociality in urban spaces at large: in the interaction with neighbors, possibly resulting in moving to other neighborhoods in the city; and the interaction with so-called "friends" through social spaces in Gowon Estate. Drawing on the idea of "performative spirituality" (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009), I will elaborate on the

embodiment of performative spiritual sociality in their socio-spatial practices. Differing from the framing of religious sociality (Haynes 2017) that hinges on the performance of sociality, this performative framing of spiritual sociality attends to the reiterative experiences in which individual spirituality is embodied as well as constrained.

Such individual spirituality in the local context often involves an assemblage of witchcraft with the formal religions of Christianity and Islam. Scholars have indicated that the spiritual belief systems in Africa have not been dominated by several ideological paradigms but built on a variety of sources embedded in people's everyday experiences (Olupona 2000; Ter Haar 2009). For instance, for those who believe in ancestral spirituality, life is a cycle that moves from birth to death, passing through the ancestral world, and comes back through reincarnated birth (Kalu 2000: 54-84). Therefore, idol worship of ancestors and deities is practiced. In a strict sense, this practice, which is widely existing in other parts of the world such as Asia, is not a kind of witchcraft, but some informants in my study discursively associated it with witchcraft ideology in terms of *juju*, arrow, etc. Therefore, witchcraft is usually a local concept with variation from case to case[62]. Instead of articulating what witchcraft is or is not, this study focuses on discursive practices of everyday spirituality that incorporate various versions of "witchcraft" related to the religious institutions of Christianity and Islam. These relations will be further elaborated in the next section on norms of morality.

[62] For instance, in Cameroon, witchcraft is employed by lower classes against elite expropriators while elites also deploy witchcraft accusations against jealous subordinates back home in rural areas (Geschiere 1997). See the review (Smith 2008: 15-23).

7.2.1 Living with Neighbors

I started my fieldwork by renting an apartment in Gowon Estate. Initially, I was struck by the "friendly" atmosphere in the neighborhood where many neighbors in our building and Close A greeted me every day. However, when I talked to my landlord Goodman (44-year-old), the owner of the apartment I lived in, his ambiguous attitude toward my neighbors intrigued me. During the process of negotiating and signing the lease, Goodman never came to the apartment but met me outside Gowon Estate. When I asked why he chose to do so, he first said he did not get along with some neighbors, but later on, he secretly warned me that some neighbors were practicing *juju*—a popular descriptor of witchcraft in Nigeria and also other West African countries. This was the "real" reason why he rented out the apartment and avoided coming back to the neighborhood.

As spirituality has become an important dimension of everyday sociality in the world (MacKian 2012) and the ideas of witchcraft have been embedded in social interactions that are noted in ethnographies of social life in Africa (e.g., Holtzman 2016) as well as other parts of the world (e.g., Caple-James 2012), it is not surprising that Goodman performed and made sense of his sociality by employing "juju" discourses. What this case study adds here is how he naturalized the witchcraft-related spiritual sociality through his life trajectories. In his narrative of life stories, he told me his wedding was delayed due to heavy rains in his hometown in Benue State. "We call it manipulation. It's not natural." After marriage, he lived with his wife in a compound in the Egbeda area of Lagos. Since their efforts to have a child failed during this period, he blamed his landlady

for spiritual “manipulation” again. “You know, Yoruba people…” he stopped, implying that this is the spiritual practice particularly made by the Yoruba. The following narratives confirmed this implied mindset. As soon as he moved from Egbeda to Gowon Estate in 2010, his wife gave birth to their first child. Nevertheless, he still did not get along with neighbors in a spiritual sense. Among all the neighbors, he only claimed a good relationship with Bruce’ family (Flat 14), who are tenants from Jos. “We are brought up in the same environment. We have common understanding…But in this Yoruba setting.... You don’t know.” He considered life in Lagos as a kind of life surrounded by Yoruba people. He wanted to complain directly but, for some reasons, kept discreet without pointing to the word “witchcraft”. Nevertheless, spiritual sociality was implicated throughout his narrative of life stories. At the end of our conversation , he asked me to be careful about specific neighbors, “that man selling water [Isaiah], that woman sitting downstairs [Mama Nan], the man opposite you [Bawa], they are not good”.

Goodman’s case vividly illustrates how spiritual sociality is performatively enacted in his migrant trajectory and lived experience with neighbors in Lagos. As a first-generation Benue-native migrant, Goodman spent some years in Jos before coming to Lagos in 1995. That was why he socially identified with Bruce in terms of shared experiences in Jos. In his eyes, Lagos is part of Yorubaland and many of his neighbors, especially those whom he was wary of and warned me about, are Yoruba. However, Isaiah and Bawa are not; both came from Edo in their younger ages. Bawa performed Yoruba-ness by speaking the language (chapter 6.2), but actually strongly disidentified himself with Yoruba-ness on certain occasions that Goodman did not know about. Nonetheless,

through living in Lagos, Goodman's performative spiritual sociality is also entangled with everyday Yoruba-ness that he felt.

For those who were born and grew up in Lagos, performative spiritual sociality does not involve Yoruba-ness but still materializes through the living environment. Like Goodman, Philip also justified his moving from one neighborhood to another by telling the stories of how he was cursed by landlords. Born in 1980 and moving to Gowon Estate with his parents in 1990, Philip was very familiar with this environment. After he got married to Lily (see chapter 6.1) in 2013, they began to live independently. They first rented a flat in a compound somewhere between Egbeda and Isheri. After they moved in, Philip immediately lost his job in an American company and struggled with unemployment for two years. When he got another job, his landlord kept asking about the details of the job. He then became suspicious of being cursed by the landlord, "Why does he ask this information? He must use it for bad things." Philip did not respond to the questions but moved out of his house to a temporary residence nearby. He believed it was this landlord that performed *juju* so that he lost his former job. After he and his wife settled in another two-bedroom flat in Ikotun, he found this second place cursed as well. This time, the misfortune was that his wife could not get pregnant for a long time, as Goodman experienced. Only when she visited Philip during his contract work in Cameroon in 2016, she got pregnant and gave birth to a baby back in Nigeria. This reality confirmed his suspicion of being cursed in the house at Ikotun. Therefore, Philip and his family moved back to Gowon Estate in 2016. He provided me with a very interesting reason which I never heard from other informants: "almost all the private houses in Lagos are cursed. That's why this estate is better. It's a government project."

Although this might be a personal perspective and reasoning, the connection between spiritual sociality and urban livelihood has been widely narrated by many other informants. In Philip's case, he associated the spiritual experience of being cursed with the living environment. Although he moved to Gowon Estate, which was supposed to be a "safe" and "better" place due to its built environment, he still narrated "curse" and "*juju*" in his experiences with neighbors, particularly with Isaiah. Given the vast, ubiquitous risks of being cursed in everyday life, I asked him how to evade or to overcome the curses he perceived. He replied, "you have to pray hard". "Pray hard" in this context means praying loudly and emotionally, which is a common scene observed in the Charismatic Pentecostal churches in Nigeria (Brennan 2018) and elsewhere (Piot 2010). Therefore, every morning around 6 AM, I heard Philip "pray hard" on his balcony.

In neighborhood life, Isaiah has become a popular as well as mysterious figure in many of the rumors and stories which normalize everyday spiritual sociality. Isaiah is in his 70s, having lived in Flat 6 of my block since the 1980s. He often introduced himself as the chairman of this block and this close. Rumors about Isaiah's life have many versions, primarily focusing on two things: the massive wealth he has accumulated over the years and the witchcraft he was said to practice in the neighborhood. According to conversations with my informants, he owned more than 20 apartments in Gowon Estate, and his children and grandchildren all lived in very decent places in Ikeja, Victoria Island or even abroad. There were different kinds of ontological narratives on the accumulation of his wealth. One was that he became rich because he was a senior staff member of the Nigerian Central Bank and earned much more than other junior staff who lived in this neighborhood. However, a widely spread narrative was that he made a fortune through

witchcraft, especially "money rituals". Philip was one of my informants questioning Isaiah's behavior: "Why does an old man in this age sweep the floor in the early morning every day? He must do something." Julian in Flat 1 also warned me when he saw me trying to interact with Isaiah. "Many residents in this block are afraid of *baba* [older man, referring to Isaiah], because he plays *juju*."

I was not able to have a formal interview with Isaiah, though I tried to talk with him frequently. Our conversation was largely restricted to superficial greetings and general discussions on public and political affairs. When it came to his personal life, he seemed alert to strategically direct our conversation elsewhere. Although I explicitly expressed my research identity, themes, and ethics, he insisted on refusing an interview about his life without any specific reason given to me. I did not realize his spiritual sociality until his friend and former colleague Baba Afolabi refused my interviews as well and commented: "I know your Chinese people practice *juju* and eat people. If I tell you my biography, even though you won't do it, what if your people come to find me?" Despite repeated clarification on my "spiritual background", I could not persuade him; nor was I ever able to persuade Isaiah.

In sum, through everyday practices and discourses of living with neighbors not only in Gowon Estate and in Lagos but also in many other places along life trajectories, spiritual sociality is sedimented and naturalized in their social interactions. What is new regarding performative spiritual sociality in Lagos is its intersection with perceived Yoruba-ness that is also naturalized as part of city life. Furthermore, the special setting of Gowon Estate (in terms of diversity and built environment) becomes a social space in

which witchcraft-related discourses are widely circulated, thereby consolidating spiritual sociality among neighbors.

7.2.2 Hanging Out with "Friends"

In chapters 4 and 5, I elaborated on the sticky space of Gowon Estate performatively constructed by the Estate boys. A remaining question is that when these young men interact with peers outside their affinity group, why do their interactions become superficial, described as "hi-hi" friendship by my informants? Based on participant observation in the social space of neighborhood bars, I found that my informants did not usually share food or drinks with "friends" at other tables, though they greeted and shook hands. On another occasion when I walked with Williams' group, one of them even reminded me not to shake hands with strangers because "you don't know how they will use you" (February 1, 2019). Here, "use" is similar to how Goodman described "manipulation", both of which are spiritual. Thus, in this section, I will further discuss the performativity of spiritual sociality in the practices of hanging out with "friends".

The word "friend" is heard frequently in everyday life in Gowon Estate. As my initial encounters with neighbors showed, I was seen as a "friend" even if the neighbors barely knew me. When I talked to Davin about this encounter in his "Car Wash" bar, he laughed and admitted, "I call everyone I meet 'friends', but I don't have a friend." Calling people "friends" in this context demonstrates a certain degree of politeness but does not imply any intimate relationships. My informants often greeted me by saying "How far, friend/bro" (meaning "How are you, my friend/brother" in Nigeria pidgin). In response, I

also greeted them by saying “I dey”, meaning “I’m doing well”. If these greetings are not performed at a certain frequency in any form of face-to-face encounter, phone call, or instant message, social connections are unlikely to be maintained. Within the affinity group such a social code also applies, but the greeting of “friends” does not mean the formation of close friendships. In local terms, people outside the affinity groups are just “hi-hi” friends, who regularly say “hi” to each other without any substantial social bonds.

In the shadow of greeting performances, spiritual sociality becomes performative in the social practices of constructing and maintaining the borders between “friends”. Jacob’s experience with Estate boys and his ontological narratives of social coding below illustrates the performativity of spiritual sociality. Observing his everyday sayings and doings with a variety of people including Tope, Idahosa and others, I found a paradox in his social life. On the one hand, he claimed that he did not make friends with people in Gowon Estate because he was disappointed by them not helping him when his father passed away and his family had to move out of the Estate (see chapter 3.2). On the other hand, he chose to rent a place close to the Estate and still hang around with people in the neighborhood. The theory of performative social identity enacted through counseling practices with his friends can explain why he treats Gowon Estate as a sticky space, but it cannot explain how and why he makes borders against certain people.

Here Jacob explains. On February 21, 2019, he did not go to a party in Gowon Estate that day. “Some boys slaughtered cows and shared among them(selves), but actually they did some ritual things behind it. Even today, some of my ‘friends’ invited me to a party, but I was not sure what they put (into the meal), so I didn’t go”. This narrative reminded me of the explanations given by Jacob (and other youths) on why they used a plastic

cover on top of their beer glass: they were afraid of something spiritually bad being put into the glass, instead of protecting the beer from flies which I observed and understood earlier on. This also echoes my observation on how they did not share food and drink outside the affinity group. All these mundane practices result from a kind of spiritual sociality individually defined by my informants and mutually maintained among them. It does not mean that they often have evidence about who is practicing "rituals" over food and drinks; the suspicion backed by performative spiritual sociality disciplines their interactions with people outside the groups that they are familiar with, while also strengthening the social bonds within the groups

Performative spiritual sociality also shapes Jacob's social identification against "yahoo boys". As discussed in chapter 5, many informants did not like being called "Estate boys" because the stereotyped label was associated with "yahoo boys". Here I would like to add some new insights into this disidentification, therefore clarifying the spiritual dimension of "yahoo boy" narratives in the local context. Scholars have identified the connection between scamming practices and rumors about witchcraft rituals in Nigeria (Smith 2001). Still based on Jacob's social life, I would suggest that this kind of discourse is not simply about rumors but points to everyday discursive practices that performatively construct spiritual sociality.

When I visited Jacob on February 21, 2019, he was talking to his mother about the death of a "Delta boy" (a young man from Delta State) in Gowon Estate a few days before. His mother said, "the dead boy's younger brother is a yahoo boy." Jacob replied, "that's the reason! If they [yahoo boys] just do it online, that might (be) okay; but many of them do diabolic ritual!" Like Jacob, many other Estate boys believed that "yahoo" is

just a cover, the way they actually make money is through spiritual manipulation. Conversations such as the one between Jacob and his mother were heard many times in the affinity groups I hung out with. These widely-spread discursive practices not only affected their social interactions with people outside the affinity groups in public space, such as beer drinking and shaking hands, but also affected their social identity as Estate boys. That's why Jacob strongly performed his disidentification with Gowon Estate as a lived space which is saturated with discourses of "yahoo boys" that have transcended its original meaning of online scamming. Performatively, however, spiritual sociality is naturalized and sedimented through his everyday performances of socializing with "friends", by saying "hi", drinking on his own (in his words, "finishing beer before pee") and avoiding meeting people in unfamiliar situations.

Drawing on the concept of performative spirituality, I have shed light on the performative enactment of spiritual sociality in the circumstances of socializing with "hi-hi" friends: Jacob's and those Estate boys' paradoxes hinge on the spiritual sociality that they "think beyond intentionality, cast off certainty and embrace their suspicion" (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009: 702). Moreover, the performativity of spiritual sociality in this scenario does not necessarily involve the discourses of religiosity (Christianity, Islam, or Jewish) that have been noted in Western "spiritual landscapes" (Blumen 2007; Williams 2016). In Africa's "urban estuaries" (Landau 2018) or simply saying urban conditions, the performative perspective can enrich our understandings of a nuanced situation called "friendship fears" (Landau 2018)—fragile social bonds that people fear and are frustrated by—and its consequences in precarious city life.

Reflecting on the two kinds of everyday practices of spiritual sociality, we can understand living with neighbors and hanging out with "friends" as lived experiences that commonly exist along individual life trajectories while specifically registering in the place-ness of Lagos. Given that the geographies of postsecularism suggest that the boundary between the religious and the secular should be blurred (Cloke and Beaumont 2012; also see Kong 2010: 763-765), this study further interprets how individual spiritualities materialize through mundane social practices. It also sheds light on the specificities of the performative enactment of spiritual sociality in Lagos and in Gowon Estate— "the place of spirituality in modern life" (Bartolini et al. 2017). In doing so, the interpretation of Estate boys' place-identity and socio-spatial stickiness is further fleshed out.

Also, compared to the performance of spiritual sociality in and across religious spaces, performative spiritual sociality is part of the "undecidability that demands, and sets us [Lagosians or residents of Gowon Estate] on the way towards" (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009: 704). That said, the unknown, undecidable, and different ways of thinking experience, narrated as part of life stories and performed as part of sociality, make spirituality felt but not seen. This kind of spirituality does not simply manifest as witchcraft, *juju*, "money ritual" or any other terms given by narrators but works through human experience as mutually constitutive of the religious and the non-religious/pseudo-religious. Such assemblage of discourses and norms will be teased out subsequently.

7.3 Making Sense of the Spiritual Sociality: the Norms of Morality

As discussed above, spiritual sociality is not simply performed in religious spaces but becomes performative in everyday practices of living with neighbors and hanging out with "friends." In this section, I will further discuss the specific "spiritual landscape" in which performativity coexists and interacts with the performance of spiritual sociality. Instead of being influenced by institutional factors as illustrated in the study of performative Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness, here I will focus on individual social and material norms for urban residents to behave, feel and judge urban differences encountered in their lived experiences in Lagos as well as in Gowon Estate.

In the vein of African studies of spirituality in people's moral values and "everyday problems of existence" (Ellis and Ter Haar 2004), I suggest that there are normed moralities shaping people's everyday spiritual sociality, and such moralities result from socio-spatial experiences in the relational places of Gowon Estate and Lagos. In a review of anthropological studies of morality, Csordas (2013) argues that morality should not be treated as a cultural system as religion or ideology but as plural, dynamic discourses uniquely distributed across different domains. Also, he suggests that the concept of evil, especially embodied as discursive practices of witchcraft, should take morality into account. From this perspective, putting morality as a framing of various spiritual discursive practices can help us tease out the norms that reproduce as well as regulate the spiritual sociality we have discussed.

7.3.1 "Money Ritual": The Morality in the Ways of Becoming (Un)settled in Lagos

Since some Estate boys socially differentiated themselves from "yahoo boys" due to the spiritual dimensions of "yahoo boy" discourses, here I illustrate what specifically constitutes the discursive construction of this stereotyped labeling and othering. Also, I discuss how these discourses contribute to the formation of people's (not only youths' but also elders') morality in the ways of becoming settled in Lagos. As Jacob mentioned, scamming does not concern him, but spiritual manipulation is the key that "big boys" used to make their fortunes and that ordinary Estate boys fear, even though the Estate boys desire to have the lavish lifestyle of the big boys.

There is a specific local term referring to the practice of *juju*: money ritual. Generally speaking, the narratives of "money ritual" describe how a person can make money mysteriously through the practice of witchcraft. By claiming that some, such as the "big boys", engage in money rituals, people make sense of how economic inequality between people in the same environment or class is created. For various personal reasons, "money ritual" believers do not or cannot articulate the ways of other people becoming rich but attribute the emerging inequality among supposedly equivalent people to supernatural power exercised through ritual. The stories circulated in the neighborhood about money rituals and supernatural powers mark a "gray zone" of reasoning about economic change in one's life and the economic differences between people.

This is a popular explanation of economic disparity in the African studies literature. In Nigeria especially, anthropologists have noted that disparities in wealth and power are interpreted and negotiated through idioms of the supernatural, in terms of the interplay

between religion and witchcraft (Smith 2001a, 2001b; Marshall 2009). Specifically, "while Pentecostalism itself fueled local interpretations that 'fast wealth' and inequality were the product of satanic rituals, popular rumors simultaneously accused some Pentecostal churches of participating in the very occult practices that created instant prosperity and tremendous inequality." (Smith 2001b: 612) Instead of only examining the role of Pentecostalism, this dissertation showcases how discourses on Christianity and Islam are also deployed through moral norming to counter the effects of "money ritual".

In neighborhood life, the Estate boys used "money ritual" not only to refer to illegitimate and immoral wealth accumulation but also to justify not engaging in ostentatious consumption. In the area of Gowon Estate, Havannah and Lyta hotels are two places for more expensive consumption where the affinity group (Tope, Jacob etc.) did not usually choose to visit. They told me many times that "yahoo boys" (referring to "big boys") lived lavish lives through drinking, smoking, and clubbing all night in these two hotels, and those were also the spaces for practicing "money ritual". I know "yahoo boys" like Williams did go to Havannah a couple of times, one of which was for his sister Fiona's birthday when he successfully scammed the money from the American guy. Williams was certainly not the kind of "yahoo boys" Tope's group mentioned. Besides hanging out with Tope's group in those low-key places where they comfortably consumed, I invited them to *flex* in Savanna and Lyta once each in the period of my fieldwork. Since it was my treat (instead of a "big boy"), we did not spend lavishly, and the narratives of "money ritual" were never heard from them while we were drinking, chatting and dancing. As noted above, the performative enactments of social identification with the affinity group materialize in part through the critique of

ostentatious consumption, thereby producing a border between these status groups and those of the “big boys”. Here I would add that the discursive practices of “money ritual” are also part of the border-making practices that construct moral norms among themselves.

Given that “money ritual” is regarded as the way to accumulate fast wealth, why don’t all people engage in money ritual? This question was discussed among my informants, leading to various narratives of the consequences of practicing “money ritual”. One of the major narratives claims that “money ritual” can cause unexpected death: it is possible that the one practicing it or the relative of this person dies early (as mentioned by Jacob and his mother about the death of the “Delta boy”). A full story of “money ritual” often involves killing, as Smith (2001) indicates in his study in Igboland. In Gowon Estate, one such story was circulated and detailed by Davin to me:

> An elderly man living in the next Close was normal before, but his leg later had problems and he soon died. People were confused by his sudden death. Later, another young man living opposite to his apartment building went mad. Neighbors realized the connection after knowing that the young man was the dead man’s son. Then, the story was revealed: this mad youth went to Edo State to practice “money ritual” by spiritually manipulating his father, leading to his father’s leg problems and subsequent death. However, instead of becoming rich, the young man went mad.

As Davin concluded, “money ritual doesn’t always work out, but people always pay the price”. According to many other informants, the risk of paying the “price” prevents people from practicing “money ritual”.

Therefore, a series of moral norms is constructed to make sense not only of economic disparity but also of social identity. First, various versions of "money ritual" are widely used to explain why some people in the same environment (such as unknown "big boys" and mysterious Isaiah) become rich. Second, the discourses of the "price" paid for "money ritual" such as sudden death, loss of family members and madness, are used to explain why other people do not want to become rich in that spiritual way. Third, compared to the rich-poor dichotomy, the boundary between the moral and immoral is more strongly drawn to construct and to maintain social identity among those who commonly recognize and share these discourses.

Furthermore, for Estate boys whose lives remain economically unsettled, these norms of morality, I argue, contribute to the performative enactment of their aspirational unsettling. The presence of scamming (regarded as "fast wealth") in Gowon Estate causes social inequality between Estate boys, leading to the differentiation of status groups such as "yahoo boys" and "big boys". Young men like Jacob associate "yahoo boys" with "money ritual" while scammers like Williams and Zack distinguish themselves from "money ritual" (wicked wealth). The variegated narratives of "money ritual" in Gowon Estate demonstrate that each of them constructs the morality of (not) making money, leading to the open-ended process of unsettling. In other words, the self-constructed morality constitutes the aspirational dimension of youth becoming. Differing from the mindset of making sense of misfortune through the supernatural, which many Africanist anthropologists have already addressed (Geschiere 1997; Meyer 1998), the morality of judging "fast wealth" and "wicked wealth" not only drives people's agentic reasoning of

lived inequality but also leads to youth "aspirational unsettling"—a performative status in which Estate boys constantly make sense of their ways of living and becoming.

7.3.2 "Babalawo" in the "Bush": The Morality between Lagos and Hometowns

In the different versions of "money ritual" narratives, I found that narrators tend to employ words *Babalawo* (Yoruba word of witch ritualists) and *bush* (referring to rural, undeveloped areas[63]) to indicate that the immoral practices of wealth accumulation and spiritual manipulation are away from those who are now living in an urban area. One of the norms in this context is that "money ritual" is only practiced by *babalawo*[64] in the *bush*. Given that many Gowon Estate residents engage in dynamic mobility between Lagos and home places, it is important to explore how morality plays a role not only in enacting spiritual sociality but also in urban identification processes.

The discursive practices of "money ritual" involve a wide spectrum of spiritual engagements, but the most common are the following three versions that contain aspects of gender and ethnicity. The first version emphasizes gendered manipulation. Williams explained that a man can become rich by manipulating a woman spiritually by using curses given by *Babalawo.* He showed me a video from his WhatsApp, in which a woman was dancing wildly. He indicated that this woman had been cursed and became mad. By exercising this magic, the man would gain a sum of money from nowhere. The

[63] "bush" is also used in Tope's father–Abiola's narrative of the area of Oyero in Suburban Lagos where his new family house was constructed (See chapter 4).
[64] *Babalawo* is a Yoruba word for witch doctor. People call this kind of spiritual manipulator with supernatural power differently across Africa. In Igbo areas, for instance, people also call them *juju* men (Smith 2001a).

second version emphasizes killing in a ritual practice. Davin said that a money ritual has to involve blood sacrifice, which means that by killing someone, usually a family member, the ritual practitioner becomes rich. When I asked how money could come through the ritual, he replied, "this is a mystery. You have to consult *babalawo*." The third version mixes the gendered manipulation and blood sacrifice. Ada, a 56-year-old man, claimed his identity as a Muslim who does not worship idols, but he said he believed in "money ritual". The process of money ritual, in his opinion, includes having sex and the man taking the woman's body liquid to *babalawo* who plays ritual over it. In this way, the woman could go mad and even die. The three exemplar narrators are all male from different ages, ethnic and religious backgrounds, but the Yoruba word "*babalawo*" is repeatedly narrated by those who do not claim themselves to be Yoruba.

In a broad sense, discursive practices of "money ritual" are related to idol worship, as Ada and many others described, practiced by ritualists from rural areas. In the earlier studies of rural-urban migration and linkages (Aina and Baker eds. 1995; De Bruijn et al. eds. 2001), hometown is usually associated with the rural area in which indigenous religions are practiced. In my research on the linkage between Lagos and Oka-Akoko, a rural town in the periphery of Yorubaland, a large-scale community ceremony is held annually, involving both indigenous traditions and modern fundraising activities. Some younger-generation informants from Oka-Akoko, such as Lily and Fashola, do believe in the existence of ritualist practices in their hometown, though they never witnessed any but only heard of them.

Nevertheless, along the life trajectories that involve Lagos in relation to home places and other cities, migratory and mobility experiences (re)produce discourses of "*babalawo*

in *bush*" that shape these urban residents' morality and spiritual sociality. For instance, Terry (39-year-old) was born in Kaduna State and moved with his family back to his hometown in Edo State during his childhood. He disliked his hometown people, "they saw us as strangers. I never go back now because they are wicked" (October 18, 2018). He then gave me an example of how they were "wicked": his father was a local politician associated with PDP[65], while another APC member often had differences of opinion from his father. His father died accidentally, so Terry blamed hometown people who supported this APC member for killing his father with an "arrow". When I expressed my confusion about the "arrow", the exact word Smith (2001b) found used among Igbo society, he replied immediately, "you don't understand. It's not real. It's spiritual!" After I shared my open-mindedness about spiritualities and my own "Chinese" cosmology, he began to open up about witchcraft practices he heard from his family. In the end, he complained about hometown people's religious identities: "they are Christians, but we don't follow the same God!" Now as a school teacher, he is living with his wife and sons in Gowon Estate without much contact with his hometown people whom he socially and spiritually differentiates himself from.

Within the urban context of Gowon Estate, some hometown places are particularly related to witchcraft discourses, especially in terms of idol worship in their narratives, thereby further complexifying performed and performative spiritual sociality. Edo state, which is Terry's home state, is one of the places that is associated with witchcraft discourses. In the narratives of Isaiah's life, for example, Julian said, "anyone against him didn't have a good ending. You know, Edo people like to worship *juju*." Isaiah indeed

[65] The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is one of the two major political parties in Nigeria, along with its main rival, the All Progressives Congress (APC).

claimed himself as an Edo man, but he always described himself as a faithful Christian in everyday conversations. Therefore, stories about Isaiah and his place-identity are circulated to stereotype "Edo" people. Although some people clearly embody their religious belief, such as Bawa who often dresses as a Muslim and regularly goes to the central mosque, he is still suspected of practicing witchcraft due to his Edo identity. For example, my landlord Goodman maintained that Bawa's family worshiped indigenous idols from Edo. "You can't get rid of it. Once stopping worshiping them, the spirits would come to the next generation."

7.3.3 "Fake" or "Good": The Morality Mediated through Religious Institutions

The morality is not simply based on personal spirituality but socially mediated and maintained through the interplay between religious institutions and mundane spiritual thoughts, sayings and doings. The narratives of the power of pastors and imams, who can be powerfully "good" (i.e., can counter the effects of "money ritual") or "bad/fake/corrupt" (i.e., can manipulate supernatural power illegitimately and become rich), are highly intertwined to mediate people's everyday spiritual sociality and morality. In other words, individual spiritual sociality cannot be separated from a series of religious activities in churches and mosques, though people are often critical of the friendships formed there. In this sense, performing spiritual sociality has effects on the performative spirituality that disciplines everyday sociality.

In the local context, "money ritual" is said to be guided or practiced by *babalawo* but also often associated with Charismatic Christians and Muslims in ontological narratives.

When talking about extremely rich pastors in Nigeria, some informants believed that the pastors practiced "money rituals" to accumulate illegitimate wealth. They referred to these pastors and imams as "bad" or "fake". "Fake" pastors are common figures in public narratives as well as in popular culture across Africa (Brenner 2018). Being fake is often mentioned in criticism of charismatic pastors, but it is also a category that is used when discussing traditional healers and prophets. Common tropes in public accusations of being a fake pastor in Ghana involve sexual abuse, misuse of money, and accumulation of fast money (Lauterbach 2016: 76-77).

"Fake" pastors are said to be involved in "money ritual" by presenting miracles to their congregations. In our conversations, informants and I often discussed their experiences of hearing pastors' "miracle" speeches or even performances. In many large-scale congregations, a miracle witness is an important part of the ceremony. For instance, when I accompanied Tilly to the SCOAN[66], led by one of the richest pastors, T.B. Joshua, the sparkling moment was that Joshua healed people of hard-neck symptoms by just praying over their heads. Although Joshua claimed this "miracle" power was acquired from God, some informants argued that those pastors should not have such power because pastors are just interpreters of God's will.

When talking about miracles, informants shared very different opinions and experiences. Most of them believed in the existence of miracles from a spiritual perspective, but some of them did not trust pastors' performances of miracles. "There's something behind it, not Christianity", my neighbor Sandy said, though he did not point to witchcraft verbally. However, Davin more directly indicated that it is a "money ritual",

[66] The Synagogue, Church Of All Nations (SCOAN) is a charismatic Christian megachurch located in Lagos. Its name contains synagogue, but it has nothing to do with Jewish.

"fake pastors go beyond what they should do. They engage in blood sacrifice". Davin said he used to go to SCOAN, because his sister and many of his friends from his hometown in Delta suggested he should go to witness the miracles which pastor Joshua is famous for. He remembered the moment when Joshua touched his head, saying "your life will be changed according to your faith". He was critical of this saying, "what does it mean 'according to my faith'. It is a trick. My life hasn't changed at all, but he can say, you don't have faith." He complained that T.B. Joshua put conditions on his words, so he would not assume any responsibility. Davin eventually left the SCOAN.

Among Muslims, "fake" also exists in the narratives of my informants. Much like "fake" pastors, those "fake" Muslims appear to have power to tell people's fortune and perform miracles, so that many people follow them. Kudus described how these "fake" Muslims wear distinctive clothes and indicated that they are rich and even have their own mosques. Different informants gave "fake" Muslims different names. Kudus said, "whatever they are called, they are deviated from real Islam. They are fake." Unlike the stories of charismatic pastors, Muslims' practice of "money ritual" was narrated more personally. Saku is a 45-year-old Muslim from Zamfara. He told me about his experience with his brother's friend, a young Muslim man. "This guy is very rich and drives a very good car. My brother used to ask the guy how he could get such money. You know what, the guy said every time he prayed, he touched his penis." Saku exclaimed, "This is not a prayer. This is not the power from God!" Saku believes that this behavior is part of "money ritual". In this sense, narrating "money ritual" not only pertains to the perception of economic differences but also conveys the ideas of authenticity of Muslims.

In addition to critiquing the immoral practices by “fake” pastors and Muslims, those “good” and “powerful” pastors and imams are regarded as the moral model to counter the effects of “money ritual”. In Christians’ narratives like Williams’, powerful pastors are relied on to combat witchcraft. While “fake” pastors engage in “money ritual” to obtain illegitimate power to perform miracles, real, “strong” pastors exercise power to save people from “money ritual”. “Pray hard” as Philip’s approach to “overcome” the problem of curses demonstrates, involves the spiritual assemblage of witchcraft and Christianity. Back to Williams’ narrative of how madness can be relieved through pastors’ prayer, we can find the discursive linkage between “money ritual” and the power of Christianity. In Williams’ mind, to save someone from a curse from money rituals, one must find a “strong” pastor. He believed that powerful pastors could bring miracles, in contrast to Davin and Sandy’s narratives. In this sense, he thought some pastors could be more powerful than Babalawo. “Pastors cannot bring money like *babalawo* in a money ritual, but strong pastors can beat them.” He thus chose to go to churches where he thought the pastor was very powerful. He also invited me, “you should follow me. He shows many miracles.”

Muslims instead draw the boundary between Islam’s power and ritualists’ power. In the various narratives of “money ritual”, the discourses of orthodox widely exist and mirror how they conceptualize the spiritual assemblage of witchcraft and religions. The way to overcome the curses and to counter the effects of money rituals in my Muslim informants’ narratives is to follow orthodox Islam, though people interpreted “orthodox Islam” differently. Kudus emphasized that one must follow Islam very strictly in order not to be affected by others’ curses. He also thought traditional idol worship was related

to "money ritual" because those who follow traditional practices do not believe in monotheism. He said his grandfather firmly practiced idol worship, but since his father brought Islam into the family, they all practiced it and became Muslims. Although his grandfather still worshiped idols until he died, it did not affect him and his family, because "Allah will forgive you and save you once you convert."

Therefore, the morality constructed in the religious institutions serves to make sense of performing spiritual sociality in religious spaces. Although those discourses of "money ritual" infuse everyday non-religious socio-spatial practices that performatively naturalize and sediment spiritual sociality, they do not exist without extensive religious practices in neighborhood and city life. Although religious differences are regarded as one of the characteristics of "life in Lagos", we do find some commonality between Christians and Muslims when it comes to "money ritual" discourses. Such commonality manifests as a morality normed by individuals to make sense of their spiritual sociality in their life courses.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

In line with the performative enactments of Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness, everyday ethnicity also becomes performative in the specific religious spaces of Gowon Estate, notably across two primary mosques and in one church that is mainly run by Christians from the "North". Such performative spatialities are showcased to illustrate that ethnicity intersects with religions more subtly than many representations of the ethno-religious nexus in Lagos and elsewhere indicate (see Gandy 2005; Naylor and Ryan 2002). Also,

in the social spaces of Gowon Estate, performative ethnicity coexists with the performative spiritual sociality that is filled with discourses of witchcraft in everyday neighborhood life. Reflecting on my informants' various daily activities, I cannot determine if the performativity of spiritual sociality is more salient than the performativity of ethnicity, because the performative theories are not used to confirm a decidable state but to unfold the "undecidability" in open-ended processes of socio-spatial practices (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009: 708). In Goodman's case, we can see that his performative Lagosian-ness simultaneously involves performative spiritual sociality when he felt that he was cursed by "Yoruba" neighbors because he is living in Lagos. In other situations, he could attribute his feeling to other performative categories, but this was the moment when he unknowingly, performatively enacted both spirituality and ethnicity in the specific place—Gowon Estate in Lagos. Such momentary assemblage of categories of discourse materializes his urban identification. This is how a performative approach illuminates the spontaneity and fluidity of everyday ethnicity and spirituality.

Moreover, as many cases show, the performativity of spiritual sociality does not appear to differ across generations, but it does manifest differently across life trajectories and everyday practices. For people who have migratory experiences back to their home places, moral norms serve to performatively construct their spiritual sociality by differentiating themselves from their home places which are associated with witchcraft and meanwhile by identifying themselves with Lagos where they comfortably live in. For those young people, especially for Estate boys for whom Gowon Estate is a sticky space, hanging out with "friends" becomes a vantage point to further understand the stickiness. By constructing moral norms on "fast wealth" and "wicked wealth", they performatively

enact their social identification against people outside the affinity groups, while reinforcing their stickiness within the groups. Using a performative lens to interpret the social dimensions of urban identification not only complements the Africanist scholarship that focuses on spiritual reasoning of economic disparity in the settling down processes, but also enriches the accounts of post-secular cities in the geographies of religion and spirituality (Cloke and Beaumont 2012; Bartolini et al. 2017).

Regarding the discourses on witchcraft, it seems that interpersonal relationships are undermined in the various discursive practices of “money ritual”, leading to superficial expressions of “hi-hi” friendship and “friendship fear” (Landau 2018). However, when looking at frequent performances of spiritual sociality in religious institutions, people seem to be united instead of separated. Such a paradox reflects a nuanced balance between witchcraft and religion, between performativity and performance. Also, the construction of moral norms about “good” or “fake” pastors and imams vividly illustrates how such a balance is dynamically maintained by individuals to make sense of their everyday sociality. This performative approach to urban social identification refreshes the cliché accounts of the religion-witchcraft nexus (see the review, Meyer 2004) by contextualizing it through life in Lagos.

Conclusion

"And there is really only one word for what I feel about these new contributions to the Lagosian scene: gratitude. They are emerging, these creatives, in spite of everything; and they are essential because they are the signs of hope in a place that, like all other places on the limited earth, needs hope."

-----Teju Cole, "Every Day is for the Thief", 2014, p.131

"Movement to Lagos involves a new element since it brings migrants into contact with a highly differentiated political and industrial environment where status must be redefined. Migration to Lagos, in other words, presents the possibilities for social change of a more sweeping order than has ordinarily been the case".

------Sandra Barnes, "Becoming a Lagosian", 1974, p.216

Toward the end of his biographical novel, Teju Cole reflects that gratitude is a Lagosian living philosophy as it signals hope that is highly needed in life in Lagos and elsewhere. I did feel a sense of hope in my informants' extensive complaints about life in Lagos, especially in the rephrasing of "suffering and smiling" by Gowon Estate residents like Titi. However, such hope and aspiration were not simply narrated by the residents; after I knew how they ended up with the status they were holding, I realized that Lagos is conceptualized through hope and aspiration because Lagos is subjectively placed in their lives. Almost half a century ago, Barnes suggests that migrating to Lagos would redefine the status and identity of those migrants. Is Lagos nowadays such a city that redefines

who they are? Differing from Barnes' classic ethnography of Yoruba urban migrants in a predominantly Yoruba-governing neighborhood--Mushin, my ethnography of urban identification gives us a portrait of what Lagos does to a variety of individual urban dwellers' identities.

Urban identification is a complex process. For those residents living in Lagos, as this dissertation illuminates, this process not only forms in their lived experiences in the city but also encompasses their socio-spatial experiences in the places of hometowns and other towns and cities along their life trajectories. In this sense, when narrating their life stories, they could identify Lagos as a place in which they settled down, or a transient place where they temporarily made homes, or even an unimportant spot without any sense of belonging. The diversity of their narrative identities is illustrated for a better understanding of identification processes in a non-essentialist and performative way. In other words, urban identity should not be studied simply through the words and categories that people use to represent their identities but should be critically and reflexively examined through their socio-spatial discursive practices in which their identities are performatively enacted.

In this concluding chapter, I will reiterate key points that characterize this ethnography. First, it provides a methodological guideline to ethnographically approach urban identity. The performative lens is a pivotal part of this study. Second, it draws attention to an important phenomenon in Lagos: the status and identities of the young generation of men born and raised in Lagos, echoing a great number of studies of first-generation urban migrants in Africa. Third, it discusses future directions for bridging African urban studies and poststructural cultural geography.

Approaching Urban Identity: Doing A "Performative" Ethnography[67]

For geographies of urban identities, the combination of a performative approach with ethnographic fieldwork works well to shed light on the reiterative discursive practices through which place-identity is socially constructed in specific urban contexts. Although performativity theories have been widely discussed and employed in human geography, there is a lack of ethnographic monographs that centrally engage with the performativity of (urban) identification. Drawing on my field experience, I found that the practice of doing ethnography is essentially "performative", as (auto)ethnography serves to rethink and redefine performativity as "an act of drawing a distinction between the descriptive and the performative" (Ssorin-Chaikov 2020: 2). In this section, I will review how I approach urban identity as a vantage point to explore the ways of doing "performative" ethnography.

Balancing the place- and subject-ontologies is a key principle of doing the ethnography of urban identification. As the place-identity paradigm has been influential in human geography, I bring the geographical thoughts on place to the study of urban identity in Africa while avoiding overemphasizing place as a decidable factor in identification processes. Also, performative theories remind me not to treat human subjects as fully agentic subjects who can mobilize their identities as they want (Butler 1993). In this sense, urban identification is not a category of analysis that we can

[67] The reason why I put the quotation marks on the word performative is because my treatment is different from the usage of "performative ethnography" in the existing literature (e.g., Henry 2012; Alhourani 2017). As I reviewed in the Introduction, there are occasions when ethnographers use performative as an adjective of performance to describe "staged" acts in everyday life.

approach by assuming a pre-existing identity and describing what its holders say and do or "act out" (Gregson and Rose 2000: 434). Urban identification is a process in which an ethnographer should attend to both urban places and urban subjects. Then, the foremost question is how to understand the "specificity" (Massey 1994: 156) of an assemblage of urban places and subjects.

The way I identify such specificity is to situate urban places in various narratives of life in Lagos, including conceptual, public, and ontological narratives, according to Somers' (1994) framing of the narrative constitution of identity. The review of conceptual narrativity of modernity and diversity in Lagos history and society informs me of selecting Gowon Estate as the studied urban place. However, this does not mean that life in Gowon Estate is a microcosm of life in Lagos. Instead, the connections and disconnections between public and ontological narratives of life in Lagos illuminate the specificities of lived experiences in Gowon Estate and Lagos. In other words, as a specially positioned urban neighborhood in Lagos' history, Gowon Estate becomes a lens for me to explore the specific assemblage of urban places (including Lagos, Gowon Estate and other places in narratives and experiences) and urban subjects. These urban residents construct not only narrative identities in Somers' sense but also socio-spatial place-identities.

The neighborhood as a lens to examine urban identification is consistent with the perspective of placing cities (and neighborhoods) in life. This is a way to lean toward the subject-ontology, as individual life trajectories and lived experiences are prioritized over the changes of urban places. In other words, treating Gowon Estate not simply as a study site but as a lens, I am not doing an ethnography of this urban place with boundaries; nor

do I conduct a multi-sited ethnography of migrant experiences of people living in this place. What this ethnography aims to illustrate is the variegated identification processes that encompass the relational places of Lagos and Gowon Estate in lives. Drawing on Massey (1999) concept of relational space, the key in this vein is not to examine how Lagos and Gowon Estate are narrated in relation to other cities and lived spaces, but to tease out how places themselves are constituted by the constellations of bundling socio-spatial relations.

Reviewing socio-spatial relations along life trajectories in this ethnography, it seems that cities are horizontally placed according to a kind of flat-ontology. The concept of flat-ontology is borrowed from Marston et al. (2005) to reject forms of classification that result in hierarchical or binary modes of thinking and to focus on relations of coming together. To some extent, the framing of cities in life can be seen as a flat-ontology approach to differentiate subjects and their associated space-times by rejecting the rural-urban dualism. However, I do not want to overemphasize this framing as it risks losing the depth of understanding the performativity of identity. Distinguishing performativity from performance requires in-depth examination and reflection on the repetitive practices which reproduce discourses and which enable as well as discipline subjects through power. In other words, placing cities in life is not to ignore the hierarchy of norms; this seeming "flat" subject-ontology needs a performative intervention to discern how the hierarchy is taken naturally through everyday repetitive discursive practices. In this sense, what I methodologically did seems very typical for an ethnographer: combining life-story interviews with participant observation; however, the conceptual reframing

through this methodology has a larger implication for making ethnography "performative".

In this vein, "spatializing" is an important performative intervention to the ethnography of urban identification. Geographers have maintained that spatiality is not only an indispensable dimension of performativity but itself materializes performativity (Gregson and Rose 2000). In light of this, to complement the horizontal subject-ontology of placing cities in life, I suggest that spatializing should be a vital lens when geographers are doing a "performative" ethnography and when geographers delve into the nuances between performance and performativity. In this dissertation, we can see how the lens of spatialization is employed to understand performative ethnicity in religious spaces, performative spiritual sociality in everyday space and the sticky space of Gowon Estate in Estate boys' social lives. Moreover, by spatializing Tope's aspirational unsettling, we have a clearer view of the meanings of counseling practices in youth becoming and in the construction of place-identity in Gowon Estate. Spatializing as a performative intervention therefore not only enriches my ethnographic experience with Tope and his peers and family but also contributes to balancing subject- and place- ontologies.

Another performative intervention applied throughout the ethnography is to draw on the nuances between narrative and discourse/discursive practice[68]. If narrative is more likely associated with performance (See the review, De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012), discourse and discursive practice are what performativity theories focus on in order to illustrate how power works through them. As I earlier put it, urban identity is not built on how people narrate but how identification is enacted through the specific assemblage of

[68] As indicated in the Introduction, I suggest viewing discourse and practice as mutually constitutive aspects of meaning-making and place-identity construction.

discourse and practice. In this ethnography, such specificities unfold in these ways: discourses on "Estate boys" are assembled with practices of project and relationship counseling in the affinity groups; discourses on the entangled Yoruba and Lagosian-ness are assembled with practices of going back to study in home places and learning to speak Yoruba at school and in everyday conversations; discourses on moral norms of spirituality are assembled with practices of living with neighbors and hanging out with friends. Moreover, the way in which these discursive practices emerge from the field does not simply rely on my own observation and reflection but also lies in intersubjective dialogues and reflections on informants' life stories and lived experiences I partly participated in. In doing so, I am able to understand and interpret how power works implicitly when the identification with Estate boys is contested, the entangled Yoruba-ness and Lagosian-ness is taken naturally, and ethnicity and spiritual sociality are performed as well as performative.

Identifying with "Estate boys": Understanding A "Lagosian" Phenomenon

In this ethnography of urban identification of various Gowon Estate residents in Lagos, a specifically localized identity of "Estate boys" is highlighted. There is a tendency to stereotype young men in Lagos through public narratives of "area boys"; and the Estate boys label conforms to this stereotyping in part. However, beneath such labeling, Estate boys also refer to the place-identity of young men who were born and raised in this neighborhood. Understanding the discursive practices associated with this identity provides an important lens to understand the specificity of identification with Gowon

Estate as well as Lagos. In this Conclusion, I would like to synthesize the key points about Estate boys in the dissertation and discuss how we can learn from studying this phenomenon in Lagos.

While I was living in Lagos, I often heard a popular saying "this is Lagos", usually uttered by people who have lived in Lagos for a period of time. This saying can be a reminder for newcomers to Lagos (like me) that you must sharpen your eyes to get by (Also see Agbiboa 2016: 942-943). The word "this" stands for what they think characterizes Lagos, which is largely ironic in their tones. For instance, when Tom explained why he spoke Yoruba, he said "this is Lagos for me" (See chapter 6.2). For Estate boys like Jacob, when he mentioned "this is Lagos" to justify his ability to speak Yoruba (in the same chapter), he displayed a sense of pride—the pride of taking "this" phenomenon lightly and naturally.

Regarding various political debates on "life in Lagos" in relation to the ethnicity of Yoruba-ness, Estate boys do not care if Lagos is called "Eko Ile" or "No Man's Land." In their minds, Lagosian-ness and Yoruba-ness are entangled in everyday life and there is no need to distinguish one from the other. Such entanglement characterizes Lagos through everyday interactions where they performatively mix Yoruba and pidgin English for their own convenience. Such entanglement also infuses their experiences of growing up in Lagos, in which they all learn Yoruba together in classrooms, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds and academic performance. Even though some of them go back to pursue higher education in their "home" states or regions, such entanglement is involved in their identification with Lagos. Therefore, much like Fela sang in "Eko Ile", Lagos is their

home, wherever they go. This home is not always based on a materialistic sense of home that they are making or remaking; it is a home of their Lagosian identities.

Not only does Lagos become a home anchoring their urban identities, but Gowon Estate also becomes a sticky space, no matter whether or not they make homes in it. The concept of stickiness of emotions draws our attention to how Estate boys feel at home in urban identification processes. Although some of them had moved out of Gowon Estate, they chose to live nearby and frequently hang around in the neighborhood. Despite being a home place of their youth, Gowon Estate may no longer be a place where they want to settle down; paradoxically, their socio-spatial experiences still hinge on this place and pertain to the stereotyped label of "Estate boys". In this sense, Gowon Estate continues playing a significant role in their urban social identification.

The significance manifests itself not simply in their experiences of being labeled as "Estate boys" but in the performative enactment of social identity among these young men. Much as we know from other ethnographic studies of urban youth in Africa, Estate boys like bluffing and performing manhood in front of their girlfriends. What I emphasize in this study are their counseling practices in the affinity groups: they provide advice to each other on "projects" in which they could participate and on "relationships" in which they could intervene. Through these reiterative everyday socio-spatial practices in and around the neighborhood, Gowon Estate therefore becomes a sticky space, and they enact their social identification within the groups. Outside the groups, they draw boundaries against "yahoo boys" and "big boys". This bordering practice not only refers to whether or not they engage in online scams but more profoundly pertains to the normative discourses of "money ritual". Hanging out with "friends" is not just a social

practice but involves spiritual sociality: they are cautious of being spiritually manipulated by “hi-hi friends” who might secretly play witchcraft. Based on the morality of rejecting fast wealth (by “yahoo boys”) and wicked wealth (by “money ritual” practitioners), Estate boys justify and make sense of their “unsettled” social status. Drawing on the concept of performative spirituality, I argue that performative spiritual sociality contributes to the enactment of place-identity of “Estate boys” by constructing a “constitutive outside”.

The normativity of spiritual sociality also explains Estate boys’ aspirational unsettling—another performative concept introduced in this study of their urban identification. As they are all stuck in the unsettling processes, they are concerned about the ostentatious behaviors of any member in the affinity groups. Although those “big boys” may have settled down with the wealth accumulated illegitimately and spiritually, Estate boys do not explicitly express aspirations to the lifestyles of “big boys”; only at the event space of the annual “carnivals”, they performatively express their feelings. By spatializing Tope’s social interactions across his affinity groups in city life, we can see that his stickiness is naturalized and sedimented through everyday livelihood. Although this unsettling process is subjectively undesirable, his aspiration unknowingly materializes through various counseling practices from one person to another in the sticky space of Gowon Estate.

Studying “Estate boys” can render the insights into the specificity of urban identification in Lagos, but this phenomenon cannot be illuminated without expanding our attention to the older generation. That is why doing ethnography with a variety of residents in Gowon Estate is advantageous. The generational difference of urban

identification manifests in the aspects of time-narration, home making and feeling at home in Lagos. Moreover, within a family, the older generation's decision on "family house" can significantly affect the younger generation's livelihoods. Many Estate boys' live their "unsettled" lives in the shadow of their parents' settling experiences. Without addressing this connection, the interpretation of "Estate boy" risks particularizing their place-identities. Also, from the perspective of placing cities in life, we can see that both younger and older generations have similar experiences in some aspects of urban identification, such as the entangled Yoruba-ness and Lagosian-ness and the performative spiritual sociality. In this sense, articulating the becoming of "Estate boys" can help us understand the society of Lagos, though the social milieu of different generations varies over the time.

Looking Back and Ahead

This dissertation is situated in the intersection of African urban studies and poststructural cultural geography. For the former study field, it brings the geographical thoughts on place-identity with an emphasis on the performativity of urban identification. By advancing the issue of identity in African urban worlds, I suggest that cultural geography should be taken more seriously in the studies of African urbanism where the political economy approach has been dominant. There is a trend, particularly based in South African scholarship, of advocating African urbanism "illuminated by global theories and methods" as well as "constitutive of the reform of the ideas through which cities generally are understood" (Parnell and Pieterse 2016: 236). Although I do not fully agree

with (implicitly) putting Africa urban studies as a local study field against a "larger" global urban study, I do think it is worth theorizing through ethnographic experiences in Africa and contributing an "ethnographic conceptualism" (Ssorin-Chaikov 2020) to the broader theoretical and methodological discussions. Urban cultural geography is one of the underexplored frontiers in current African urban studies. The ethnography of urban identity is thus conducted under this direction.

This ethnography is framed as "performative" because it integrates performative theories and perspectives to understand common and mundane experiences in urban Africa, in terms of identity, ethnicity, and spirituality. In turn, theorizing through these experiences can simultaneously contribute to the performativity scholarship in poststructural geography. Although there is lack of Africanist contribution in this field, I do not hope this dissertation is merely an application of performative theories and concepts, treating Lagos as an "empirical site" of Western theories—the standpoint that decolonial geographies rightly criticize (Daley and Murray 2022). In this holistic and ethnographic monograph, I try to showcase how to make a "performative" ethnography of urban identity in an African context. I hope the approach taken in this study can inform ethnographers of doing research on urban identity in other contexts. Therefore, doing such an ethnography in Africa is not aimed to deliver anything idiosyncratic, anything African/Nigerian, but to understand "common concerns" on urban life through the mundane human experiences that dwell in a specially-positioned place.

Appendix

List of Abbreviations

Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA)
All Progressives Congress (APC)
Bayero University Kano (BUK)
Benue State University in Makurdi (BSUM)
Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)
community development association (CDA)
Delta State University (DELSU)
Department of State Security (DSS)
Federal Housing Authority (FHA)
Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC)
Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)
local government area (LGA)
Nasr Allah al-Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT)
National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)
Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU)
Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)
River State University (RSU)
Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)
The Synagogue, Church of All Nations (SCOAN)
University of Benin City (UniBen)
University of Lagos (UniLag)
University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)
Usmanu Danfodiyo University (UDUSOK)

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