Wa mwisho kulala na wa kwanza kuamka:

Fighting for life on the streets of Dar es Salaam

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In the past 25 years, the number of young people living and working on the streets of Dar es Salaam and other major Tanzanian towns and cities has escalated rapidly (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). The economic crisis of the early 1980s, and the program of structural adjustment that followed, created conditions that have resulted in large numbers of street youth. For a variety of reasons, these young people have either been abandoned by, or have chosen to leave, their families.

Numerous anthropological studies have explored the lives of these young people (Nieuwenhuys 2001; Kilbride et al. 1999; Bernat 1999; Hecht 1998; Schepet-Hughes & Hoffman 1999). Most recently, studies have emphasized street youth’s resilience, and the strategies through which they cope with difficult life circumstances (Veale et al. 2000; Panter-Brick 2002). In spite of resilience, the adverse outcomes of life on the street – whether physical, psychological or emotional – are well documented (Veale et al. 2000; Raffaelli 1999; Scanlon et al. 1998; Wright 1990a & 1990b).

Although we have a reasonable understanding of how and why children and youth come to live and work on the streets of urban centers like Dar es Salaam, few studies have focused on how street youth make use of the urban environment once they are in the city. Furthermore, although numerous studies have documented the negative health effects of life on the streets, few studies have focused on the ways in which street youth experience ‘health’ and articulate notions of physical and psychological ‘wellness’ and ‘un-wellness.’

The goal of this study was to explore the experiences and meanings of health and wellness among young men who live and work on the streets of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. More specifically, I was interested in the intersection between understandings of health and wellness, and the ways in which street youth make use of and experience urban space and place. What I discovered were definitions of health and wellness that stem from the shared ideologies and preoccupations of youth street culture – a culture that is rooted in spaces and place. Thus, I conclude that space and place are useful framing concepts for understanding the lives of these young people, including ideas and behaviors related to health and wellness. Equally, I must stress the power of space and place to shape lives and determine futures; in Dar es Salaam, the extent to which street youth are able to appropriate space to meet their financial needs influences the extent to which they can secure basic necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education.

This project was qualitative and exploratory in nature. It was multi-sited, but took place primarily on the streets of downtown Dar es Salaam. I used convenience and snowball sampling methods to select a core study population of approximately fifteen young men, between the ages of 16 and 24. Based on participant observation, informal discussion and visual representations including photography, film, graffiti art and cartooning, I attempt here to document the experiences and meanings of one group of young men. In doing so, I aim to contribute to youth-centered research that privileges the experiences and meanings of young people living on the fringes of society.

Study supervisor: Eileen Moyer, PhD

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First and foremost, I want to thank all of the masela and wakali wa donta who introduced me to Dar es Salaam's streets and welcomed me into their worlds. I can only hope that I have done justice to the many stories you shared with me on these pages. Respect, and hope.

Particularly, I am indebted to my assistant and rafiki yangu, Athumani. Without his insight and connections on the street, I would still be scratching my head, wondering how to begin the task of understanding the dynamics of street life among young men in Bongo. Because of his company and behind-the-scenes maneuvering, my presence was tolerated and even welcomed in places and spaces where no wazungu are normally found. Athumani's contribution to this project is significant, and I will be forever appreciative.

Heri Mcharo sat patiently with me while we translated hours of tape-recorded conversations. Unfortunately for him, I always saved those difficult 'why' questions for our sessions together; luckily for me, he usually had the answers. Heri's role in this project went beyond that of simply providing translation; his contribution to what appears on these pages is considerable.

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*Photograph on front and back covers by Danya Fast; graffiti art by Kindo Emanuel
Glossary of Swahili terms

Asante (s)/Asanteni (pl) - thank you

Alusto, n. - loser; someone who is a loser in life

Bangi, n. - marijuana

Baunsa, adj. - from the English term 'bouncer' for the 'muscle-man' who stands outside of a nightclub and lets people in and out of the door; describes an individual with a lean, muscular physique

Bling-bling, n./adj. - flashy fashion accessories including chains, necklaces, rings, and earrings

Bongo, n. - lit. brain; colloq. Dar es Salaam or Tanzania as a whole; can refer to the ingenuity required to build a successful life in Dar es Salaam or Tanzania more generally*

Bongo Flava, n. - Swahili music popular throughout East Africa

Bongo nomu, n. - typical troubles of life in Dar es Salaam, or Tanzania more generally*

Bosi, n. - boss

Braza man, n. - a well-dressed urban man, usually displaying some bling-bling

Chai, n. - lit. tea; colloq. bribe

Chaka, n. - a hiding place for engaging in illegal or secretive activities, such as smoking marijuana

Chizi kama ndizi! - lit. 'crazy like a banana'; a popular expression among Dar es Salaam youth

Choka mbaya, adj. - a bad or tiring state of affairs; to be fed up with what life has to offer*

Daladala, n. - public transport

-Data, v. - to be in a state of extreme confusion about life; to be thinking too much about life's problems to the point of going crazy

Deiwaka, n. - from the English 'day worker'; a person who seeks daily informal employment at established locations (e.g. hotels, construction sites) to do specific tasks

Demu (s), n. - young woman

Dili (s)/Madili (pl), n. - possibility for making money*

Donta, n. - town; Dar es Salaam

Freestyling, n. - the practice of composing and reciting hip hop rhymes on the spot, without formal musical accompaniment; it commonly involves a group of people who take turns rhyming and/or creating background beats

Freshi, adj. - cool, relaxed, calm; implies an overall state of well-being

Funikabovu, n. - enjoyment; implies partying with friends

Gongo, n. - strong, illicit brew

Kama kawaida - just like always; as usual

Karanga, n. - peanuts

Karibu (s)/Karibuni (pl) - welcome

Kibaharia, adv. - from 'baharia,' meaning a person who works on a ship; describes the action of being able to get by day-to-day in unpredictable and difficult circumstances
Kibandidu, adv. - from the English, 'bandit,' meaning Mafia; describes the action of living like a bandit in a particularly harsh way, as for example when someone is arrested and taken away by the police*

Kiselasela, adv. - from 'masela,' meaning street hustler; describes the action of living the life of a street hustler

Kitambi, n. - belly

-Konda, v. - to become thin or to lose weight, usually as a result of mental and/or bodily illness

Maji baridi, n. - cold water

Mama lishe, n. - local, low-cost eatery

Masaki, n. - a high-income neighborhood where wealthy people live

Maskani, n. - lit. dwelling place or home; collog. designated, semi-public locations where young people (mostly men) gather to socialize, rest and engage in informal entrepreneurial activities*

Mawenge, adj. - lack of street intelligence, sometimes due to a lack of experience and sometimes due to lifestyle choices*

Mazoezi, n. - physical exercise

Mchizi (s)/Machizi (pl), n. - friend or 'comrade of the crazy life'; also majita

Mishemishe, n. - a person who scours the city looking for odd jobs; a person who is ready to work at all times and can do any job that arises

Mishemishe, adv. - quickly, readily, flexibly and/or efficiently

Mishemishe, v. - to search for work and be ready to perform any job that arises

Mjanja (s), n. - lit. a clever person; collog. a person who possesses streetwise intelligence, and is able to use creative strategies to build a life on the streets*

Mjerajera (s), n. - a person who has been in and out of jail, and knows the hardships of life on and off the streets

Mkali wadonta (s)/Wakali wadonta (pl), n. - a hustler who is famous or well known throughout the city; also refers to a person who lives the life of the street more generally

Mnene, adj. - fat

Modo, adj. - describes a style of dressing that usually includes fitted jeans, fitted t-shirts or collared shirts, and sneakers

Moka, n. - dress shoes

Mpiga picha, n. - photographer

Msela (s)/Masela (pl), n. - lit. sailor; collog. 'urban sailor' or 'street hustler'; a friendly term of address between young men in Dar es Salaam

Msosi, n. - from the English 'sauce'; food

Mtoto wa mama (s)/Watoto wa mama (pl), n. - lit. 'child of mother'; collog. a wealthy person who grew up with money and has had comparably few problems in life

Mwanangu, n. - lit. 'my child'; collog. A friendly term of address among young men in Dar es Salaam*

Mwanaume (s)/wanaume (pl), n. - man/men

Mwembamba, adj. - thin, usually as a result of 'natural' body type

Mzungu (s)/Wazungu (pl), n. - white person/white people
Nguvu, n. - power, strength

Noma, n. - troubles

-Piga misele, v. - lit. 'to hit around'; colloq. to go from place to place over the course of the day to meet with friends or make connections

-Piga mistari, v. - lit. 'to hit a line'; colloq. to freestyle

Pombe, n. - beer

Pound mpaka dolla - lit. to change British pounds to American dollars; colloq. to make a lot of money

Ramani, n. - map

Simpo, adj. - from the English 'simple,' meaning laid-back; describes a style of dressing that includes trendy jeans, t-shirts and sneakers

Simpo, n. - sneakers

-Sizi, v. - to cool down, to become calm despite the surrounding chaos

-Survive, v. - from the English 'survive'; to scrape by despite the numerous problems of street life

-Tafuta maisha, v. - lit. to search for life; Colloq. to fight for a meaningful life

Tizi, n. - physical exercise

Tupo pamoja - 'we are together'; a common expression of solidarity among Dar es Salaam youth

Ugali, n. - sticky maize porridge

Ujanja, n. - lit. cleverness; colloq. streetwise intelligence

Umishemishe, n. - quick wit

-Ungaungu, v. - to pool money together for a common purpose (e.g. to buy food); also -donation*

Uswahilini, n. - lit. the place of Swahili people; colloq. densely populated, low-income neighborhoods

Usunguni, n. - lit. the place of wealthy people; colloq. high-income neighborhoods

Vijana [s]/Kijana (pl), n. - youth/youths

Wachumba (pl), n. - lit. fiancées; colloq. girlfriends

Wadogo (pl), n. - younger siblings

Wahindi (pl), n. - people of Indian descent

Wahuni (pl), n. - hooligans

*Terms followed by the asterisk were taken or adapted from Moyer, Eileen and Athumani Amiri, Kamusi ya Swahili cha Kimaskani: Dictionary of Street(corner) Swahili. Unpublished manuscript.
For all the uprooting, the homelessness, the migrations, forced and voluntary, the dislocations of traditional relationships, the struggles over homelands, borders and rights of recognition, for all the destructions of familiar landscapes and the manufacturing of new ones, and for all the loss of local stabilities and local originalities, the sense of place, and of the specificities of place, seems, however tense and darkened, barely diminished in the modern world.

- Clifford Geertz (1996: 261)

I really like people like you. When I meet people like you, I want to share with you the life we live. If you want to know this life of masela, you have to stay with us, in our place. If you go to a place like Masaki, and ask about the life of masela, you will not be able to know about us, because watoto wa mama, they know nothing about our life. If you hear me talking - even Tupac, he is a hustler - even he can’t talk like me, because for me he is like a mtoto wa mama. If you want to know the life of masela, you have to come to us, to our place. When you first came to our place, you could see how we were living. Before you came, you couldn’t have imagined the life we were living.

- Mussa Juma Ninja

D: Wapi tunakwenda leo?
A: Tutambae kupiga misele . . .

D: Where are we going today?
A: Let’s go hit around . . .
Figure 0.1 Amazoni. (Photograph by Baraka)
Chapter 1 - Chizi kama ndizi! on the streets of Bongo

1.1 Introducing Amazoni

It is 2 pm when we arrive at Amazoni - a fitting name for such a place, given the dense foliage that skirts an open lot used primarily for washing cars. As we approach, several maselal emerge from behind trees and shrubs, interrupting a mid-day joint to size up the mzungu researcher. My assistant Athumani had told me only minutes before that the boys were expecting me, and now I am nervous.

The previous day Athumani and I had spent hours going over and translating my preliminary research questions, but at this moment I am second-guessing every single thing on the typewritten sheets clenched in my hand. Actually, what’s written on those pages should be the least of my worries, because right now I have to exchange greetings, introduce myself, and come off as relatively charming - all in Swahili, which I have been frantically studying for only a week and a half.

In fact, we stand around at maskani Amazoni for only a few minutes before Athumani informs me that we can’t stay. We wind our way through back lots and parking garages before settling ourselves on the shady steps of the city’s botanical gardens - a place that would become our chaka for all subsequent interactions requiring the tape recorder. The boys will be along shortly. Just as I want to avoid unwanted attention from police and concerned citizens wondering what I am doing with fifteen teenage masela, they want to avoid the 'heat' that the presence of a young, white woman could bring to their place of work and leisure.

Now they have arrived and I am pleased, although slightly intimidated, by the large turnout. In an effort to inspire a good first impression, I pull

1 Msela (m)/masela (pl) can be translated as 'hustler/hustlers' and is a commonly used, friendly term of address among young men who live and work on the streets of Dar es Salaam. It was the term I heard used most often among those with whom I worked to describe themselves and their peers. For this reason, I have chosen to use it throughout this thesis.

2 Marijuana cigarette

3 White person (s)

4 Designated, semi-public city spaces where youth (mostly men) 'hang out,' socialize, rest and engage in informal entrepreneurial activities

5 A hiding place for engaging in secretive or illegal activities, such as smoking marijuana

6 I.e. attention from police
out a package of Embassy cigarettes and pass them around. Most of the boys happily indulge while Athumani and I get organized to explain the project. Eventually, Athumani stands up and begins reading aloud from the first page of printed notes. I realize then that he is also a bit nervous.

The masela listen to Athumani for less than one minute before one of them (who I would later know as Evander) stands up and grabs the pages out of his hand. With half-mocking and half-genuine enthusiasm, Evander proceeds to read out not only the project description but also all of the questions we were planning on asking over the course of the next week. The boys are nodding and laughing throughout, and when Evander finishes, his efforts are met with applause and hollers of support from the rest of the group. He pockets the copy of the research notes, and then demands that I introduce myself in Swahili.

As it turned out, I was the one under keen observation that day. Later, when my translator Heri Mcharo and I began working on those earliest recorded discussions, I was taken aback by one young man’s detailed description of my first few awkward moments at the maskani. During a lengthy monologue in which he introduces himself and provides his first thoughts on the project, this young man (Ninja) described precisely what I witnessed upon arriving at Amazoni: young men without shoes or shirts, running back and forth across the street with buckets of water for washing cars; another group standing together, eating off a large plate...
of donated leftovers from a nearby *mama lishe*; and one young man with a missing thumb, with whom I clapped hands in greeting, and then smiled meekly at when we were unable to snap our fingers together to complete the handshake. Clearly, Ninja was watching me during those first moments together, gauging my reactions and possibly evaluating whether I was a suitable candidate for conducting this kind of research.

Several weeks later, Ninja's insight and Evander's initiative no longer surprised me. In fact, that first day of interviews was indicative of how all of us would interact for the duration of the project. At times I was in charge, providing questions for discussion or guiding loosely organized group activities. On other occasions, Ninja or Evander or one of the other *msela* I came to know would take over, forcing me to confront aspects of their lives that they chose to reveal. Much to my delight, the young men with whom I worked for those three months in the hot sun of Dar es Salaam had no qualms about taking ownership of this project. In the end, all I had to do was watch, listen and learn.

1.2 Understanding health and wellness on the streets

This project began with a desire to understand the socio-spatial worlds of young men living and working on the streets of Dar es Salaam. I wanted to understand how young people living on the fringes of society come to define and make use of public space within a landscape constructed largely to exclude them. Based on previous work and my own observations, I knew that while young people are able to claim ownership over certain urban spaces and places, there are others from which they are clearly excluded. I wondered whether these relationships of ownership and exclusion have an effect on how young people feel about themselves, their lives and their futures in different urban spaces and places. Feelings of self-worth that vary with space and place might in turn have implications for how overall wellness is experienced and understood in the urban context. Through this project, I wanted to examine more carefully how space and place can be used as framing concepts for understanding experiences and ideas about health and wellness among these young people.

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7 Local, low-cost eatery
8 In the context of this study, I use the terms 'young men' and 'youth' interchangeably, to refer to individuals between the ages of 15 and 25. I use the term 'children' to refer to slightly younger individuals, between the ages of 4 and 14. Of course, 'children' and 'youth' are not always bounded, discrete or homogenous categories, and it is important to keep in mind "generation’s essentially fluid and liminal quality" (Burgess 2005: viii).
9 For example, see Moyer 2003; Beazley 2002; Gigengack 2000.
I believe that as anthropologists, we need to look not only at how street youth may be uprooted, unrooted, out-of-place or outside of the processes through which urban space and place are constructed. While it is crucial to understand what happens when homeless youth enter, threaten or contest already constructed public spaces, we should focus equally on how street youth construct and make use of space and place in everyday life (Robinson 2000); how they may be simultaneously in-place as well as out-of-place on the streets of urban centers. Street youth are marginalized through space, but they can also be active in reconfiguring "geographies of exclusion and inclusion and the categories of public and private" (De Boeck & Honwana 2005: 1). Their exclusion is reflected in the places and spaces they occupy, such as street corners, traffic lights, abandoned buildings, and vacant stretches of roadside. Simultaneously, these in-between spaces and 'nowhere places' (De Certeau 1984) can provide opportunities for meaningful interaction, imagination and exchange.

Figure 1.2
Understanding youth through space and place. A group of young masala strike a pose in their place at maskani Lebanon. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

Previous anthropological research has shown how a street corner can become a thriving center of informal economic activity (Moyer 2004; 2003); how an abandoned building can be transformed into a home base for 'hanging out' and receiving visitors (Gigengack 2000; 1999); how a city park becomes a relatively safe, gendered retreat for young, homeless women eager to resist harassment (Beazley 2002). The concepts of space and place are useful for shedding light on how street youth create meanings, construct identity and experience being-in-the-world (Feld & Basso 1996); how they navigate geographies of power and enact geographies of resistance (Moyer 2003; Beazley 2002); and finally, how they may be simultaneously marginalized and enabled by processes of globalization and
modernization (Moyer 2004; 2003). The relationship between street youth, space and place is complex and multidimensional. By tracing street youths' uses of space and place, we gain important insights into who they are, and why.

In my own research, I was interested in how ideas and behaviors related to health and wellness might themselves be grounded in experiences and meanings of particular urban spaces and places. I felt that it was worth exploring if and how the meanings and experiences of overall wellness could shift according to different spatial contexts. Experiences of health and wellness - and the meanings that grow out of these experiences - are never singular or static; rather, meanings and experiences vary according to a number of contextual factors. Individual agency plays a role in negotiating experiences and meanings in different contexts.

The reasons for focusing on young men were largely practical. Firstly, it is clear that gender has a significant effect on experiences and understandings of health and wellness. Therefore, I felt the need to limit the scope of my study to either young men or young women. Secondly, due to fewer restrictions on their movements, and the types of employment opportunities available to them, young men living and working on the streets of Dar es Salaam are more visible and easily accessible than young women in the same circumstances (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). I used convenience and snowball sampling methods to select a core study population of approximately fifteen young men, between the ages of 16 and 24. The nature of my methodology however, and of street ethnography more generally, meant that at any one time, there were several other young men present in addition to those that belonged to the core study population. Over the course of the three-month fieldwork period, I estimate that I spoke to approximately 40 young men about topics specifically related to this project.

Indeed, what I discovered on the streets of Dar es Salaam both confirms and goes beyond my initial thoughts. I witnessed a group of young men fighting to build a meaningful life on the streets,¹⁰ and a youth street culture rooted in

¹⁰ I have chosen to use the word 'fighting' - as in 'fighting for money' or 'fighting to build a meaningful life' - as one possible translation of the Swahili verb 'kutafuta.' Kutafuta can be translated literally as 'to search' or 'to look for,' but when it is used among street youth with reference to money or life, for example - as in 'kutafuta pesa' or 'kutafuta maisha' - I believe it is sometimes more accurately translated as 'to fight for.' This was confirmed for me when those among my core study population who were able to speak some English used 'fighting' in the same way that they would have used 'kutafuta' if they had been speaking Swahili. Furthermore, war metaphors are commonly invoked among young men living and working on the streets of Dar es Salaam; they are
space and place. What I did not anticipate was the extent to which articulations of health and wellness would mirror the shared preoccupations of street life, a life in which fighting for money and work is paramount to more ‘conventional’ health-related considerations such as malaria prevention or HIV/AIDS. Nor did I anticipate the extent to which ideas about health and wellness would be expressed in the idioms of youth street culture. Finally, I underestimated the power of space and place to shape lives and determine futures. In Dar es Salaam, the degree to which street youth are able to appropriate space to meet their financial needs influences the extent to which they are able to secure basic daily necessities; it can mean the difference between eating and not eating, staying in school or dropping out, and getting medicines when sick or simply hoping for the best.

1.3 Street ethnography and a view ‘from below’

Those who participated in this project defined health and wellness in ways that mirrored the ideologies and current preoccupations of youth street culture in Dar es Salaam. Thus, it was only by penetrating this culture, and the spaces and places in which it finds its most poignant expression, that I was able to begin understanding the meanings of health and wellness among these young men. Indeed, these understandings and the health-seeking strategies that stem from them are emplaced. Furthermore, a single place can mean many and sometimes contradictory things in relation to overall health and wellness.

That space and place are useful framing concepts for understanding the lives of young people who live and work on the streets is a central assumption of this thesis. Street ethnography refers to ethnographic practice that takes place ‘down below,’ on the sidewalks and street corners and back lots of the cityscape. In Dar es Salaam, street youths’ geographies are transient, and accordingly, street culture is translocal (Gigengack & van Gelder 2000; see also Moyer 2003). Whether for work or leisure, rest or play, street youth make use of a number of urban spaces and places everyday. This requires the street ethnographer to navigate multiple urban locales; as I experienced firsthand, walking the streets is only the beginning.

the subject of graffiti art, hip hop lyrics and everyday conversation. For all of these reasons, I have chosen to use the phrase ‘fighting for’ throughout this thesis, as well as in the title.
By tracing young people’s geographies ‘from below,’ street ethnography provides valuable insights into “how processes of in- and exclusion take place in the lives of concrete human beings in the lowest echelons of society, and why precisely these processes occur the way they do” (Gigengack & van Gelder 2000: 8). For my own project, I was interested in understanding how processes of spatial inclusion and exclusion intersect with notions of health and wellness among young men. I wanted to know how young people feel in various places and spaces of the urban environment, and why they feel the ways that they do.

Geographical poetics

The methodological approach I employed is perhaps best reflected in the work of De Certeau (1984), particularly his notions of spatial practices and geographical poetics. Spatial practices refer to the ways in which people navigate space and place in everyday life (De Certeau 1984). As De Certeau explains, in the city, there exist formal, ‘proper’ places and liminal, in-between spaces. The former - such as international hotels and office high rises - have established meanings and histories, while the latter - such as street corners and abandoned lots - occur at the edges of formal places and are empty of particular meanings and histories. These liminal, in-between spaces or ‘nowhere places’ are transformed and made meaningful through “social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting” (Low 2000: 128).

Figure 1.3
In-between spaces and nowhere places. Three masela relax in Amazoni chaka. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)
Accordingly, the spatial organization of the city occurs at two levels. From above, we witness a geography of “literal, forbidden or permitted meanings” in the form of skyscrapers and international hotels, office buildings and golf courses (De Certeau 1984: 105); in other words, a geography of ‘proper’ places. This geography reflects powerful structures that impose a certain logical order on the movements and activities of city dwellers. De Certeau (ibid.) argues that a "second, poetic geography” can be observed from below, at the level of the street. It is here that we witness the creative use of liminal, in-between spaces for social interaction, imagination, and exchange, resulting in “fragmented trajectories that elude legibility” (Caldeira 2000: 310).

In fact, I would argue that these ‘spatial practices’ follow their own logic, a logic that defies the spatial order imposed from above. The young men I came to know were highly mobile, covering significant distances each day in search of work and the pursuit of pleasure. These daily trajectories may appear fragmented and illegible to the outside observer, but among those immersed in youth street culture they constitute highly informed, logical strategies for achieving well-being. Either way, the city exists beyond its architecture of ‘proper’ places and the power structures it represents. The real, living city is produced in part by a culmination of all the random sites of human engagement that take place within its in-between spaces and nowhere places (De Boeck & Plissart 2006).

De Certeau’s articulation of space and place is useful for describing how Dar es Salaam street youth move within and make use of the urban environment. He argues that even those “already caught in the nets of ‘discipline’” are able to appropriate space through clandestine tactics that circumvent the spatial strategies of the state (De Certeau 1984: xiv-xv). Street youth are excluded from ‘proper’ places like hotels and high-rise office buildings. Instead, they are frequenters of transitory, in-between spaces. In everyday life, street youth must avoid the ‘proper’ places from which they are excluded, and make use of the liminal, in-between spaces available to them. Street youths’ movements between and within these indeterminate spaces in pursuit of work, play and rest are a part of the ‘second, poetic geography’ described by De Certeau.

A chord tied between two trees is used to string up the newspapers of the day, thereby creating a space for informal economic endeavor and lively social engagement, as people gather under the trees’ shade to discuss the news of the day (De Boeck & Plissart 2006). A construction site for a new hotel initially
draws lunch vendors to an ideally situated street corner; as the hotel nears completion and the street begins to receive more vehicular and pedestrian traffic, other informal entrepreneurs converge on the corner and its adjacent traffic lights to sell their wares and provide services (Moyer 2003; 2004). By appropriating an abandoned and crumbling building, and 'furnishing' it with cast offs, a television, and a small altar with the image of The Virgin, a gang of street boys create a 'home' of sorts in which to hang out and entertain the odd street educator or anthropologist (Gigengack 1999). Although street youth are excluded through space, they are simultaneously able to occupy liminal, indeterminate spaces to meet some of their needs, including needs related to health and wellness.

De Certeau shows us that, in order to understand the experiences and meanings of people who live and work on the streets, we need to observe their movements and interactions from 'down below,' at the level of the street. A view 'from above,' which emphasizes the structural constraints that shape street peoples' movements through space and place, only provides a partial picture of how marginalized individuals navigate place and create meanings in everyday life.
1.4 The research process: negotiation and dialogue

I began this project with a commitment to engage in street ethnography 'from below.' I wanted to interact with young people on their own terms - using 'streetwise' Swahili - and within the spaces and places of the cityscape that held particular meanings for them. With this commitment came successes and challenges.

Street ethnography is relational: it "deals with the social relations between street people and those who show that they are not of the street," but equally important, it is based on the type of relationships that evolve between researcher and informants, between researcher and assistants, and between assistants and informants (Gigengack & van Gelder 2000: 7; see also Pool 1994). Particularly when working with young people, the researcher must be aware that power relations are always embedded in these various relationships, and within the research process itself.

Figure 1.5
Data collection. [Left to right] Khamisi Julius, Albogast, Mussa Juma Ninja, Emanuel John, and Gideon Mugamba interview each other in the city botanical gardens. (Photograph by Danya Fast)

At the outset of this project, I had to locate myself in the field vis-à-vis the young men with whom I was working and my assistants, as well as intervening agents such as service providers and the police. I also had to position myself vis-à-vis the public, particularly middle and upper class Tanzanians. I had to demonstrate to those young people who agreed to participate in this project, firstly, that they could trust me, and secondly, that I was committed to taking their views on health and wellness seriously, and not just as anecdotal stories.
to be compared with what I was being told by my other 'expert' informants. Key to this endeavor was my research assistant Athumani Amiri, who had over 10 years experience living on the streets of Dar es Salaam. Largely as a result of his skill and careful behind-the-scenes maneuvering - not to mention his mastery of streetwise Swahili - I was quickly able to enter and interact with street youth within their spaces and places.

The anthropologist seeks the emic perspective, or the 'insider's point of view' (Spradley 1970). We want to know what meanings people's actions have for themselves, and how people create and negotiate those meanings in everyday life. In order to begin to understand the 'constellations of meaning' (Pool 1994) around concepts of health and wellness on the streets, I initiated a dialogue, between the young people with whom we were working, my assistants and myself, and among my 'informants' themselves. During the three-month fieldwork period, knowledge was actively produced through interaction and negotiation that flowed in all directions. The research process was characterized by an evolving creative relationship between everyone involved, and revision and reinvention were the rule, rather than the exception. My assistants and I reformulated my research questions no less than five times before I felt satisfied that we were beginning to ask the right questions about health and wellness.

Luckily, sometimes tedious processes of revision and translation provided a vital component of data analysis, particularly in light of the fact that I was not proficient in Swahili. Conversations with my assistant Athumani and my translator Heri were invaluable opportunities to discuss and debate the meanings of particular Swahili terms or phrases related to health and well-being. In general, I must emphasize the size and scope of my assistants' contribution to this project. Through countless discussions and none-too-few arguments, they each shaped this project in their own way.

From the outset of the fieldwork period, I wanted to establish a relaxed and open working atmosphere, and I wanted to encourage those with whom I was working to participate and collaborate fully in the research process. As such, the methods of data collection I employed included informal group discussions, photography, film, and visual art. Oftentimes, we would end an afternoon of work

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11 See Fabian (1990) for a more detailed discussion of ethnographic practice and researcher-participant inter-subjectivity; see also Pool (1994)
together by recording or filming freestyling\textsuperscript{12} sessions. I found that these mediums provided the most relevant insights into youth street culture, and they turned out to be significant sources of information on the meanings of health and wellness as well.

Being a young person myself - in some cases only one or two years older than the youth with whom I was working - and enthralled by much the same artistic media, one challenge was to resist the temptation to become a 'friend' instead of a 'researcher' among those young men I came to know well. Indeed, to assume that uncomplicated friendships would come easily, despite the tremendous differences in power between these young men and myself, was both naïve and potentially damaging to the project.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.6.png}
\caption{Emanuel John waves at the camera while someone else gets organized to take a shot. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)}
\end{figure}

Informal methods of data collection conducted in informal spaces like public parks, beaches and \textit{mama lishe} meant that sometimes it was hard to keep in mind that we were in fact working; that I was a researcher who would return home in the evenings to translate and analyze these interactions, while my project participants would return to the \textit{maskani} where they slept on flattened cardboard boxes and unfolded newspaper sheets. I eventually came to recognize the need to keep some professional distance between us in order to maintain the integrity of the project.

Managing my image with these young men and with my assistants turned out to be much more difficult than I had anticipated. While being young was in many ways an advantage when it came to understanding and appreciating youth street culture, it also had the effect of blurring the line between friendship and professionalism in some of our interactions, requiring me to re-evaluate and re-situate myself more responsibly in the field on more than one occasion.

\footnotesize{Composing and/or reciting hip hop rhymes on the spot, without formal musical accompaniment. It commonly involves a group of people who take turns rhyming and/or creating background beats.}
The strength of ethnography is that it allows those who have been marginalized by larger structural forces “to emerge as real human beings who shape their own futures” (Bourgois 1995: 17). While an understanding of relationships of inequality and injustice is crucial to appreciating the complexity of the world we live in, too great a focus on structure “obscures the fact that humans are active agents in their own history, rather than passive victims” (ibid.). This research project was informed by an assumption that “children [and young people more generally], especially in the often extreme living conditions in which they grow up in Africa, are not only vulnerable and passive victims, subjected to, or ‘made and broken’ by, the socio-economic and political processes of the African reality, but also active subjects, ‘makers and breakers’ of that reality” (De Boeck 2005: 199; emphasis in original). The task for anthropology at present is to work towards youth-centered research that privileges the experiences, meanings and ideas of young people themselves. This research project represents one such attempt.
Chapter 2 - Karibuni Dar es Salaam

Yeah I am taking the mic so angry
And then the verses are flowing
Home there's so many responsibilities
To take over
But my family is in trouble
Father has already given up
Mom and wadogo\(^\text{13}\) they depend on me
But me Albo G I don't have work
Uncle kicked me out and even my aunt
She didn't say anything
I didn't go to school
And now I feel sorry
I am so angry when I remember it all

The life I live is wild
Still I am suffering
Bongo\(^\text{14}\) Dar es Salaam
In the ghetto still suffering
Every morning my feet hit the pavement\(^\text{15}\)
Today to Majani and tomorrow to Master J\(^\text{16}\)
This is my daily calendar
Because I don't have money
But one day I believe
I will take over
- Albogast

2.1 A brief history lesson

During the mid-1980s, the number of young people living and working on the streets of Dar es Salaam and other major Tanzanian cities increased rapidly, accompanied by a growing recognition that these young people constitute a serious problem according to the interests of mainstream society (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). That being said, there is evidence to suggest that a substantial population of young – and mostly male – unemployed, underemployed, or informally employed Tanzanians had already emerged as a 'threat' to urban order during the British colonial era (Burton 2001; 2006a; 2006b). At that time, colonial officials took several measures to confine young Tanzanian men to the countryside, where they would remain under the control of gerontocratic tribal administrations. In fact, by expanding opportunities for schooling in post-war Tanganyika,\(^\text{17}\) and introducing 'modern' consumption patterns, colonialism provided

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\(^{13}\) Younger siblings
\(^{14}\) lit. brain; colloq. Dar es Salaam, or Tanzania more generally
\(^{15}\) i.e. searching for work
\(^{16}\) Majani and Master J are two well-known hip hop producers in Dar es Salaam
\(^{17}\) Tanganyika was the name given to what is now mainland Tanzania by the British colonial administration following World War II. In April 1964, independent Tanganyika formed a union with
part of the impetus for rapid urbanization and intergenerational conflict between Tanzanian youth and elders (Burton 2006b).

With the advent of Tanzanian independence in 1961, post-independence politicians inherited the problems of accelerating urbanization and mass unemployment in city centers; ironically, their response to these problems mirrored that of European and African elites during the colonial period. In Dar es Salaam, young men without formal employment - labeled 'hooligans' or wahuni in Swahili - were considered a threat to urban order and subjected to harassment and forcible removal from cities (Burton 2001). Beginning in the colonial era and extending into the years following independence, the "occupation of urban space was made conditional upon conformity to certain forms of behavior: notably industriousness (usually linked to formal employment), respectability, and deference to (colonial and African) authority" (Burton 2006a: 6).

Today, the occupation of public space by the 'homeless,' the unemployed, or the informally employed continues to arouse opposition from Tanzanian politicians and other elites (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). In October 2006, the Tanzanian government declared informal street vending illegal, leaving thousands of street workers unemployed. In the official imagination, it continues to be young men who constitute "a potentially insurrectionary unemployed class," and are most visibly in violation of state-sponsored norms of modernity through their presence on city streets (Burton 2006: 366).

Despite attempts by both the colonial and post-colonial administrations to restrict rural-urban migration, the population of Dar es Salaam has grown exponentially over the past several decades (Burton 2006b). Dar es Salaam is the largest city in Tanzania, and the metropolitan area alone has a current population of well over 3.5 million inhabitants (Perullo 2005). By some estimates, the population of greater Dar es Salaam may be as high as 8 million (Moyer 2007: personal communication), and is growing at a rate of 4.4% annually.18

Demographic expansion has not been met with sufficient economic development, resulting in widespread unemployment and inadequate infrastructure and resources (Burton 2006a). Furthermore, problems of urbanization and unemployment first

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identified during the British colonial era were exacerbated in the 1980s, when Tanzania was faced with an economic crisis characterized by high external and internal debts, declining terms of trade, rising costs of living, and inflation. In response, the Tanzanian government pursued a program of structural adjustment as defined by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Structural adjustment required reductions to public spending, the privatization of state-owned economic sectors, the devaluation of the local currency, and the liberalization of trade.

Since their introduction, structural adjustment programs have been extremely detrimental to the lives of impoverished Tanzanians (Lugalla 1995). Beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing until the present day, impoverished Tanzanians have experienced heightened unemployment and an erosion of their purchasing power. At the same time, the cost of living has increased. I witnessed this firsthand when, over the course of my three-month stay in Dar es Salaam, the price of local transport increased from 200 to 300 Tanzanian shillings. Although this is equivalent to only a few Euro cents, such an increase has significant consequences for the thousands of city dwellers who subsist on less than one Euro per day. Transport is a basic necessity in a large, sprawling city like Dar es Salaam, where the lowest income housing is located far from those areas of the city with the greatest number of opportunities for employment. An increase in bus fare means that money which could have been used for school fees, for example, must instead be allotted for daily transport.

The economic crisis of the early 1980s, and the program of structural adjustment that followed, created conditions that have resulted in large numbers of street children and youth, in Dar es Salaam and in other major Tanzanian cities and towns. Obtaining precise numbers of ‘street children’ or ‘street youth’ in a given urban context is difficult. Numbers given by international aid

19 For example, reduction in government expenditures resulted in unaffordable healthcare and education for the poor, as well as fewer available jobs in the public sector. The abolition of government subsidies for farmers increased the costs of agricultural production, which in turn increased the costs of agricultural products and foodstuffs. The devaluation of the currency also had the effect of increasing prices for locally produced and imported goods. Finally, privatization and the retrenchment of workers resulted in higher rates of unemployment.

20 Until quite recently in Tanzania, parents were expected to pay user fees for their children’s education and healthcare (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). In fact, despite recent promises of free primary education for all Tanzanian children, parents continue to shoulder the burden of various school-related costs (Moyer 2007: pers. comm.).

21 ‘Street children’ is largely a category of convenience, encompassing diverse individuals living all over the world under a wide range of circumstances. It is a label often detested by young people themselves, and I use the term with caution here. I have opted to use it only when drawing on sources that make direct reference to ‘street children’ or the ‘street children problem.’
organizations are often wildly speculative, with no clear indication of what kinds of children and youth are being counted (Glauser 1990; Hecht 1998). For example, information from UNICEF Tanzania collected prior to 2003 suggests that around that time there were approximately 5000 street children in Tanzania, 40 percent of whom lived in Dar es Salaam (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). In 2000, however, an official at the Tanzanian Ministry of Youth estimated that there were approximately 800 000 young people working on Dar es Salaam’s streets (Moyer 2007: pers. comm.). In the absence of any clear consensus regarding what constitutes a ‘street child’ or ‘street youth’ in Tanzania, it is nearly impossible to make accurate estimates of the number of young people that might fit into these categories.

Regardless, it can be argued that the vast majority of street youth come from poor rural families, and many come from single-parent households (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). For a variety of reasons, these youth have either been abandoned by, or chosen to live apart from, their families. A situation of increasing poverty in the countryside — evidenced by marginal jobs, unemployment, and farming that does not go beyond the subsistence level — has seriously undermined the abilities of families and communities to provide for children. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also contributed to family and community instability, and has resulted in an increasing number of orphaned children. Abuse from caregivers and teachers, the perceived irrelevance of schooling and inability to pay school fees, and increasing exposure to media and consumerism, all lead young people to conclude that success in life lies elsewhere, outside of school, the family and the community (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). Many Tanzanian children and youth leave home in order to escape poverty and family dysfunction; they arrive in cities like Dar es Salaam looking for employment and the means to secure a better future.

Once in the city, however, formal employment opportunities are few, and many young people end up living and working on the streets. Youth in this position are vulnerable to violence from police, other adults and other street youth (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003); they are vulnerable to illness, including malaria, diarrhea, stomach-related maladies, respiratory diseases, skin-related afflictions, eye infections and headaches (Lugalla & Mbwambo 1999); finally, they are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Life on the streets can entail significant emotional and psychological suffering (Veale et al. 2000; Raffaelli 1999; Scanlon et al. 1998; Wright 1990a; 1990b). It has
also been noted that many street youth engage in potentially harmful 'coping behaviors,' such as frequent drug use and unsafe sex (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003).

At present, Tanzania has a population of 37.5 million, with an annual growth rate of 1.8%. It is estimated that 44% of the population is below 14 years of age. Faced with limited opportunities for economic advancement in the countryside, and few opportunities for formal employment in the city, it is likely that growing numbers of Tanzanian youth will pursue informal entrepreneurial activities on the streets of urban centers. If their earnings are not sufficient to pay for the basic costs of living, these youth will end up sleeping on the streets as well.

**Figure 2.1**

*Hatuna kitu* [We have nothing].
(Graffiti art by Kindo Emanuel)

### 2.2 Enter anthropologists

Numerous anthropological studies have explored the lives of young people living and working on the streets (Nieuwenhuys 2001; Kilbride et al. 1999; Bernat 1999; Hecht 1998; Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1999). Most recently, these studies have emphasized street youth's resilience, and the strategies through which they cope with difficult life circumstances (Veale et al. 2000; Panter-Brick 2002). It has been emphasized that regardless of age, young people are capable of scanning their environments, evaluating the options available to them, and making decisions based on a sophisticated understanding of the situation at hand (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). In spite of resilience, the adverse outcomes of life on the street are well documented (Veale et al. 2000; Raffaelli 1999; Scanlon et al. 1998; Wright 1990a; 1990b).

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23 Ibid.
Although we have a reasonable understanding of how and why children and youth come to live and work on the streets of urban centers like Dar es Salaam, few studies have focused on how street youth make use of the urban environment once they are in the city. Furthermore, although numerous studies have documented the negative health effects of life on the streets, few studies have focused on the ways in which street youth experience 'health' and articulate notions of physical and psychological 'wellness' and 'un-wellness'. Where such accounts exist, they often present a predominantly negative picture, with little regard to how experiences of being well/unwell or healthy/unhealthy may be multiple and shifting, even for marginalized individuals. Finally, although much anthropological work has been done on street youth agency, few studies have looked at the relationship between agency, the everyday use of urban space and place, and experiences and meanings of health and wellness among these young people. This research project was designed to begin addressing some of these issues.

A recent study carried out by Lugalla & Kibassa (2003) in Dar es Salaam noted that the majority of street youth interviewed rated their health status as 'good.' The authors conclude that "it is still unclear as to whether the boys and girls consider the urban environment as a breeding ground for their ill health" (Lugalla & Kibassa 2005: 81). What I would suggest is that the relationship between street youth, the urban environment, and notions of health/ill health is more complex than this statement implies. I discovered that while some aspects of the urban environment are associated with ill health and un-wellness, other aspects are associated with good health and wellness.

24 Throughout this thesis, I make repeated reference to the terms 'health' and 'wellness' (and their opposites). I use both terms because I want to look beyond - but not ignore - classic definitions of 'health' that focus on the functioning of the physical body. The terms 'wellness' and 'well-being' are commonly used to emphasize the interaction between the body and mind, and between the individual and aspects of his or her environment. However, I also want to look beyond established definitions of 'wellness,' to focus on what 'health' and/or 'wellness' mean to young people.

25 The use of a slash is commonly understood to mean 'or.' I use a slash here to indicate the fluid interaction between two terms. For example, in a given context, we may feel either healthy or unhealthy, neither healthy nor unhealthy, or both healthy and unhealthy.

26 Furthermore, Hecht (1998) and others have pointed out that involvement in urban street life may be a viable strategy for impoverished children and youth when the alternative is living in a situation of heightened domestic violence or with one's family in conditions of rural poverty. It has been shown that in some cases, young street people are more adept than impoverished 'home' children and youth at obtaining the material resources necessary to maintain a basic level of health (Hecht 1998). In cases such as these, street life is associated with an improvement in health and wellness, despite the numerous health-related assaults to young people's well-being as a result of street life.
Through this project, I wanted to find out how young people themselves articulate the relationship between street life and health. According to those with whom I spoke, life on the streets is at once the key to good health as well as the prime source of much physical and psychological suffering. Many young people view themselves as simultaneously in- and out-of-place on the streets of Dar es Salaam.

Figure 2.2

Maisha magumu Jamani [hard life indeed]; Fungu la kosa; matitizo shida na njaa; alosto ajira [Someone down on his luck; troubles, problems and hunger; alosto, 77 employment]. (Drawing by Evander Lee)

77 Loser; someone who is a loser in life
This life's prospects up and down
We leave our parents so far
And come to town to search for wealth

How are we going to return home?
Still alive or in the coffin?
Or we can return home
Having lost parts of our bodies?
I ask myself so many questions

My close relatives I left them so far
Where I am right now it's no good
There is no one to care for me
I search so long and hard
Just so that I can get something
Anything
But the situation is still bad

Every time I step forward
I feel like someone is pulling me back
Other people have no pity
They still disturb me
They have even tried to burn me²⁸

To return back home is a good thing
But I have nothing in my pocket
But don't cry mother
All of this I leave to God
One day I will come back
And I will come with gifts

Mama Ah Ah
Don't Cry Ah Ah Ah
These are the problems of the world
But one day
I'll return
I'll return back home

- Mussa Juma Ninja

3.1 A generation in crisis

Young street people have been variously imagined as a pity, a threat, an affront to modernity - and a fruitful subject of anthropological inquiry. Popular imaginings of street youth are informed by their use of space and place, and somewhat paradoxically, by the notion that 'homeless' children and youth are without space and place. Whether because they are children who ought to be at home and in school, or because they are criminals bent on destruction, street youth are oftentimes viewed as 'out-of-place' in the public spaces of urban centers.

²⁸ A reference to the practice of chasing down and lighting on fire those who are suspected of being thieves
Certainly, this is a view shared by a significant percentage of the Tanzanian public. On more than one occasion, when I told people what I was doing in Dar es Salaam, they responded by teaching me the following Swahili adage: *Mkataa pema pabaya panamwita* [someone who refuses a good place in the world is being called by the bad life]. What I was being told was that the majority of young, informal street workers in Dar es Salaam are in their current situation because they have abandoned their prospects for a good life in the village, and have come to the city in search of excitement and reckless enjoyment. A widely held belief was that these young men have chosen to leave their proper place in the villages of their birth, and are now visibly out-of-place on the streets of the city center.

Putting aside for the moment whether this is an accurate picture of reality, it is important to recognize that young people themselves articulated a sense of displacement. Most of the interviews I recorded begin with a wholehearted denouncement of street life, and a long list of hardships endured without reward despite years of struggling. Many of the young men I came to know dreamt of making enough money to return home and be reunited with their families in the countryside, and several hoped to return to school for further studies. These sentiments were frequently the yearnings of hip hop lyrics, an important medium for both celebrating and condemning street life. I also recognized this sense of displacement in graffiti art, cartoons and drawings.
However, just as often as I heard young men vehemently denounce street life, I was confronted with impassioned celebrations of youth street culture and the intellectual savvy necessary to make a life on the streets. These sentiments were also reflected in hip hop lyrics, artwork, and storytelling. The fact is that most of the young men I knew expressed something in-between a wholehearted denouncement and an impassioned celebration of street life. During the course of fieldwork, I heard and saw many statements of hope for a better future. All of this indicates to me that the notion of street youth as straightforwardly out-of-place on the streets of the city center - or as straightforwardly in-place, for that matter - is far too simplistic.

Figure 3.2 [left]
Tunaishi kibandidu [We are living like bandits]; Yaleo noma [Today’s problems]; Rumbah kali [This load is overflowing]. (Cartoon by Evander Lee)

Figure 3.3 [below]
(Clockwise from top) 1. Kibaharia [A man who is able to get by day-to-day in unpredictable and difficult circumstances]; 2. Kiselasela [He comes to live the life of masela]; 3. Kibandidu [He is living like a bandit]; 4. Historia ya street boy: Tanzania pigika mbaya vumbai tupa ni noma tu [History of a street boy: This hard hitting life of Tanzania means that there are only problems covering everything]; 5. Ni noma [troubles]; 6. Choka mbaya street boy [A tiring state of affairs]. (Cartoon by Evander Lee)
Figure 3.4

Spaces of hope. [Left to right] 1. "Today on the streets – nothing! Police are everywhere. I don’t know how I will keep living like this" 2. This ugali is no joke [i.e. it will provide the body with strength]. We will share each piece with meat between us without interference from others.
3. Mwanangu, everything is okay. This ugali has no blood [i.e. it has no water and just a little will satisfy one’s hunger]. Here we are serious about getting ahead in this life: we are going places. (Cartoon by Evander Lee)

3.2 Looking beyond dichotomies

Yeah yeah
Sometimes I chill
And I diss this life
Which cuts me like a knife
I fight like a gangster
I am the real nigga hustler

Don’t be so shocked
I have already tested negative
You are sick
But I am fine
My car has insurance
As I have already told you
I’m still early in this life

Don’t look at me
Sometimes thinking about my mother
She left me a long time ago
While I was in school
I know one day I will return
And see my mother again

These guys put barriers up
So that I can’t succeed
They have put barriers up
For so long
But I will take off
And I will shine like moka

29 Sticky maize porridge
30 Lit. ‘my child’; colloq. a common and friendly term of address among young men
31 I.e. tested negative for HIV
32 New dress shoes
Mosoma is where I am from
Dodoma is where I wasted my time
But Dar es Salaam is where
I am living

Yeah
I am shining
Because I am clever

Before I arrive to the club
First I smoke bangi

- Haraka

Anthropologists have looked critically at the notion of street youth as 'children out-of-place' (Connelly & Ennew 1996; Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1998). Firstly, it has been noted that this view is informed by a universalized, middle class European and North American definition of young people as innocent, vulnerable and in need of adult protection. It follows from this definition that children and youth belong in certain social spaces, such as the family and school, but not in others. Young people who fall into the highly ambiguous and diverse category of 'street children' are therefore perceived as deviant, disorderly and discontented, but this view ignores the extent to which definitions of childhood and youth have varied throughout history, across cultures, and according to socioeconomic class (Aries 1962; James & Prout 1990).

Figure 3.5
Young people in- and out-of-place. Kwinyi Mussa washes a car at maskani Amazoni. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

Secondly, anthropologists have observed that, in many contexts, street youth are working youth who have come to play a major role in the emergent informal economies of rapidly expanding cities (Hecht 1998; Kilbride et al. 2000). Insofar as their presence betrays the illusion of

33 Marijuana
modernity and reflects the state’s failure to provide for its citizens, street youth may be viewed as out-of-place on city streets (Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1998). In reality, many young people living and working on the streets of Dar es Salaam and elsewhere are better viewed as carving out new spaces for themselves within ongoing processes of globalization (Moyer 2004; 2003).

Certainly, this line of analysis fits most closely with how all of those I knew viewed their situation. Fighting for money through work and life on the streets was perceived as the only available option for personal fulfillment, given limited opportunities for more permanent employment in both the rural and urban settings. As such, they did not view themselves as ‘refusing a good place in the world’ or ‘being called by the bad life’; instead, life and work on the streets was understood as the only means to secure a ‘good place’ in a rapidly changing nation where opportunities for young people continue to be few. As such, it was necessary to endure ‘the bad life’ of the street until that time when a better life becomes a reality.

![Figure 3.6](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Looking outwards. A shoe-shining stand at maskani Jolly Club. (Photograph by Emanuel Rodeck)

Finally, anthropologists have noted that the assumption that street youth are without a sense of stability, permanence and belonging is not always well founded (Moyer 2003). Street youths’ geographies are often highly transient, but this does not mean that the spaces and places they make use of are without significant meaning for them. In fact, I observed that in Dar es Salaam, those who live and work on the fringes of the urban landscape possess a heightened awareness of the social significance attached to place; after all, survival on the streets means successfully navigating geographies of power and appropriating liminal, nowhere places in order to meet needs. As I will argue in Chapter 6, these geographies of power—and the extent to which street youth are able to carve out spaces
within them - have significant implications for the health and wellness of young street people, as well as for how concepts of health and wellness are understood and acted upon (see Chapter 5).

Figure 3.7

Maskani nyumbani [home].
(Cartoon by Evander Lee)
Chapter 4 - *Bongo Flava, bangi and kibandidu: Youth street culture*

I have suffered a lot  
To where I am now  
I have come up against so many things  
But still I am stable  

I am the man  
I have to struggle  
I can’t give up  
Because others have money  

If I am to die  
I will die  
Because I am playing a dangerous game  
Robbing and selling things  
In the middle of the night  

I must force things  
Money is a foundation  
When I win  
I will spend easily  

That is why  
I do believe  
I have the spirit of a Rastafarian  
I am the master of black people  
Peace and love  
I don’t mind  

Machizi\(^{34}\) if you are wrong  
I will tell you  

- Albogast

4.1 Leaving the Jungle

The sun is shining when Athumani and I show up at Amazoni. We are greeted with a chorus of shouts and cheers because it is Sunday - that means no work, and today we are headed to a beach just outside of town. The boys are pretty much ready to go, running back and forth across the street making last minute preparations. Instead of the loose, worn t-shirts and shorts they wear for washing cars, today most of them have opted for *simpo*\(^{35}\) style - trendy t-shirts, jeans and sneakers. Even Ninja - who lost one set of clothes the previous week when he escaped from the police station - is looking smart in a collared shirt and windbreaker.

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\(^{34}\) Friends or 'comrades of the crazy life'

\(^{35}\) From the English 'simple' meaning 'laid-back'; describes a style of dressing that usually includes trendy jeans, t-shirts or collared shirts, and sneakers
We have to wait for a few minutes because some of the boys have pooled their money together and are cooking *ugali* in a back lot across the street. I enter a cement enclosure covered with graffiti, rinse off my hands, and squat on the floor to eat. They are adamant that I join them, even though they are sharing what looks to me like a meager amount of food between seven or more people. A few of the boys argue over whether to take a photo of this scene. As always, I am hesitant to take my camera out, for fear that I do not have the ‘informed consent’ of everyone present, or that I will get charged an extortionate amount once I have taken the shot. I opt to keep my camera in my bag, and soon everyone is concerned with more pressing matters, such as buying *bangi*, and where to find a football for the beach. Some of the *masela* have formed a small circle and are already freestyling to Kindo’s human beat box.
4.2 Penetrating youth street culture

Street ethnography with young people calls for a particular methodological approach - one in which improvisation and reinvention are the rule rather than the exception (Gigengack and van Gelder 2000). In order to penetrate and interact comfortably within this world of streetwise young men, I had to become proficient in their 'culture of communication' (Christensen 2004). In fact, mastering Swahili grammar was comparably less important than learning those crucial slang words that unlocked hours of discussion about life on the streets.

Initially, I found that the easiest way to establish relationships was to discuss topics of mutual fascination such as hip hop music, film, fashion and international celebrities. One of the best suggestions given to me before leaving the Netherlands was to bring along popular Western magazines as gifts. At first, upon hearing this suggestion, my mind turned to the evils of global consumerism and the objectification of women. Just as quickly, however, I was forced to admit to myself how much I love flipping through the glossy pages of Vogue or Harper’s Bazaar, studying the latest products and designer clothes. As it turned out, the magazines were a hit, and even generated some critical reflection on my part, as evidenced by this early entry in my fieldnotes:

12 May 2007

In the afternoon, two masela and I head to Coco Beach, near the large estates of the Masaani Peninsula, a high-income area where, my acquaintances inform me, 'only you wazungu and other rich people live.' Given that fact, I am surprised to be the only mzungu in sight when we arrive. It is a local hang out full of groups of young men and many fewer young women. Some are standing on the adjacent cliffs, smoking bangi, fooling around and freestyling. We settle down on the sand to listen to some music on my MP3 player and flip through the Western magazines I brought from Amsterdam.

I can’t help but smile at the irony: my new friends are ogling Ashley Judd’s almost naked figure on the front cover of Marie Claire, and the feature article about her is titled 'Not Just Another Pretty Face.' Inside is a cookie-cutter account of how Ashley Judd is working to confront AIDS among 'at-risk youth' in Africa. My present company, however - two young men who are likely 'classified' as 'at-risk youth' for contracting HIV - could care less about Judd’s do-gooder account of the heart wrenching situation in Africa when I try to raise the topic for discussion in broken Swahili. For the time being, they would much rather flip through the magazine and - like countless other young men their age - inspect each and every photo of scantily-clad supermodels and sports cars. I wonder to myself whether Ashley Judd has ever been part of such a scenario, and which ‘African youth’ she is referring to in her interview with Marie Claire.

In order to begin understanding young people’s ideas about health and wellness on the streets, I had to consciously put aside commonly invoked adages
about 'African youth and HIV/AIDS,' or 'homeless youth and drug abuse.' It is not so much that I disagree with what has been said before about African youth and health, or about homeless youth and drug use, nor is it the case that the young people with whom I worked were unconcerned with these issues. Rather, I wanted to keep firmly in mind that this project was about understanding how young people envision health and wellness on the streets; how they articulate and prioritize health-related concerns and health-seeking strategies. I wanted to enter the field without a working definition of health and/or wellness already in mind. Undoubtedly, if I had tried to come up with something prior to speaking with young people, I would have included HIV/AIDS as a prime threat to health and well-being, and I probably would have boxed 'drug use' and 'abuse' under the somewhat problematic label of 'coping mechanisms.'

In the field, one challenge was to avoid asking questions and initiating discussions that would prompt young people to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. Street ethnography with young people requires the researcher to create a context in which participants are able to respond in accordance with their own views. Young people express and represent their experiences, interests, values and understandings in ways that can differ from adults. Popular culture mediums such as film, music, graffiti art and cartooning can be more fruitful sources of discussion and data than straightforward question-and-answer interviews. As Moyer and others have recognized, "sometimes the best mode of questioning is to ask no questions at all but, instead, to create space for conversations" (2003: 242). The researcher must take steps to ensure that the methods employed fit with and reflect young people's experiences, interests, and understandings - and this requires proficiency in the norms and values of youth culture(s). Achieving this proficiency is not an easy task, and fortunately, incompetence in the field can open up new areas of inquiry, and misunderstandings can lead to new or better understandings (see Pool 1994).

4.3 Defining youth street culture

Based on fieldwork in East Harlem, New York, Bourgois (1995: 8) describes inner-city 'street culture' as

a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values, and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society. Street culture offers an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity . . . not a coherent, conscious universe of political opposition but, rather, a spontaneous set of rebellious practices that in the long term have emerged as an oppositional style.
The irony of course is that in Tanzania, as elsewhere in the world, aspects of youth street culture have been commercialized and integrated into mainstream popular culture. Street cultures may ‘emerge in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society’ or ‘as a spontaneous set rebellious practices.’ However, once aspects of street culture become integrated into the mainstream, there exists a reciprocal relationship between street culture and the mainstream: in Tanzania, the mainstream continues to poach aspects of youth street culture, while at the same time, youth culture incorporates – or reincorporates – aspects of mainstream popular culture.

For example, Bongo Flava refers to a distinctive brand of Swahili hip hop and Swahili music more generally that originated in Tanzania and is now popular throughout East Africa (Saavedra Casco 2006). A commonly held belief among those with whom I spoke was that many Bongo Flava musicians made their start on the streets of Tanzania’s urban centers, particularly Dar es Salaam. In fact, this has rarely been the case. Although it is true that Tanzanian hip hop originated among the country’s youth, several authors have noted that this musical genre was first experimented with by those wealthy enough to access foreign hip hop recordings and studio time (Saavedra Casco 2006; Perullo 2005; Remes 1999). Regardless of where it started, however, hip hop’s allure quickly spread to inspire and engage Tanzanian youth from multiple socioeconomic classes (Saavedra Casco 2006; Remes 1999).

Whether fact or fiction, success stories of masela who ‘made it big’ as hip hop artists straight off the streets are a source of inspiration for young people hoping to catch a similar break. A significant number of the young men I knew aspired to record hip hop tracks at local studios once they had saved up enough money, and several of them showed promise. From the perspective of many young people living and working on the streets, Bongo Flava is a musical genre that originated among and continues to be dominated by streetwise masela.  

37 For more detailed discussions regarding the origins and meanings of Swahili hip hop among Tanzanian youth, see Saavedra Casco (2006); Perullo (2005); Weiss (2002); Gesthuizen and Haas (2000); Remes (1999).
38 Gesthuizen and Haas (2000) note that in Tanzania and elsewhere, hip hop’s origin myths are generally unclear and shrouded in mystery. Furthermore, they discuss a preoccupation with ‘realness’ within an emergent global hip hop culture. Given this preoccupation, it is hardly surprising that the young men with whom I worked were insistent that Tanzanian hip hop has always been, first and foremost, a medium through which disenfranchised youth are able to express social critique and escape situations of poverty. To be anything other makes Tanzanian hip hop – and its star performers – somehow less ‘real’ or genuine.
Regardless of its origins, Bongo Flava has been fully integrated into mainstream media and is a part of daily life for the majority of Tanzanians. The lyrics of Swahili hip hop tracks can be oppositional and rebellious in nature; they oftentimes express social critique and detail the hardships of life among marginalized Tanzanian youth. However, it would not be accurate to characterize Swahili hip hop as wholly oppositional, rebellious or subversive. As much as it is a form of resistance, it is also a medium for expressing aesthetic preferences and mainstream norms and values.

When thinking about youth street culture and popular culture more generally, it is therefore wise to keep the following warning in mind:

When social scientists explore 'expressive' cultural forms or what has been called 'popular culture[,]' . . . most reduce it to expressions of pathology, compensatory behavior, or creative 'coping mechanisms' to deal with racism and poverty . . . Few scholars acknowledge that what might also be at stake here are aesthetics, style and pleasure. (Kelley 1997: 17)

Youth street culture provides an 'alternate social reality' (Brake 1980) which exists apart from, but simultaneously incorporates aspects of, mainstream culture. It is characterized both by rebellious practices and aesthetic concerns. Within this social reality, aesthetic preferences, pleasure and suffering, and the pursuit of financial capital are all organizing principles. At maskani and other youth-appropriated spaces of the city, explosive creativity takes the form of streetwise slang and hip hop lyrics, graffiti art and fashion. Shared ideologies of togetherness (tupo pamoja) and youthful cunning (ujanja) are encoded in the language of the street and communicated through various artistic media and storytelling. Proficiency in these mediums of expression is a means through which street youth appropriate, meaningfully occupy, and enjoy urban space. Furthermore, I would follow Bourgois in arguing that this proficiency also provides "an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity" on the streets (1995: 8).

39 For more detailed analyses of the lyrical content of popular Tanzanian hip hop tracks, see Saavedra Casco (2006); Perullo (2005); Gesthuizen and Haas (2000); Remes (1999).
4.4 Situating youth street culture

As people fashion places, so, too, do they fashion themselves.
- Feld & Basso (1996: 11)

If you want to know this life of masela, you have to stay with us, in our place.
- Mussa Juma Ninja

Understanding the relationship between space and place is not an easy task, but De Certeau’s (1984) articulation of the two terms is a useful starting point. He describes place as simply a physical location, while space refers to the ways in which place is used, and the meaning that is made out of place. In other words, space is a 'practiced place,' which is transformed by social practices and imagination, by memory, desire and aspirations, and by movement and dwelling (De Certeau 1984). Place becomes space when people come to occupy that place over time. People occupy places physically, but also linguistically through narrative (Moyer 2004). Place can be occupied visually through fashion, hairstyle and art, as well as sonically through language and music (Moyer 2005). Through these various occupations, meanings are created, definitions are arrived upon and rejected, and alternative spatial realities are imagined (Moyer 2004). Some spatial meanings, definitions and imaginings are shared, while others remain private.

For example, an open lot or vacant stretch of roadside is simply a place if it is empty - empty of physical bodies and also empty of meanings. These 'nowhere places' are transformed into meaningful spaces when one or more people come to occupy them, bringing with them all kinds of experiences, aspirations, values and asymmetrical power relations. Maskani Amazoni is one such space; it has been occupied and made meaningful, firstly, as a space of business and hope for a more financially lucrative future, and secondly, as a space of relaxation, pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment and social interaction. Being 'at home' and 'at work' can be as simple as walking a few steps onto the adjacent road and changing the way one talks in order to recruit a potential customer. As we will see, each of these sets of meanings contributes to Amazoni as a space of health and wellness.
De Certeau (1984) describes a conceptual move from ‘proper’ places to meaningful spaces. Other writers have taken a reverse approach, and describe a move from space to place and the inherent emplacement of human culture (Basso 1996; Casey 1996). From this perspective, place refers both to a physical location and to the experiences and meanings it gathers. Proponents of this view envision place as the anchor of human interaction and experience. Places gather people, and with them their experiences, histories, memories and thoughts. Places gather languages and narratives. Furthermore, places do not merely amass these things but hold them in a particular configuration (Casey 1996). In this way, places are able to bring together sometimes radically disparate and conflictual interpretations, understandings and meanings. Place anchors social life to the physical landscape, “blanketing it with social significance” (Basso 1996: 55).

If human experience is embedded in place, and people form meaningful relationships with the locales they occupy, it follows that sense of place powerfully informs identity (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003). Indeed, among Dar es Salaam street youth, self and group identities are both expressed spatially, evidenced most clearly by the literal marking of walls and other urban surfaces with graffiti art, tags \(^{40}\) and slogans.

\(^{40}\) A stylized image of one’s name, nickname or the name of one’s ‘crew’ (peer group)
I observed a strong relationship between sense of place and identity among the young men with whom I interacted. To me, the streets of the city center looked much the same - dusty, strewn with garbage, and packed with honking cars, people walking and vendors on the move selling *maji baridi*, *karanga* and cigarettes. To those that accompanied me, however, each and every street corner, open lot and alleyway could unlock a story about the people who had worked or slept there. I found that the easiest way to learn about the 'street careers' (Visano 1990) of those with whom I was working was to accompany them on walks through the city center, allowing them to point out and elaborate on those places and spaces that held particular significance. Masela would tell me: 'You see, here is where I came and slept when I first arrived in the city (pausing to wave at some acquaintances) - I still know people at this place'; or, 'This is where I was washing cars before I moved to *maskani* Amazoni, but the police moved us along.' As Basso remarks, "places possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become"; they provide "points from which to look out on life, to grasp one's position in the order of things, [and] to contemplate events from somewhere in particular" (1996: 55-56).

During these first walking tours on the streets of Dar es Salaam, I was impressed by the extent of the social-spatial networks that connect masela all over the city. Each space of work and relaxation - each maskani - forms a node of an elaborate social-spatial system for maintaining social connections and accessing information regarding potential *madili* or the latest police interference. It was only later, when I asked groups of street youth to map all of the maskani they knew and frequented within greater Dar es Salaam, that I realized these social-spatial networks went far beyond the city center and even beyond the city itself. This vast social-spatial network is a hallmark of

41 For further discussion of the close relationship between sense of place and identity, see Gigengack (1999). Based on work with a gang of street boys (*banda*) in Mexico City, Mexico, he found that while members of the banda were aware of the topography of the entire inner city, they were particularly well acquainted with their own 'territory' or neighborhood. Within the neighborhood, different places were associated with different activities such as hanging out and sniffing glue, playing football, begging and sleeping. Intimate knowledge of these places and their histories conferred banda identity. Members of the banda could tell detailed stories about the best spots for sleeping or begging, for example; these stories were interwoven with autobiographical details that simultaneously expressed how the boys saw themselves and their lives on the street. The banda was united by a shared 'experiential topography' (Basso 1996); through relationship with place, banda identity was confirmed and reinforced.

42 Cold water
43 Peanuts
44 Possibilities for making money (pl)
youth street culture in Dar es Salaam, and as we will see, it is at the center of health-seeking strategies for staying well on the streets.

Although I tried to visit as many maskani as possible over the course of the research period, I stayed mainly in and around the maskani where my 'expert informants' - Musa Juma Ninja, Emanuely Rodeck, Kindo Emanuel, Evander Lee, and Albogast - were found, in the heart of the city center. I did however spend much time discussing with street youth the differences between various maskani located all over greater Dar es Salaam, and the implications of those differences for overall health and wellness.

Different maskani are associated with different groups of masela, but also with different kinds of behavior. Maskani can be associated with a particular kind of work - car washing, shoe shining, selling cigarettes and biscuits - or with a particular kind of activity, such as sleeping, eating, exercising, or drinking alcohol and smoking bangi. Of course, most maskani are associated with more than one kind of activity, and all maskani are spaces of relaxation, aesthetic enjoyment, and pleasure. However, it was made clear to me which maskani are for sleeping or cooking food, for working, for thinking, and which are for consuming alcohol and using drugs.

Early on, one maskani in particular came up time and time again in conversations about masela and (bad) health. Adjacent to Dar es Salaam's fish market and the ferry terminal from which a barge transports passengers the short distance to Kigamboni, there is a large, open lot littered with makeshift shelters of corrugated iron, cardboard and cement blocks. Plastic tarp is strung up here and there, and men and women group together in rare patches of shade to cook over open fires, smoke bangi and drink gongo.45 The putrid stench of last night's alcohol, fish guts and urine, an abundance of seemingly unpredictable individuals, and limited shade all combine to create a feeling of discomfort for outsiders like myself. Navigating the uneven surfaces of the lot strewn with garbage, and declining aggressive offers of bangi and gongo for 200 shillings,46 I felt for the first and only time in Dar es Salaam somewhat hesitant and afraid to enter what was clearly their space. Named maskani Lebanon because of its associations with lawlessness and confusion, this place

45 Strong, illicit brew
46 Approximately 15 Euro cents
has been wholly appropriated - to some extent through excessive revelry and intimidation - by those who live there.

The masela I befriended characterized maskani Lebanon as a space of rash and reckless behavior, full of individuals who have given up on fighting for life and are consumed by alcoholism and drug abuse. It is also a space associated with violence (including sexual violence) and crime, and I was warned on several occasions not to go anywhere near Lebanon on my own. Generally speaking, the masela I came to know at maskani Amazoni and elsewhere were adamant in distinguishing themselves, their aspirations, and their behavior from those who stayed at Lebanon and other maskani like it. Although many of them went to Lebanon to drink alcohol or smoke bangi, they wanted to distance themselves from what they perceived as a space of violence, ill health and destructive behavior. We can see that, while youth cultures can create safe, constructive and healthy spaces of cooperation, hope and personal fulfillment, they may also inform spaces that are rife with violence and substance abuse, according to the definitions and understandings of young people themselves.

In order to understand young people’s ideas about health and wellness, we need to be attentive to peer cultures, and to the spaces and places in which peer interactions occur. The association between maskani Lebanon and poor health among those with whom I worked illustrates how notions of health and wellness among young people are themselves emplaced.

Figure 4.4
Spaces of destruction. [Left to right] 1. Cheers mwanangu! Here I am out of this world. I can’t hear and I can’t be told . . . 2. Don’t even try to measure what I am. I’m navigating dry land and I’m going ahead with this behavior [i.e. drinking alcohol and smoking bangi]. That lovey-dovey stuff [i.e. romance] is for later. 3. This bottle of gongo . . . No one is coming to interfere. Here, I am killing myself. No problem. (Cartoon by Evander Lee)
4.5 Wakali wa dona: meaning-making and subcultural capital

Me, I am a mkalii wa dona - don't even try to measure what I am. It's like tying to cross the ocean by foot.
- Joffalay

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) notion of 'cultural capital,' Thornton (1996) suggests that within a cultural group, status is partially conferred through the accumulation of what she labels subcultural capital. Based on an ethnographic study of the British nightclub or 'rave' scene, Thornton (1996: 8) defines 'taste cultures' as those that are based on shared aesthetic preferences, usually related to music, fashion, and other forms of expression. Taste cultures are transformed into self-conscious subcultures with the aid of niche and mass media; according to Thornton, a minimally definable subculture comes into existence only once it has been labeled as such by the media.

Subcultural capital, then, refers to the forms of knowledge and skill that are markers of 'cool' within the subcultural group. Subcultural capital can be objectified - in fashion or material possessions - and it can also be embodied, as in 'being in the know' or being 'cool' (Thornton 1995). These subcultural distinctions confer status on the owner in "the eyes of the relevant beholder," and inform hierarchies of power and prestige within the cultural group (Thornton 1995: 11).

The notion of a bounded, easily definable 'subculture,' which exists apart from and can be neatly contrasted with a clearly discernable 'main culture,' is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, it is not clear what makes one culture a 'main' culture and another a 'subculture,' and ultimately these labels may conceal more than they reveal. Distinguishing cultures in this way seems to exoticize those beliefs and practices defined as 'subcultural,' while implying that there exist non-subcultures that are considered to be somehow more 'normal' or mundane. Secondly, the subculture label brings to mind the critique offered by Kelley (1997), which I quoted earlier in this chapter: namely, social scientists interested in 'expressive' subcultural forms have oftentimes been too quick in reducing them to creative 'coping mechanisms' for dealing with social marginalization. In doing so, they overlook the extent to which considerations of aesthetics, style and pleasure inform cultural practice.
Despite the drawbacks of the 'subculture' label, I believe that it is possible to delineate a 'taste culture' based on shared aesthetic preferences among Dar es Salaam street youth. Furthermore, Thornton’s concept of subcultural capital is useful for illustrating, firstly, how status is conferred among young people living and working on the streets. Secondly, this concept helps us to understand how youth street culture can provide "an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity" (Bourgois 1995: 8), in addition to being a platform for aesthetics, style and pleasure.

In Tanzania, young men living and working on the streets are hard pressed to accumulate financial capital, nor do they have social capital in the form of higher education or 'skills training.' Based on my data, I would argue that within the context of mainstream society, this lack of financial and social capital results in feelings of alienation and otherness. However, within the youth-appropriated spaces of the city, one’s present financial capital and level of official education can be less important - at least among one’s peers - than the skill, savvy and style with which one is able to successfully navigate street life. In other words, on the streets, one’s subcultural capital can hold more value "in the eyes of the relevant beholder" (Thornton 1995: 11) than one’s present financial or social capital.

Among Dar es Salaam street youth, status is conferred on those individuals who demonstrate youthful cunning (ujanja) and quick wit (umishemishe) in finding ways to make money (madili), and who demonstrate resilience and success despite years of living the life of masela. It is conferred on those individuals who have mastered the subtleties of streetwise slang, and are able to demonstrate that mastery through hip hop freestyles and graffiti art. Also, it is conferred on those who are able to dress well or keep their bodies strong despite having no financial capital. These individuals earn the title of 'wakali wa donta': masela who are known throughout the city and set apart from others. Wakali wa donta are 'connected,' and they can wield these social connections to obtain favors from other masela. The title of wakali wa donta is a point of pride, and it holds particularly poignant meanings in the spaces and places of youth street culture.
Lyrics and beats: the power of words on the street

The more I focused on the "cultural processes and practices through which places are rendered meaningful" (Feld & Basso 1996: 7), the more clearly I recognized the different values of specific forms of subcultural capital among youth.

On the streets of Dar es Salaam, the significance of language — and of the manipulation of language — cannot be overemphasized. I try to imagine what this project would have been if I had not made any attempt to learn Swahili, or conversely, if I had been fluent. In fact, the centrality of language to this project means that I can fairly characterize the three-month field period as one long Swahili lesson.
I had intended to study Swahili to learn basic greetings and phrases, while depending most of the time on an interpreter. I ended up learning much more because it became apparent early on that language would be the key to this entire project. By demonstrating an interest in learning some 'street' Swahili, I showed young people that I was committed to taking their views seriously. Streetwise language is central to young people's interactions with each other on the street; by making it central to our interactions as well, I positioned myself in the role of a struggling student and created space for meaningful conversations on young people's terms.

I should stress here that the cultural meanings encoded in streetwise slang are constantly undergoing revision and reinvention. For example, a number of terms that I learned at the beginning of my three-month stay had taken on new or sometimes completely different meanings by the time I was leaving. Other terms had become obsolete; I was told on more than one occasion when I proudly tried to use one of them that 'no one says that anymore.' Furthermore, the range of meanings implied by a single term was always a source of considerable debate among young people, often with no clear consensus. In general, I observed that the beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values, and ideologies of young people were multiple and shifting; to speak of 'the' street culture or even 'the' youth street culture in Dar es Salaam is misleading.
Thus, the numerous slang terms I make reference to throughout this thesis can be and are used differently by young people in Dar. These same observations apply to the meanings of visual symbols that appear in graffiti art and cartoons as well.

**Figure 4.8**

*Piga mistari!* [Hit a freestyle!]. [Left to right] Omary Rashidi, Baraka, Mussa Juma Ninja, Khamisi Julius, Albogast, Emanuel John and Mgorogoro freestyle at Kigamboni beach. (Photograph by Danya Fast)

Aesthetic preferences, subversive sentiments, and ideas about health and wellness are all encoded in the streetwise slang, and communicated through mediums of hip hop music, graffiti art, storytelling, as well as through casual conversation and greetings. On the streets, mastery of language is a form of subcultural capital that holds tremendous value at *maskani* and other youth-appropriated spaces of interaction.

**Simpo style, modo clothing and Braza Man bling**

Fashion in the broadest sense - including clothing, hairstyles, various forms of body modification such as bodybuilding and tattooing, and accessories such as mobile phones, headphones, and even cigarettes and joints - is a significant aspect of youth street culture. Through fashion, the body is rendered meaningful (De Boeck & Plissart 2006). It must be recognized that the body itself is "a moving spatial field [that] makes its own place in the world" (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 6); it is a "site from which and for which youth can create multiple spaces of agency, subjectivity and representation" (Springay 2005: 118). Like street corners and abandoned lots, the body is a space reflection and imagination, for creation and reinvention, and for material and symbolic accumulation.
Among the young men I knew, fashion was clearly associated with good health and overall wellness. Of course, having clothes to wear is an obvious aspect of well-being, and I want to stress that the connection between health, wellness and fashion went beyond the notion of ‘food, water, clothing and shelter’ as the basic necessities. We discussed three styles of dressing at length.

Modo clothing refers to slick, European-style garments, while simpo style refers to more casual outfits consisting of sneakers, jeans and nice t-shirts. A popular ideal among those I knew was to combine simpo style or modo clothing with ‘African’ hairstyles like Afros and dreadlocks. Stylish accessories included a cigarette or joint behind one ear and a pair of headphones hanging out of a shirt pocket - all the better if they are attached to a functioning MP3 player or mobile phone. Masela who achieve this appearance command respect and communicate pride in their African heritage.

Braza man refers to a style of dressing that includes a certain amount of embellishment or bling-bling: chains and necklaces, diamond stud earrings, rings - generally speaking, a look that is the hallmark of countless North American hip hop and rap artists. Interestingly, while Dar es Salaam youth do idolize American rap artists to some extent, most of the young people with whom I spoke were adamant that they prefer simpo style and modo clothing to over-the-top, Braza man style.47 There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, it is simply a matter of aesthetic preferences. Secondly, it is at least partially related to the fact that none of those with whom I worked could afford to wear a great deal of bling, or even if they could afford it, they ran the risk of having it stolen during nights slept out on the street. Thirdly, a flashy appearance was conceptualized as somewhat risky, because it might arouse suspicions among the public and other masela about where one got the money to

47 Gesthuizen and Haas (2003) similarly note that, although Tanzanian youth and Bongo Flava artists follow the American hip hop scene closely, they do not always possess a desire to imitate American artists - both in terms of their style of dress and the subject matter of their songs. In contrast to the lyrics of many American hip hop tracks, Tanzanian artists often choose to express anti-gangster and anti-violence sentiments through their music. Those Tanzanian artists who choose to rhyme about topics that are perceived to be American preoccupations - such as gang violence and extravagant wealth - may be accused of ‘not keeping it real,’ particularly by those who believe that home-grown hip hop should be used to communicate important educational messages about the realities of life in Tanzania. For further discussion regarding the interaction between American and Tanzanian hip hop cultures, see also Perullo (2005); Weiss (2002); Remes (1999).
afford such expensive clothing and accessories. Fourthly, most of those with whom I spent time felt that hip hop stars who dress in Braza man style have clearly forgotten their humble beginnings - or worse, that perhaps they didn’t come from humble beginnings at all, in which case they lose legitimacy as real ‘hustlers.’ When I asked young people how they would envision their futures if one day they woke up and suddenly had all of the money in the world, the majority of them stressed that although their lives would change dramatically, they would not forget where they had come from, and nor would they forget their friends who were still on the street. Avoiding over-the-top Braza man style was seen as one way to communicate respect for where one had come from.

All the youth who participated in this project stressed the importance of dressing well to feeling good and commanding respect on the streets - respect from one’s peers, but also respect from the general public. Respect from the public can translate into opportunities for employment, and thus fashion is connected with well-being in the sense that it can be the key to making money, which is then used to secure basic necessities such as nutritious food, medicine, bus fare and school fees.

Several young men commented on the fact that if they were poorly dressed and approached a crowded public area, people around them would hold their bags tighter or move away, assuming that all masela are thieves, capable of violent and unpredictable behavior. Of course, some masela are thieves and violent ‘gangsters,’ but those I knew lamented the fact that the actions of a few were oftentimes applied to all. They went to great lengths to appear clean-cut and
respectable, and I always marveled at how well dressed and well groomed they were in light of the fact that they slept outside. Situations in which they find themselves being judged as criminal based on their appearance result in feelings of alienation and otherness. As one group of boys put it at the end of a discussion about the Tanzanian public and their views towards masela, when people move away from them in fear, masela feel 'different from other people - they feel inferior.'

That being said, dressing too well can also be problematic; people including police may wonder where a msela got the money to dress so nicely, and may assume that he is a thief. This can result in harassment and even imprisonment. Two people with whom I spoke worried that if they dressed too nicely, others may think that they are practicing witchcraft.

Through bodily appearance, the disorder of the city, economic scarcity and marginalization are contested. The body can become “the (sometimes subversive) site through which official political and cultural discourses and practices are questioned, reinvented or replaced by alternate forms of togetherness, conviviality, competition and success” (De Boeck & Plissart 2006: 239). In other words, the body is the site of contestation and communication; it is an important space for the construction of identity and the elaboration of meanings.

Figure 4.10
How can we avoid the Bobby?
(Graffiti art by Kindo Emanuel)

Efforts to communicate specific messages to peers and the general public through physical appearance are not just a matter of identity politics,
pleasure or pride, however. All too often, street youths’ bodies become public space, belonging to policemen and to the state. One of the most challenging aspects of this research was listening to stories of police violence, and of violence within prisons. During the brief fieldwork period, one of my closest ‘informants’ spent a week in prison, and another escaped before standing trial. The stories that came out of these all-too-common occurrences were at once humorous and tragic.

Thus fashion, and the ability to manipulate fashion in order to communicate respectability, vulnerability or ‘cool’ (Moyer 2003), is another form of subcultural capital with high value on the streets, both at maskani and other public spaces of the city center. Indeed, dressing well can mean staying out of jail, and staying out of jail is unequivocally associated with good mental and physical health on the streets.

**Kupiga misele and peer networking in space and place**

At the heart of youth street culture is an elaborate social-spatial network of maskani and other spaces of business, pleasure, relaxation, play and rest. Fundamentally, social networks are spatial networks; young people living and working on the streets come to know each other through place. The intelligence, savvy, and hustle necessary to navigate this social-spatial network together form one of the most significant and valuable forms of subcultural capital on the streets. As I will argue in Chapter 5, they are also at the center of what it means to be healthy or well.

*Kupiga misele* literally means ‘hitting around’ and refers to the practice of moving through the city and outlying areas, visiting friends and making connections that could lead to potential madili. Dar es Salaam street youth are highly mobile, and this mobility is not random; it is an *informed* strategy for succeeding at life on the streets. Informed mobility is at the center of what it means to be a mishemishe, that is, a young, clever, energetic person who is always searching for and ready to do any kind of job that presents itself. Understanding the meaning of mishemishe is central to understanding young people’s emic definitions of health and wellness on the street, and *kupiga misele* can be understood as an important health-seeking strategy.
The life of a hustler: tupo pamoja

The practice of kupiga misele is crucial to maintaining social connections and reinforcing ideologies of unity and togetherness on the street. Solidarity among young people is perhaps best summed up by the phrase ‘tupo pamoja,’ meaning ‘we are here together.’ It is a commonly used expression in greetings and partings between masela, and implies a bond based on the shared realities of their lives.

Peer networks and solidarity through friendship are crucial to staying well on the street; they are forms of capital in and of themselves, and they require significant subcultural capital in the form of streetwise savvy (ujanja) to navigate. Masela all over the city - connected to each other through social-spatial networks - commonly pool a portion of their earnings for a common purpose, such as buying msosi.\footnote{From the English ‘sauce’: food} Generally speaking, the masela I knew helped each other financially when one among them did not have money for various expenses. This practice was referred to as ungaunga or donation, which could also be called upon to raise money for larger expenses, such as school fees or funeral expenses. At maskani Amazoni, for example, several of the masela were helping Kindo by making contributions to his school fees; without these contributions, Kindo assured me that he would have dropped out.
Masela are also able to call on each other for favors that are connected to financial need but do not involve cash changing hands. The most important kind of favor is a connection to madili through a friend who has already found employment. Other favors involve getting something for free that one normally has to pay for—meals, rides on the daladala\(^49\) where a friend is working as a conductor, or admittance to the beach front of a tourist guesthouse where a friend is doing construction. Indeed, I benefited from these kinds of favors. When we were working, the norm was for me to pay for everything—drinks, food, bus fare and even cigarettes. At times however, masela would use their connections on the street to secure for us a free ride, meal or day at the beach.

\(^{49}\) Public transport

*Figure 4.12*

School days. Chimogomo and Khamisi Julius look at Kindo’s graffiti-covered notebook at maskani Amazoni. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

*Figure 4.13*

Tupo pamoja. Amosi, Wakuswing and Pendapenda relax together at maskani Amazoni. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

Ideologies of togetherness and solidarity are not only invoked as strategies for survival; they are also expressions of pride and celebrations of street life. Tupo pamoja is reinforced through storytelling and the
skillful use of language more generally, bringing us back to the power of words on the street. Outsiders are not privy to the hilarious stories told while sitting around maskani, nor can they decipher the full range of meanings captured by slang words loaded with double meanings and innuendos. I was aware of how much I was missing of what was said, even when I tape-recorded conversations and attempted to translate them later. My translator Heri and assistant Athumani would be listening to a tape, laughing hysterically, and telling me that a particular word or phrase simply could not be translated into English, and that I would have to be satisfied with a partial understanding of what was said. Storytelling, freestyling and the manipulation of language creates and reinforces feelings of solidarity among those who possess the skills and knowledge - the subcultural capital - necessary to understand and be understood in the idioms of street language.50

4.6 Feeling good in space and place

When you have no money, others judge you as a thief; you can't buy soap to wash your clothes, you can't cut your hair, and then others think that you are wild.

- Khamisi Julius

This project aims to understand the intersection between health and wellness and space and place. I began thinking about these relationships in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. I noticed that young street people seemed to behave differently depending on where they were and what they were doing within the urban environment. In those city spaces and places over which they had managed to claim some ownership - like the low-income street corners, parks and alleyways of the Downtown Eastside - Vancouver street youth appeared relaxed, confident and at times even boisterous. Middle and upper class Vancouverites who passed them on the street by foot gave them a wide berth, and those in cars locked their doors and drove by. These defensive actions were a source of considerable humor among young street people, and often prompted further play-acting. However, when I observed these same youth collecting bottles in middle and upper class neighborhoods (in order to obtain the 10 cent deposit held back at liquor stores), or on public transit buses surrounded by well-dressed individuals returning from work and school, they appeared submissive and timid.

50 Saavedra Casco (2006: 237) notes that in Tanzania, the manipulation of language for the benefit of audience members "who are well-versed in the art of decoding . . . and reading between the lines" has a long history. He argues that Tanzanian hip hop, for example, has inherited several elements from the Swahili tradition of poetry performance, including the "mutual consensus between [performers] and their audience of norms for the adequate use of poetry and language" (Ibid.).
Other Vancouverites continued to give them a wide berth, but this time the result seemed to be feelings of exclusion and self-conscious otherness, rather than pride.

Several writers have elaborated on the power of place to shape social interaction (Beazley 2003; Moyer 2003; Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003).\(^{51}\) It is clear that different social encounters in different spaces and places influence young peoples’ identities in different ways.\(^{52}\) I would argue that it is also important to recognize the effects of these social interactions on the way young people feel about themselves, their lives and their futures in different urban spaces and places. Social interactions in space and place can result in feelings of alienation and otherness, or conversely, in feelings of self-worth and confidence. In other words, feelings of worthlessness and worthwhileness are emplaced.

In Dar es Salaam, all of the young people with whom I spoke were able to describe places within the city where they were more likely to feel badly about themselves and the conditions of their lives— for example, when they are at a public bus stand and people move away from them in fear. Equally, they were able to describe places and spaces in which they were more likely to feel good about themselves and their futures— for example, when they are at maskani, working and socializing with friends. These feelings, rooted in experiences of space and place, inform mental and physical health on the street.

Relationship with place is a process that is “dynamic, multisensual, and constantly oscillating between a ‘foreground’ of everyday lived emplacement and

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\(^{51}\) For example, based on fieldwork in Indonesia, Beazley (2002; 2003) discusses the gendered use of space among Yogyakarta street youth. Within the city, street boys and girls appropriated different places as gathering points; a group of boys occupied a public toilet facility on the main street of the city center, while a group of girls occupied a park in the south of the city. The boys believed that they belong on the streets of the city center, as this is a ‘masculine’ space that should be reserved for tough, independent young men. The girls occupied a more out-of-the-way location, where they could safely reject constructions of ‘femininity’ and dress and act in decidedly un-feminine ways (Beazley 2002). The young women spent their days in the park, where they were able to retreat from the male-dominated streets of Yogyakarta, and could be more vocal, gregarious and confident than when they were socializing in other city places. This gendered use of space reflects how the youth identified themselves, and their behavior within these appropriated spaces illustrates the power of place to shape social interaction.

\(^{52}\) For example, Beazley (2003:4) concludes that street youth “posses multiple and fluid identities which shift depending on their circumstances, the spaces they occupy, and their daily interactions.” Among those living and working on the streets of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, particular urban areas were identified with particular activities. Furthermore, youth’s use of space changed in relation to their age, gender, and relative income from street work. In some places, youngsters acted according to the value of group solidarity, while at other times they acted in favor of individual survival.
a ‘background’ of social potential” (Casey 1996: 6). Awareness of one’s relationship with place may be fleeting or arresting, unconscious or conscious. Through movement and dwelling, work and play, people enter into and maintain different kinds of relationships with place, and it is by virtue of these relationships that place is constituted and made meaningful. Conversely, places and their meanings are embodied.53

Dar es Salaam street youth are forcefully excluded from public space, and this exclusion can be embodied and expressed, for example, through deferential posturing when moving through or around forbidden, ‘proper’ places. Conversely, when street youth are ‘hanging out’ in the spaces they have successfully appropriated as their own – even if these are an abandoned lot or a vacant stretch of roadside – they demonstrate greater ease through more relaxed bodily posturing and movements. People are “forever performing acts that reproduce and express their own sense of place – and also, inextricably, their own understandings of who and what they are” (Basso 1996: 57). Street youth participate in this performance when they mark spatial territories with the ‘tag’ or graffiti signature of their gang; when they walk down a high-end public street with shoulders hunched and eyes averted; or when they play a game of football in an abandoned lot with their peers.

Figure 4.14
Favorite places. Kindo Emanuel and Mussa Juma Ninja pose on a graffiti-covered structure at a Kigamboni maskani. (Photograph by Danya Fast)

53 The body is a physical and biological entity, but it is also a medium through which we experience being-in-the-world, and the center of human agency. The body is a location for speaking and acting on the place-world (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003); it is at once a tool, an object and an agent. Embodiment refers to our “perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world” (Csordas 1994: 12). We exist within and experience the world around us as embodied individuals.
What I found is that young men living and working on the streets feel the best in the spaces and places where their subcultural capital holds the most value. This was reflected in what they said, and in the changes in body language and behavior that I observed as masela moved between and within various urban spaces and places.

Time and time again, when I asked young people where their favorite place was to go, they answered that they like the city center the best, because that is where most of the masela with whom they are networked come together to ‘do mishemishe’ and find madili. Similarly, when I asked them where they go to feel freshi, several of them mentioned the city center and others mentioned a specific place within the city center. Without exception, everyone I spoke to told me that they feel the best when they are engaged in work or actively looking for work — in other words, when they are doing mishemishe on the streets of the city center.

All of the young men in my core study population lived and worked in the city center of Dar es Salaam. It is hardly surprising therefore, that to the best of their collective knowledge, the city center has the highest concentration of maskani and other youth-appropriated spaces of work, rest, and enjoyment. Based on a map we made together of all the maskani my ‘informants’ could think of in Dar es Salaam, it was clear that they were familiar with fewer and fewer maskani as they moved out from the city center and into outlying areas. Thus, when young people told me that they like the city center best, and that they feel freshi in places and spaces in and around the city center, I concluded that they feel the best when they are immersed in the network of places and spaces that they have appropriated and made meaningful according to their own understandings and values. It is within this network that their subcultural capital holds the most value — in the eyes of their peers, and also in terms of securing income through kupiga misele and ‘doing mishemishe.’

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54 I have used mishemishe as an adverb here, meaning a combination of ‘quickly,’ ‘readily,’ ‘flexibly’ and ‘efficiently.’ ‘Doing mishemishe’ refers to the daily process of looking for work and being ready to perform any odd job that arises. Normally in Swahili grammar, an adverb is created by adding ‘ki’ to the beginning of a word, as in ‘kimishemishe.’ However, the use of mishemishe as an adverb is a relatively recent development in street slang, and it is not yet being used in the grammatically correct form ‘kimishemishe.’ Thus, I have chosen to write the term without the ‘ki’ prefix, although I recognize that this is grammatically incorrect.

55 From the English ‘fresh’; refers to a general state of physical and mental well-being.
Based on his work with drug dealers in East Harlem, New York, Bourgois (1995) notes the very different kinds of cultural capital required to navigate the world of inner-city streets and the world of minimum wage-earning America. The men he worked with were highly adept at running informal drug-dealing businesses on the streets, and at maintaining the social networks and streetwise standards of decorum necessary to do so. However, when these same men attempted to penetrate the world of legal, minimum-wage employment, they were met with failure, resulting in feelings of alienation and insecurity. Although they possessed the cultural capital of the street in abundance, they lacked the cultural capital necessary to successfully integrate with mainstream America.

In Dar es Salaam, this point became clear to me when I made the mistake of suggesting that we work for the afternoon at a local fast food restaurant which services wealthy Tanzanians and wazungu. I thought it would be a good spot because of fewer interruptions and ample table space for spreading out maps of the city, drawings and photographs. When we arrived, I asked everyone what they wanted to drink, and to choose something small to eat. Instead of the response I was expecting - requests for pizza and hamburgers and other items beyond the spending money I had in my pocket - my questions were met with shrugs and quiet mumbles of 'I don't know.' I was shocked: young men who I knew to be confident and at times overbearing street hustlers were suddenly quiet and submissive, waiting for me to take the initiative and tell them what to do.

Later that evening, when I was thinking about the incident and writing up my fieldnotes, I wondered how I could have been so forgetful of the realities of spatial exclusion in Dar es Salaam - a central focus of my research. Of course the masela I brought to the fast food restaurant felt uncomfortable and out-of-place in the air-conditioned room full of business people enjoying their high-priced coffees and croissants. Not only are street youth excluded from spaces like this because of the unaffordability of the merchandise, but they are also excluded in the sense that they lack the cultural capital necessary to comfortably interact within such upper-class spaces. Just as I lacked the cultural capital necessary to navigate their social-spatial networks, and was afraid of committing behavioral faux-pas at various maskani, they felt under-confident in knowing the correct behavior in a pricey fast food restaurant, a space far-removed from those of the street.
To summarize, an elaborate social-spatial network of *maskani* and other meaningful spaces provides a context in which definitions of what it means to be young, healthy, successful and *mjanja* are based on young people’s meanings and understandings. Although they subscribe to mainstream notions of success and hope one day to acquire further education, a house, a car and a source of steady income—youth street culture offers them an alternate social reality in which success and personal fulfillment are possible in the present. The practices and preoccupations of youth street culture are not a collection of coping mechanism for dealing with poverty and social marginalization. Rather, as we have seen, youth street culture is an important platform for “aesthetics, style and pleasure” (Kelley 1997: 17), and offers an “alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity” (Bourgois 1995: 8). The *masela* I knew feel the best when they are immersed within the spaces and places they have appropriated as their own and where their subcultural capital holds the most value. Conversely, they feel the worst where they attempt to integrate with the mainstream and fail, as when people move away from them in fear or clutch their bags tighter in spite of young people’s best efforts to achieve a respectable appearance.

*Lit. a clever person; colleg. a person who possesses streetwise intelligence, and is able to use creative strategies to build a life on the streets*
Chapter 5 - Understanding the meanings of health and wellness on the streets

Yeah yeah it’s a picture and not a flash
This is my hard life
Yeah yeah it’s a picture and not a flash
In this game I am so tight
Gangsters I am hardcore
With so many obstacles
And still I overcome
All of the humiliation and problems
I am doing music
I can’t run from everything that’s wrong
I know that I will eat
Through the microphone
And that’s why I work hard
I can’t relax because
When I remember where I’m from
The tears start
All that time when I had nothing
They saw me as garbage
Now I am surprised
Why are they interested in me now?
I make a promise here and now
And I will not break the promise
That I have already made in front of friends
When I was standing still
And I had no job
Yeah yeah it’s a picture and not a flash
This is my hard life

It’s 5 am and hundreds of young mishemishe are waking up to clear the concrete corridors and alleyways of city center maskani before adjacent shops open for business. Dotto, Gideon, Ema, Baraka, Joffalay and Omary are among them, casting aside makeshift bedding of flattened cardboard boxes and opened newspaper sheets, and thanking God for another day alive and well enough to fight for money on the streets. As they gather up their few possessions, each asks God to help him to find work and take

57 Normally in Swahili grammar, in order to make the verb 'mishemishe' - meaning 'to search for work and be ready to perform any job that arises' - into a noun describing a particular kind of person - i.e., someone who is constantly searching for and ready to perform any kind of job that arises - an 'm' would be added to the beginning of the word for a singular noun (mmishemishe) and 'wa' would be added for a plural noun (wamishemishe). However, different uses of mishemishe (as a verb, adverb and noun) have emerged relatively recently on the streets of Dar es Salaam. Thus, although I heard the term used as a singular and plural noun on numerous occasions, I never heard it used in the grammatically correct forms 'mmishemishe' or 'wamishemishe.' For that reason, I have chosen to use 'mishemishe' as both the plural and singular form of the noun, although I recognize that this is grammatically incorrect.
away feelings of hunger. If there is a water source near by, the boys
pause to brush their teeth before hitting the streets in search of
potential madili.

Other groups of mishemishe are already assembling on the street corners
and open lots from which they conduct business – washing cars, carrying
loads, or selling cigarettes, water, karanga and anything else that
people will buy in passing on their way about town. As other masela walk
by their maskani, they pause to greet each other and exchange news,
making plans to meet later in another part of the city. As always,
mishemishe are keeping their ears open for when and where potential
madili might come up.

By 8 am the workday is in full swing. If they are lucky, today will pass
without interference from police. If not, this will be just one more day
that the police succeed in extracting chai\textsuperscript{56} from informal street workers
in return for 'permission' to continue selling goods and services on the
streets. The worst-case scenario is that the police will find a reason
to start arresting people; a few days spent in jail means hefty chai
expenses and greatly reduced earnings for that week.

At 1 pm Dotto, Gideon, Ema, Omari, Baraka and the other masela from
maskani Amazoni assemble together and pool some of their earnings in
order to buy msosi. Throughout the city, food is cooked over open fires
in back lots and behind parking garages, and eaten off the same flattened

\textsuperscript{56} Bribe

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\textbf{Figure 5.1}

\textit{Kulala huku umesimama [sleeping while standing still]. Ninja
poses for a photograph in his sleeping place at maskani Mansfield. (Photograph by Hashim)}
cardboard sheets and plastic bags used for sleeping. The best time for mishemishe to rest is after eating, when nagging feelings of hunger subside and the heat of the day makes working seem less appealing. If work is good, however, it will not be preferable to rest until the early evening, at which time mishemishe return to the maskani where they began their day.

Figure 5.2

Msosi [food]. Evander Lee demonstrates cooking ugali at maskani Kidongo Chekundu. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

Between 7 and 9 pm, when shops are completely shut down and people are busy with returning to their homes, there is a brief lull before the city shifts to evening and a host of new activities brings people back to the streets. Mishemishe rest when they can before resuming work on the streets, selling biscuits, cigarettes, karanga and bangi from impromptu kiosks at the side of the road. People come and go from bars and nightclubs, laughing and chatting or stumbling home. Mishemishe see all of this; they will rest only when the city sleeps, and the last potential customers have returned to their homes.

Figure 5.3

The city shifts to evening. Two masela selling cigarettes and biscuits near maskani Ghetto Baby. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)
Wa mwisho kulala na wa kwanza kuamka: masela are the last to sleep and the first to wake up. This is the life of a mishemishe, in which fighting for money is paramount to all other concerns.

When I began asking questions about health and wellness on the streets, I was struck by the homogeneity of the answers. Regardless of what questions I asked or how I asked them, the reply was almost always the same: money - and the work necessary to get it - are the two most important things for building a healthy and meaningful life in Bongo. At first, I thought that I was simply asking inappropriate and easily misinterpreted questions, or that I was initiating too many group discussions, during which a few individuals would express their opinions first, and then the rest would follow their lead. I thought to myself, of course building a meaningful life in Tanzania requires money, but what about the everyday health-seeking strategies employed by these young men, despite having no money? I was expecting to hear about the importance of personal hygiene and exercise, or about the difficulties of avoiding malarial mosquitoes during nights slept out on the streets. Indeed, I did hear about these things, but only after young people explained to me the importance of fighting for money on the streets as an everyday practice directly related to overall health and well-being.

The more I listened, the more I realized that my questions were not inappropriate, nor were they being misinterpreted. Rather, I was not listening carefully enough to those answers that did not fit with what I expected to find before entering the field. Once I sat down with my fieldnotes and began to consider things more carefully, I saw that these young men had given me precisely what I had asked for - elaborate definitions of health and ill health that stem directly from their identities as masela, as mishemishe, as vijana59 and as wanaume.60 Whether they were speaking about day-to-day survival or the long-term goal of building a meaningful life, the 'health-seeking strategies' I was searching for, and conversely, assaults to everyday well-being, were most clearly articulated in the idioms of youth street culture.

Among young men who live and work on the streets, notions of health and ill health center around the need to work as quickly, flexibly and as much as possible, in order to come out of the daily fight for money with earnings,
however meager. A mishemishe wakes up everyday and resumes the search for madili, or opportunities to generate income. Following elaborate social-spatial networks that concentrate in the city center but extend into outlying areas, masela employ mobility in order to access madili or the news of potential madili. As I have argued, this mobility is not random; it is a highly informed strategy that requires significant knowledge of the cityscape. Moreover, it requires an awareness of the various social relationships that blanket that cityscape and imbue it with particular meanings. In other words, navigating these social-spatial networks through the practice of kupiga misele requires significant subcultural capital in the form of streetwise intelligence (ujanja).

Masela move between maskani and informal spaces of street-side business, avoiding unwanted attention from police and conversing with friends and acquaintances about the latest news, potential business arrangements, and opportunities for a few days employment. When I was able to accompany masela on these daily outings, I was struck by the number of people with whom they maintained personal relationships. I watched as they skillfully negotiated dozens of different kinds of social interactions, knowing in each encounter precisely what they could ask of each other, and how to ask it.

Different urban spaces and places are connected with different kinds of madili, and madili result in income. It must be recognized that kupiga misele and the mobility it implies are themselves important health-seeking strategies. Time and time again, when I asked young men what they did everyday to stay healthy, or what they did everyday to feel freshi, their replies involved a description of moving around the city looking for work, and being ready to accept any job that comes up. This readiness to work is referred to as ‘doing mishemishe.’

Speed, mobility and flexibility are highly valued on the street; ‘doing mishemishe’ refers to a general state of constantly searching for work, and being ready to perform any available job. Mishemishe is also used as a noun to describe those young people who engage in this practice on a daily basis. A mishemishe is distinguished from a deiwaka, which refers to an individual who goes to specific places at the beginning of each day to find out if there is a need for workers to perform specific tasks. For example, deiwaka may arrive at large hotels or office buildings early in the morning, hoping to sweep the
floors or do construction work. A mishemishe, on the other hand, will traverse the city all day in search of odd jobs; he will do one task and then move on to do another completely different job.

When a mishemishe is presented with an opportunity to make money, he should be able to accept whatever task is being offered, whether it is carrying heavy loads, mixing cement, selling shoes, or acting as an impromptu tour guide. Thus, he should be clever (mjanja) and moreover, he should be able to carry out tasks quickly and efficiently. By ‘doing mishemishe,’ he is able to secure income and accrue capital, which in turn translates into food, clothing, bus fare, school fees, and recreation - all of which are viewed as important for health. The everyday practice of mishemishe is not easy however; it requires physical and mental energy and strength (nguvu). We can see therefore how ideas about physical and mental health all relate back to this central concept of ‘doing mishemishe’ (see appendices A and B).

5.2 Being a vijana, becoming a mwanaume

What it means to be a youth on the streets of Dar es Salaam is clearly connected with what it means to be a mishemishe. Those with whom I spoke felt that a youth is particularly suited to the life of a mishemishe. For example, Ninja described a youth as

someone who can come quickly when called, someone who is strong and can work mishemishe. He can work anywhere and is able to do any kind of dili that comes up. He is a mjanja.

Emanuely made similar observations:

A youth is energetic and active, and can do things that others appreciate and look up to. Also, he can go places that he will not go when he is married. He goes to these places to know another kind of life, the life of masela.

Other young people connected being a youth with becoming a man. A man is someone who is able to take on all of the responsibilities of family life. He is able to provide for his wife and children in the form of money for food, school fees and clothing. Furthermore, he has a plan for how to maintain his family responsibilities over time; he has established a sound economic foundation so that he and his family will never be without money for the basic

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61 Possibility for making money (s)
necessities. Simply put, a man is someone who has successfully built a life for himself and his family. Amidu stated it as follows:

A man is someone who fights for life, and the life of his family. He is the head of the family with all of the responsibilities. A man is hardworking and always has a plan. When he goes to sleep at night, he must think of all that he has to do the next day.

Thus, when Babushebi and others describe a youth as ‘someone who is always fighting for money, and who needs to work hard and build a future,’ it is clear that being a youth is associated with building the economic foundation necessary to become a responsible man and the head of a successful household. In order to do so, many youth must live a life of masela and access certain spaces and places that they will not necessarily return to once they become responsible husbands and fathers. While these spaces and places represent opportunities for accruing capital and securing a meaningful future, they also represent a lifestyle of irresponsibility and reckless enjoyment in the form of money spent on alcohol and temporary girlfriends.

The notion of maintaining a more permanent girlfriend on the streets raised worries in the minds of several young men with whom I spoke. A steady partner was associated with accidental pregnancies, engagement, and the need to find a room to rent where everyone could stay together. This was beyond the financial means of most of those I spoke to; accordingly, many young men stated that, although they love women, they want to postpone initiating a serious relationship until their financial situation improves.

Of course, many masela already have serious partners and children of their own, regardless of their level of financial security. As far as I know, no one in my core study population was supporting a long-term partner or children, but this is more likely to be an artifact of my sample than a situation that applies to the majority of young men on the streets of Dar es Salaam.

Nevertheless, a commonly expressed ideal of a man as someone who is responsible and financially secure stands. It seems that the life of masela cannot be wholly reconciled with that of a responsible man. This has serious implications for those young men who are confronted with failure despite years of attempting to build a future through life on the streets. The result may be a crisis of identity and even mental illness. Emanuely reflects:
When I have a job, I feel like a man. Then, I feel like I have a future. A man is the 'God of the world.' He is someone that fights for life.

As the phrase 'God of the world' suggests, being a man is also associated with nguvu or power. A man is powerful in at least two ways: firstly, he is the head of the family and of superior intelligence; he is capable of making long-term plans for his future and that of his family, and of carrying them out successfully. Secondly, a man is physically powerful. Physical power manifests itself in the form of being able to perform physically challenging tasks, and in the form of sexual power.

These aspects of manhood inform what it means to be a young msela in the process of becoming a man. Success on the streets, and the streetwise intelligence necessary to get it, earns one the title of mjanja or mkali wa donta. It is these clever and notorious individuals who skillfully wield the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in building a meaningful life on the streets. They are already demonstrating an ability to provide for themselves and a readiness to plan for the future, despite the surrounding chaos. Conversely, for those who lack street smarts, the consequences can include a life of dire poverty in which one has to beg for money from peers, resulting in feelings of worthlessness and confusion.

Power in the form of sexual prowess also informs youth identity and visions of the meaningful life towards which they are striving. In Tanzania, one can generalize to say that initiating a relationship with a girlfriend - whether for a prolonged period of time or for a single evening - requires money. Consequently, only one of the masela I knew spoke of having a girlfriend. The rest indicated that they did not have the capital necessary to maintain a romantic relationship. Yet, all of the masela I spoke to stressed the importance of one day finding true love and sexual satisfaction with a girlfriend or wife. They also frequently talked about the importance of sex and physical affection to feeling good despite the hardships of life. This was most clearly expressed in discussions around saving the money to rent a room, which would allow them to entertain female guests in a manner and with a frequency that their present situation did not allow. Thus, although young men living and working on the streets are often unable to initiate and maintain long-term, loving, and sexual relationships with young women, they envision such relationships as a part of the future towards which they are working, and they imagine scenarios in which money becomes irrelevant to approaching a
beautiful young girl. These scenarios were frequently the topic of hip hop lyrics:

That demu there is freshi
When you see her sitting
With her hair set nice
And in her hand is a cigarette
Legs in a short skirt
Down there she has on simpes
But she doesn't like to wear socks
Ohh She looks smart

When she arrives at the disco
She shines like a diamond
Many girls they love me
Even though them
Those who are rich
They seduce by Benz

The girl she is in school
But she's in standard 7
- Omary Rashidi

Health-seeking strategies change as masela move from being children to youth. A number of researchers have noted that as street youth reach adolescence, society's perception of them changes, and also, street youth's own perceptions of their lives change (Beazley 2003). It has been suggested that adolescence presents street youth with a 'career crisis' (Visano 1990), during which they must re-evaluate and re-orient their strategies for survival. In Dar es Salaam, I observed that expectations, within mainstream society and also among masela themselves, change as masela grow older and are tied to ideas about what it means to be a man in Tanzania.

Most of the young men with whom I worked came to Dar es Salaam as children. At this stage - when they were still physically small and 'cute' and without an aura of intimidation - they were able to skillfully manipulate their 'street child' identities to appeal to NGOs and other charitable individuals for assistance. However, once they reached adolescence, they discovered that they were no longer the object of adult pity and charity. Simultaneously, they reached a stage of physical and psychological maturity that allowed them to be fully initiated into youth street culture, and to find work as mishemishe or deiwaka on the streets of Dar es Salaam. Thus, the need to fight for money on

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62 Perullo (2005) also notes the use of hip hop as a medium for expressing young men's fears and fantasies regarding the initiation of romantic relationships with women when one has little or no money to offer her.
63 Young woman
64 Sneakers
65 i.e. they are able to seduce girls because they have a Mercedes Benz automobile; because they are rich
the streets as a mishemishe or deiwaka signals their exclusion from charitable assistance, but equally important, it also signals their desire to build a financially viable life for themselves as young men.

In Tanzania, rather than "resent[ing] the structural and economic restrictions placed upon them by the state and dominant society" (Beazley 2003: 16), young men living and working on the streets, initially at least, embrace the interstitial spaces and 'nowhere places' that allow them to participate in the modernizing project—the very spaces and places that also signal their exclusion from that project (Moyer 2003). Upon reaching adolescence, masela by and large turn away from service providers, and are fully initiated into the extensive social-spatial networks of their peers that connect them to the people and opportunities for employment that enable them to stay healthy on the streets.

5.3 The body as capital

If the body becomes the main urban stage though which one can realize oneself, it also remains, simultaneously, an extremely vulnerable, contaminated and violated entity, a body in danger.

- De Boeck & Plissart (2006: 257)

To live this life, you have to be strong. You can't be lazy or you will die.

- Emmanuel John

One day a friend and I were walking along Kigamboni beach. I had wanted to photograph some particularly good graffiti art on a nearby building foundation, but as the day wore on, it seemed clear that we were not going to make it there before dark. My assistant Athumani was with us, and as we walked I had given up trying to follow their conversation in Swahili. Up ahead there were four men pulling a large fishing boat up onto the beach. Beside the boat, three kids were having a competition to see who would be the first one to crack open a large shell. After we passed them, my friend Amin commented that fishermen are strong and fit because of the physical demands of their labor. Recognizing a good opportunity to talk about my research, I asked him about the relationship between the body, strength and health. Amin is of Indian descent and completed all of his studies in English. Unfortunately for Athumani, we carried out this conversation in English.
D: So, being strong and fit and mwembamba\textsuperscript{66} is good? I mean, it's admirable?

A: Yes, absolutely.

D: But I wonder about it, because I see many middle-aged Tanzanian men who are \textit{mnene}.\textsuperscript{67} They also look like they have more money, at least they have more than the masela I am working with. So, don't those men also want to look good - I mean, be thin?

A: You have to understand the way it is here. The way you get money is - say I marry your sister. I get money by meeting you and marrying your sister. To make money, you make connections, and to make connections, you sit and have beers in the bar. So, people that make connections and later make money have drunk lots of beers in the bar. Then they get a \textit{kitambi}.\textsuperscript{68}

D: [laughing] So it is just from drinking beer? But, I know young guys here in Tanzania with very little money who drink a lot of beer.

A: You have to understand the way it is here. The way you get money is - say I marry your sister. I get money by meeting you and marrying your sister. To make money, you make connections, and to make connections, you sit and have beers in the bar. So, people that make connections and later make money have drunk lots of beers in the bar. Then they get a \textit{kitambi}.\textsuperscript{68}

D: You mean they lift weights and run. Yeah, yesterday we [myself and Athumani] went to a gym in Mwenge \textit{uwahilini}.\textsuperscript{69} It costs like 200 or 300 shillings to go in there. Still, it is interesting that young guys with very little money will pay to lift weights each day.

A: Yes, young men - masela - want to stay fit and slim and strong. If a man is bigger it means that he is already set up for life.

D: So a rich man can 'let himself go,' as we say in English? Do you know that expression? He can get fat.

A: Yes, when you have no money and no wife, being fit and strong is important. For instance, I had a friend who was ex-army who stayed in very good shape for four years. Then finally he was hired as a security guard. So it paid off, staying in shape.

D: I see. So being in shape, being strong is something that you have, even when you don't have money. It is something that can help you, just like capital - I mean money.

A: Exactly.

Of course, not all middle-aged, middle and upper class Tanzanian men are content to 'let themselves go' and become \textit{mnene}. That same day, I was having breakfast with a masela who had us both laughing hysterically when he used an elaborate story to illustrate the dangers of becoming too fat. He began by saying that being \textit{mnene} raises one's blood pressure and can lead to a heart attack if a fat person gets over-excited. Then he recounted an incident that occurred on the same block where we were eating, involving a fat man and his very thin wife. As it turned out, the man could no longer please his wife sexually, so she had turned to a thinner, more attractive man for gratification. This of course brought embarrassment to the husband, for he was no longer able to sexually satisfy his thin wife, in part because of his large body size.

\textsuperscript{66} Thin
\textsuperscript{67} Fat
\textsuperscript{68} Belly
\textsuperscript{69} Lit. place of Swahili people; colloq. low-income, densely populated neighborhoods
I followed up on Amin's other observations about the importance of maintaining a thin and strong body as a form of capital. In subsequent discussions with my masela 'informants,' it did seem that having a strong and healthy body is considered highly valuable on the streets.

I heard several stories about masela who had dedicated their free time to athletic pursuits and had subsequently received scholarships to train with sports teams, either in Tanzania or abroad. In fact, as often as I heard people say that they were waiting to record a hip hop track and hoped to become professional recording artists, I also heard young men say they wanted to play football for a professional team. Becoming a Bongo Flava hip hop artist or an athlete were seen as ways to escape street life, backed up by stories of masela who had made it big overnight, straight off the streets. Although less entertaining, I also heard stories about masela who had stayed fit and later managed to land jobs as security guards and in major hotel gyms as a result of their athleticism.

Of course it is important to recognize that like fashion, graffiti art and hip hop music, body strength and size is also a matter of aesthetics. Among the young people in Tanzania - masela or otherwise - a thin, fit body is preferable to a fat body for men. I was once sitting on the beach with a slightly mnene friend, watching people playing football and exercising in the mid-afternoon sun. My friend and I both took notice of a particularly athletic young man who was doing sprints up and down the beach. I was impressed that he could run like that in Tanzania's hot sun; my mnene friend commented that he wished he could look like that.

For masela, however, the ability to do mishemishe and make money on the streets is paramount, and many of the tasks mishemishe and deiwaka are hired to perform are physically challenging. Furthermore, mishemishe are in constant competition with each other for obtaining impromptu jobs such as carrying heavy loads across town, mixing cement, or unloading and loading trucks. I was met with gales of laughter when I asked one time whether a bosí looking for workers would single out a msela mnene for the task of transporting crates of water across town.

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76 Big boss
Having a strong, lean body—described on the streets as *baunsan*—is of critical importance for obtaining work and money, and therefore for maintaining everyday health and wellness. A strong, lean body was equated with health in the sense that those who eat healthily, avoid excessive alcohol consumption, and exercise regularly were believed to be less susceptible to malaria and other illnesses. Also, a powerful and lean physique was associated with health and wellness in the sense that it is key to doing *mishemishe* and therefore to making money on the streets. However, this ideal did not exclude the possibility that a fatter body could also signal good health.

**Figure 5.4**

*Danya Studio Promotion.* A promotional poster featuring an artist whose physique would be described as *baunsan.* (Drawing by Evander Lee)

Generally, the *masela* I spoke to associated fatter bodies with *watoto wa mama,* or 'children of the rich.' *Watoto wa mama* are considered to have led comparably easy lives; they have never had to worry about when and where they will get their next meal or the money for other expenses. As a result of having constant access to nutritious foods, and because they have not been consumed by troubling thoughts and worries, *watoto wa mama* become fat and lazy, but at the same time they are also healthy.

Even my translator Heri commented to me one day, as we passed a group of children playing, 'Oh, there are *watoto wa mama.*' Since I knew that Heri had a place to stay and food to eat, as well as the modest salary I was paying him, I asked him to clarify his comment. He replied: 'You can just see by the way that they are running and their [body] size that they have never had to worry a day in their lives; they are so free.'

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71 From the English term 'bouncer' for the 'muscle-man' who stands outside of nightclubs and lets people in and out of the door; describes a lean and muscular physique.
It is not just masela who are fighting to build a life in Tanzania. In fact, most young men - whether they are balanced on the brink of abject poverty or not - are consumed by worries about their future: how they will get the money for school, whether they will be able to get a job when they finish school, how they will manage to help a family member in need, and so on. As Amin pointed out that day on the beach, a fat body indicates an established, successful and worry-free life in the minds of those whose futures are far from certain.

Within the same conversations in which they were listing off assumptions about watoto wa mama based on body size, several young men strongly cautioned me against assuming the health status of someone from their appearance. Although they did not often mention it directly, I am sure that this warning is related to the widespread and often erroneous assumption among Tanzanians that someone who is very thin may also have HIV/AIDS.

According to the masela I spoke to, many of whom are very thin themselves, being mwembamba can mean different things. Firstly, it can be a body type; as one mselas put it, ‘You could give this type of man all the mwosi in Tanzania and he will still not become mnene.’ Secondly, it can mean that an individual is working hard all of the time, whether performing physically or mentally challenging tasks. I remember laughing to myself when my friend and Swahili teacher told me after class one day that all Americans are thin because they work all the time. They don’t have as much time for sitting around and watching TV. A man who is mnene does not work a lot and does not do exercise. In other words, he is lazy.

Indeed, these kind of assumptions were confirmed in countless other discussions I took part in about body size and well-being. Thirdly, a thin appearance can mean that a person is thinking and worrying too much about the troubles of life, and finally, it can mean that a person is sick, whether with AIDS or some other serious illness. In the latter two cases, an exceptionally thin individual will not be called mwembamba, but rather be described using the verb kukonda.72

First and foremost, a person who has lost significant weight likely has a serious problem and is consumed by troubling thoughts about that problem. For

72 ‘To become thin’ or ‘to lose weight,’ usually as a result of mental and/or bodily illness
example, he may not be able to get enough food to eat; in this case, he will be thin because of a lack of calories, but also because of troubling thoughts about food and where to get the money for food. The same applies to illness; a person may be thin because of illness, but constant worries about illness and how to get money for medicine and hospital visits will also contribute to a person’s emaciated condition.

In sum, thinness can be the result of one’s body type or lifestyle, but it can also be the result of illness, lack of food, and excessive worries. Emanuely told me one day that although thinness can be ‘natural’, it is generally bad: ‘It threatens people.’ He recounted a story about two friends who died as a result of sleeping outside – an aspect of street life that was strongly associated with bad health and unwellness. His friends had contracted malaria and become very ill; before they died, they lost additional weight from their already thin frames. On this particular day, Emanuely himself seemed to be suffering from malaria or some other illness, and I wondered at the time if he was reflecting on his own fear – as I was reflecting on mine – that his thin frame might not be able to withstand bouts of serious illness.

We can see from these discussions that mental and physical health are interconnected. As one of my acquaintances put it, ‘if you want to take care of your mind, you have to take care of your body.’ Simply put, street youth feel better about themselves, their lives, and their futures in any space or place if they have just eaten a nourishing meal. Hunger and serious illness threaten the physical body, but they also generate worries that threaten mental health. In turn, thinking too much about the troubles of life threatens
problems associated with having no money such as hunger, being unable to afford hospital visits and medicines, lacking basic necessities such as soap and clothing, and being unable to return home to visit family. A msela who is kidata feels profoundly different from others around him, and feels inferior to those who have money. He has to varying degrees gone crazy from thinking too much about the problems of life.

One thing that confused me during conversations about masela who had become afflicted by these kinds of thoughts and feelings is that they were sometimes described as 'going too fast.' My confusion arose from the fact that the noun mishemishe can be roughly translated as 'hustler' or 'one who is able to move quickly.' Because the ability to do mishemishe is unequivocally associated with good health, I was surprised to hear masela speak negatively about someone 'going too fast.' Through subsequent discussions, I came to realize that kudata is associated with sporadic and reckless actions that can land a msela in the hospital or in jail. A msela who is kidata is 'going too fast' in the sense that he is behaving irrationally without thinking things through. For example, he may get exceptionally drunk and run out in front of a car, or he may become careless and begin engaging in illegal activity in plain view of the police.

Figure 5.6
Acting crazy. Baraka pretends to be kidata and digging through a pile of garbage for the benefit of the camera. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

If a msela who is kidata becomes seriously affected by his condition, his behavior may change dramatically, at which time he may be described as a msela mawenge. 'Msela mawenge' is the second concept that emerged as key to understanding the meanings of ill health on the streets. A msela mawenge is the opposite of a msela mjanja; he is someone who lacks the streetwise intelligence and drive necessary to build a successful life on the streets.
This lack of cunning may be the result of inexperience, but it is also demonstrated through antisocial behavior. A *msela mawenge* sleeps all of the time, smokes too much *bangi* and drinks too much *pombe* and/or *gongo*. He may also use harder drugs such as cocaine and heroine. As a result, he is incapable of doing *mishemishe* and fighting for money on the streets. In general, a *msela mawenge* has no direction in life. When he is presented with the opportunity to work, he is not able to follow directions and complete the job properly. As it was put to me several times, 'he simply cannot do anything right,' and therefore he is unable to build a life on the streets.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 5.7**

Thinking other thoughts. Mussa Juma Ninja smokes a joint in Amazoni chaka. (Photograph by Kindo Emanuel)

'Kidata' and 'msela mawenge' are related in the sense that someone who is *kidata* may become a *msela mawenge*. One important health-seeking strategy for overcoming persistent and troubling thoughts among Dar es Salaam street youth is to smoke *bangi*. As Emanuely stated in a group interview, 'smoking *bangi* is a way to think other thoughts and feel other feelings' - to which everyone else present nodded vehemently in agreement. To a lesser extent, drinking alcohol in limited quantities is also associated with clearing the mind of troubling thoughts, although several young men emphatically associated alcohol consumption with bad health. Particularly, drinking *gongo* (strong, illicit brew) was perceived as dangerous to health, and I was told that over consumption of *gongo* could lead to death. Sleeping is another health-seeking strategy employed to forget one's worries for a time.
If a msela is kidata, and begins to increase the amount of time he spends smoking bangi, drinking alcohol and sleeping, he may become mawenge, and incapable of doing mishemishe and fighting for money on the streets. If this occurs, not only will he damage his own life prospects, but he will also become a burden to his friends, who will have to donate a portion of their already meager earnings to support him. This is the reason why, when I asked young men what advice they would give to a friend who is kidata, many of them said that they would advise him to smoke less bangi, drink less alcohol (particularly gongo), and focus on doing mishemishe instead of sleeping or sitting around maskani most of the day.

**Bangi** smoking is an important aesthetic aspect of youth street culture and is associated with good mental and physical health. With regard to physical health, bangi and cigarettes are smoked to take away feelings of persistent hunger. As for mental health, all of the masela with whom I interacted are to some extent affected by persistent, troubling thoughts; they smoke bangi to clear their minds and help them to face the hardships of life day after day. Many young people also explained that smoking bangi allows them to come to new realizations about life; for example, it ‘brings ideas’ about where to go to find work or how to make money. Unlike alcohol – which is viewed as a means to having fun but as generally bad for health and for waking up early in the morning to begin doing mishemishe – smoking bangi in moderation is viewed as a constructive habit. There is a fine line, however, between smoking bangi as a constructive, helpful behavior and smoking to excess, which results in a lack of motivation to do mishemishe. Heroine and cocaine are always associated with bad health and several young men commented on the dangers of getting mixed up with these drugs through life on the streets.76

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76 See McCurdy, S. et al. (2005) for a discussion of initiation into heroin use among Dar es Salaam youth; see also Moyer (2003)

Figure 5.8

‘Choka mbaya’ [A tiring state of affairs].
(Graffiti art by Kindo Emanuel)
In sum, the inability to do mishemishe is at the core of definitions of ill health and un-wellness among young masela (see appendix A). Without mishemishe, a msela cannot find work, and without work, he cannot successfully fight for money and build a life on the streets. Without money, a msela cannot afford good, nutritious foods, nor can he afford medicine or hospital visits if he becomes seriously ill. He may become too thin as a result of hunger and/or illness, as well as from worrying about how and where he will obtain his next meal. Furthermore, a msela without any income has no money for refreshing his mind through bangi, exercise - because of the costs of additional food which is required for daily exercise - or funikabovu, a general term for ‘enjoyment’ that implies partying with friends. Nor can he afford female companionship even for a short period of time. A msela who is unable to refresh his mind through bangi, tizi,77 funikabovu, and wachumba78 is less likely to be able to remain cool and calm on the streets - a state which is described by the verb kusizi, and will be discussed in detail below. Furthermore, his identities as a quick-witted, fast-paced youth, and as an independent and capable man, are in jeopardy, which results in additional troubling thoughts.

5.5 Kutafuta maisha: in pursuit of a meaningful life

Conversely, the ability to do mishemishe everyday is at the heart of what it means to be young, healthy, streetwise and successful (see appendix B). A msela who is able to do mishemishe everyday is mjanja; he possesses the streetwise intelligence and direction necessary to fight for money and build a life on the streets. As such, he is able to afford good, nutritious foods such as ugalı, vegetables, meat and fish, and he is more likely to have occasional female companionship. In doing so, he demonstrates the hustle and cunning associated with being a youth, and the nguvu (power) associated with being a man. Because he is able to buy enough food, he is more likely to engage in daily physical exercise, resulting in a healthy, strong body that protects him from illnesses like malaria and further enables him to do mishemishe. With the money he makes on the street, he can afford to refresh his mind through tizi, bangi smoking, and the occasional night of funikabovu at a club. With his mind refreshed and his body strong, he is able to focus everyday on the task of doing mishemishe and fighting for money on the streets. He can remain cool and calm (kisizi), and can accept his situation in life.

77 Exercise
78 Girlfriends
On the street, therefore, a healthy meaningful life is first and foremost associated with having money, and more specifically with accruing capital. All of those with whom I spoke felt that, 'when money comes, other good things follow.'

5.6 The emplacement of health and wellness

In the previous chapter, I described several aspects of youth street culture and argued that masela feel the best in the spaces and places where their subcultural capital holds the most value; that is, in the spaces and places that they have successfully appropriated as their own. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that mental and physical well-being - and the health-seeking strategies necessary to achieve them - were oftentimes expressed with specific reference to space and place. Indeed, many health-seeking strategies rely on the extensive social-spatial networks of maskani and other meaningful spaces that are the hallmark of youth street culture in Dar es Salaam.
Seeking kisizi

Yeah Yeah
Call me Albo G
A.k.a superstar
I’m one hundred percent
I’ll refuse your fifty

To shine with bling-bling
And smell good with cologne
The girls love me yeah yeah
In the company of friends
Who have madili
And make money everyday

I’m okay
Even if you want money from me
If I have it
I will give it to you

My friends at maskani
Thought that I would leave them
But it’s okay
When I have it
Money is for pleasure

Sometimes I get a call
From my far away friends
If I put the effort in with hip hop
I believe I will go far

Sometimes I am in the club
Busy with friends
Drinking pombe
No worries, no troubles
Beautiful girls are available
At every corner
It’s a matter of choosing the one I like
And I am ready
To get a kiss
Or something more

In the club
Me and my machizi
We are chilling good
In the club there is nothing wrong
There are many girls
And the guys they hold them

- Albogast

To be kisizi can refer to achieving a state of physical and/or mental 'calmness' or 'coolness.' One potential consequence of thinking and feeling too much about the problems of life on the street is to become rash and reckless, or to begin 'going too fast.' When this occurs, there are several spatial and socio-spatial strategies for 'cooling down' and thereby achieving an improved state of wellness.
Firstly, young people informed me that a common approach is to find a place for sitting alone and thinking things through. This strategy is often combined with the practice of smoking bangi to clear the mind of troubling thoughts. Praying to God for help and guidance, and writing hip hop rhymes are also common practices. Places such as beaches, chaka, and the home where one’s extended family is living, were all mentioned as spaces of calm and cool, where one can come to terms with the realities of life on the streets and one’s current situation.

It is important to note that space is not limited by place. Spaces may be created through imagination and memory (Gustavson & Cytrynbaum 2003). Remembered people, places and things not located in the present place can be re-imagined at a new moment in time, creating new spaces. Imaginings of 'the good life' - past, present or future - are often located in specific geographies. For young people on the streets of Dar es Salaam, 'the good life' is often associated with a creatively re-invented city somewhere in 'The West,' or with a romanticized vision of 'home' in the countryside, where the problems of city life are absent.

Among the young men with whom I spoke, notions of 'home' were multiple, fluid and shifting. Masela referred to the maskani where they slept as their 'home,' but they also used this term to describe the place where their relatives live. Furthermore, I heard the masela of Amazoni refer to their maskani as 'home' on more than one occasion even though none of them slept there. Thus, it seems that home can be many places simultaneously, all of which evoke feelings of belonging, familiarity, and community. It is these places that are ideal for 'cooling down' or becoming kisizi.

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79 See Diouf (2005)
80 The significance of remembered places and imagined spaces has been discussed at length by those concerned with processes of globalization and deterritorialization, and with experiences of rootedness, uprootedness and transrootedness (Gupta & Ferguson 1992). They argue that remembered places and imagined spaces provide "symbolic anchors of community for dispersed [and homeless] people" (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 11). These communities may themselves be imagined - as is sometimes the case with a transient and loosely configured 'gang' of street youths whose membership and hierarchy shifts frequently (Gigengack 2000; Anderson 1983).
When one is thinking and feeling too much, the masela I knew disagreed as to whether it is better to spend time alone, thinking quietly, or to meet together with friends at maskani. One the one hand, some said that when they are kidata, they are unable to remain animated and to interact with others, not unlike how many North Americans express ‘feeling depressed.’ Furthermore, they said that other masela are not always understanding when one is feeling badly; a masela who is kidata may arrive at maskani looking for support, but may instead be greeted by teasing. This light teasing is likely aimed at helping someone who is feeling troubled to forget his worries and to reinforce feelings of group solidarity and togetherness (tupo pamoja). However, when an individual is seriously suffering from mental unrest, it may have the opposite effect: it may cause the afflicted individual to feel further isolation and alienation.

On the other hand, several young people insisted that if a friend is kidata, he must talk about his situation with other masela. His friends can tell him things like, ‘this is the life we are living - tupo pamoja’ or, ‘we have to keep fighting for money,’ or ‘never give up hope.’ Furthermore, by meeting with others at maskani, the afflicted individual is able to access knowledge of potential madili and is more likely to find work. Over and over again, masela
repeated to me that they feel well when they are working; most felt that the only real cure for being *kidata* is to find work. Thus, meeting together at a *maskani* is viewed as a productive health-seeking strategy, because *maskani* are essential spaces for learning about potential sources of income.

**Figure 5.11**

*Mazoezi* [physical exercise]. Chakuslidi poses in push-up position at *maskani* Amazoni. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

*Maskani* are spaces of work and opportunity; they are also spaces of social interaction, enjoyment and rest. When a *msela* is thinking and feeling too much, he goes to *maskani* to draw on the first set of meanings, but equally important, he is able to draw on the latter set of meanings as well. *Maskani* are not places of isolation; rather, they are profoundly social spaces of conversation, storytelling and advice.

While in Dar es Salaam, I heard many funny stories about running away from the police, the trials of life in prison, and getting friends out of jail. These stories often involved hilarious imitations of the police and other 'big bosses,' resulting in much laughter and joining in on the part of all those present. It is interesting to note that although *masela* are afraid of prison and will do almost anything to avoid ending up there, jail is also a popular topic of light conversation. It seems that these kind of stories - which invert the everyday power relations between *masela* and police - are expressions of street youths' adeptness at navigating the perils of street life, while at the same time they reinforce feelings of solidarity and togetherness among those who are all too often powerless at the hands of law enforcement.

In sum, *maskani* are spaces of sociality and mutual assistance. Peer networking tied to space and place is therefore an essential health-seeking strategy. Firstly, it is means to enjoyment, and secondly it ensures that
masela will have access to assistance when, as inevitably happens on the street, their earnings fall short of their needs.

Figure 5.12
Tizi [physical exercise]. Juma and Nas practice martial arts at a basketball court in the city center. (Photograph by Mussa Juma Ninja)

Besides spending time alone and interacting with friends, a third strategy for cooling down is to engage in physical exercise (or tizi) in the parks, beaches and makeshift gyms of the uswahilini. Many young men told me that exercising clears the mind and helps them to stay 'cool,' and as we have seen, it is also viewed as an important health-seeking strategy in that it is a means to a strong, lean and illness free body that in turn enables one to do mishemishe.

Finally, listening to music, watching television on public screens at various locations in the city, going to nightclubs, and spending time with girlfriends were also effective ways to cool down and refresh the mind. The places in which each of these activities occurs become spaces of mental calm, and sometimes, of hope for a better future.

Figure 5.13
Spaces of desire. Barabu and Joffalay pose in a shiny red SUV. (Photograph by Emanuel Rodeck)
Feeling different from others

People are so poor, yet in this country there are so many expensive cars. For sure, I would like to drive one of those cars.

- Emanuely Rodeck

Sometimes we just sit there [at the maskani], staring at each other as if at a television. There is nothing to do.

- Babushebi

Those with whom I spoke agreed that they feel the best when they are working. Income is necessary to build a life on the street, and to feel positive about one’s self and one’s future. Over and over again, masela told me that the number one assault on health and well-being - before AIDS or malaria or any other conventional health-related concern - is sitting around with nothing to do, whether in jail or at maskani. Thus, maskani can mean many things simultaneously and can evoke different kinds of feelings in relation to health and wellness. Maskani can be sources of community; they are also sources of income, and of the knowledge necessary to obtain it. In these senses, maskani are spaces of health and wellness. At the same time, maskani can be sites of boredom and inactivity when there is no work to be found; when this inevitably occurs, maskani are spaces of frustration, ill health and unwellness. Furthermore, the constant threat of police brutality and arrests means that maskani can become spaces of danger and violence.

Figure 5.14

Spaces of affluence ‘that other people have.’ An uzunguni\(^{81}\) home in Mbezi Africana. (Photograph by Danya Fast)

\(^{81}\) Lit. the place of wealthy people; colloq. high-income neighborhoods
When masela are without anything to do, and the social-spatial network of maskani they have created is yielding nothing useful, they begin to feel different from and inferior to other Tanzanians with steady jobs, girlfriends, wives, and a home to return to each night. During these periods of inactivity, masela walk the streets of the city center, seeing all of the goods in the shops that they wish they could buy but cannot afford. It is at these times that they imagine the rich people of Masaki, driving in their fancy cars and relaxing in their uzunguni homes behind high fences and barbed wire. Imaginings of the good life that other people have are themselves emplaced, and symbolized by spaces of wealth like Masaki, high-priced shopping malls and the inside of Range Rover SUVs. Proximity to these spaces can result in negative feelings about one’s self and one’s future, particularly when youth-appropriated spaces – such as maskani and chaka and even visions of home – are either inaccessible (for example, homes located in distant regions of the country) or fail to deliver relief from the stresses of street life.
Chapter 6 - Geographies of power and geographies of resistance: Fighting for life and the struggle for modernity

Space is neither a dominator nor liberator – it does, however, provide a context within which occur struggles to dominate and overcome domination.

- Breithart (1984: 72)

It's not like you don't remember
The many troubles and harassment
We are still fighting
We will never run away

We are facing a war
Their weapon is an arrow
But I will go wherever I want
Even if I don’t have a gun

Life is a journey and not a joke
Look at me
I am working hard
And it's true I'll make it

Life is to search
You can be surprised
You can win the lottery

I am already mature in music
You can’t diss me
I am a real soldier
And not a new recruit

Now they agree
Those who didn’t believe it
That Albo G could be a superstar
They talked too much
And now they are quiet

And now I wear bling-bling
Of high quality
And now I dress fly
With the steam of bangi in my head
Yeah mkali wa donta

6.1 Conflicting definitions of modernity

At present, a war is being fought on the streets of Dar es Salaam over who has the right to make use of public space, and for what purposes. In October 2006, the government declared that informal street vending would no longer be allowed on the city streets, leaving thousands of people without the means to secure even a modest income. For many, the struggle for control over public space has become one of financial desperation and fear.

That place and space are socially constructed and made meaningful is a familiar concept to anthropologists. An equally urgent task is to ask ourselves how these meanings are established: who has the power to make ‘proper’ places of spaces, and who contests these various uses of space? Perhaps most importantly, we should ask ourselves what is at stake in the making of place and space.

According to those I knew, the stakes are high; whether they can conduct business on the streets can mean the difference between eating or not eating, paying school fees or dropping out, going to the hospital when ill or simply hoping for the best. I could hardly initiate a discussion with anyone involved
in street life about any topic without touching on the damage done by the government's anti-street vending policy. Several people expressed grave concerns that aggressive government action is resulting in higher levels of crime and violence on the streets of Dar es Salaam. Once peaceful spaces of informal business have become spaces of fear, violence and even death, spurred on by police intolerance and the destructive power of bulldozers sent to clear the streets and roadsides of makeshift stands and stalls.

To a large extent, this battle over public space comes down to conflicting definitions of modernity. While the government and other Tanzanian elites envision a modern, developed cityscape as one that is free of street vendors, those who engage in informal entrepreneurship envision themselves as participating in the modernity project through work on the streets (Moyer 2003). By appropriating potentially profitable interstitial spaces—such as street corners, open lots and vacant stretches of roadside—informal entrepreneurs are taking advantage of the emergent wealth in Tanzania to accrue capital and pursue meaningful lives of their own. At present, they are being largely prevented in these endeavors, with sometimes devastating consequences for health and wellness.

Space and place are sites of real struggle and emancipation; they are significant as symbols and also as part of a material, day-to-day reality in which one must secure basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, bus fare, and school fees. It is not just that young people feel badly about themselves, their lives and their futures when they are prevented from earning money on the streets; in fact, struggles over space and place can have immediate implications for the physical and mental health of those involved.

**Geographies of power**

Drawing from neo-Marxist and postmodern theory, several anthropologists have discussed space and place in the context of 'geographies of power' and 'geographies of resistance.' These concepts are useful for understanding the current situation of Dar es Salaam street youth, and for understanding the intersection between urban space and health.

*Geographies of power* refer to the ways in which space is used to differentiate between the rich and the poor, between the 'haves' and the 'have-
nots,’ or put another way, between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders.’ Geographies of power make use of ‘closed’ public spaces - including international hotels, country clubs and office high-rises - each characterized by strongly defined boundaries and a high degree of internal homogeneity (Sibley 1995). Such closed public spaces are perhaps best exemplified by what Caldeira (2000) describes as ‘fortified enclaves,’ which are privatized, enclosed and monitored spaces reserved for the upper classes. Closed public spaces are similar to De Certeau’s ‘proper’ places - both are characterized by established, permitted meanings and histories that reflect and reinforce the values and aspirations of the dominant (i.e. wealthy) group.

Figure 6.1

‘Fortified enclaves.’ The barbed wire and gated houses of Masaki and other high-income areas are a symbol of all that young street workers are excluded from, and all that they are working towards. (Photograph by Danya Fast)

Poor, marginal and homeless ‘outsiders’ who enter these closed spaces appear disruptive and deviant, provoking suspicion, intolerance and moral censure. In this way, spatial segregation is enacted to keep out people who do not fit with the shared values and aspirations of the dominant, ‘insider’ group (Sibley 1995). Essentially, the occupation and control of urban space is used to position one socioeconomic class in relation to another, and “inequality is an organizing value” (Caldeira 2000:4).

Dar es Salaam’s ‘geographies of power’ and ‘fortified enclaves’ are evident to anyone who spends enough time traversing the boundaries between the rich and the poor, or between wazungu (white people), wahindi (people of Indian descent) and waswahili (black people). In greater Dar es Salaam, spatial segregation is a highly visible reality, and was described by those young people with whom I interacted in roughly the following way: Wazungu and other rich people live in and around the large, gated estates of Masaki, the Msasani Peninsula and Oyster...
Bay, while wahindi live in and around the city center, in close proximity to their shops and businesses. Swahili people live outside the city center in uswahilini, which are crowded, low-income housing sprawls built in defiance of city planning regulations. While those that live in Masaki and the city center have easy access to the best schools and services, those in uswahilini must make do with inferior services, including government schools staffed by underqualified, underpaid and overworked teachers.

Dar es Salaam street youth are among the disruptive and deviant 'outsiders' excluded from the closed public spaces of the city center and high-income areas like Masaki. They may occupy open public spaces, such as street corners and traffic intersections, but they should never step foot into the adjacent international hotels, high-priced restaurants or high-rise office buildings. In this way, geographies of power limit the ways in which street youth can move through and make use of the city. Geographies of power influence how they feel about themselves, their lives and their futures, but particularly at present, they also determine whether they are able to secure even the basic necessities through life and work on the streets.

**Geographies of resistance**

Alternatively, geographies of resistance refer to the ways in which 'outsiders' use 'open' spaces to combat their exclusion from mainstream society. Open public spaces—such as street corners, back lots and public parks or beaches—are characterized by weakly defined, ambiguous or open boundaries, and by heterogeneous social encounters and divergent values (Sibley 1995). These open public spaces are analogous to De Certeau's in-between, liminal spaces, which can be occupied and made meaningful by diverse social

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82 For example, Beazley (2002) discusses the 'spatial strategies' employed by young, homeless women in order to blend into the Yogjakarta cityscape and avoid harassment from police and other street boys. During the daytime, the girls she worked with occupied a public park on the outskirts of the city, maintaining a group boundary around this space by congregating there in large numbers. When they took to walking the streets at night in search of food, income or romantic involvement, however, they moved in smaller units of two to three girls in order to remain invisible and avoid unwanted attention. While the girls avoided the streets altogether during the daytime, at night they were highly mobile, visiting a number of urban spaces in order to create and maintain social contacts and identify potential sources of income. Beazley argues that "by consistently moving in the margins, [the girls] ... developed a network of socio-spatial strategies in order to survive" (2002: 1666-67). These socio-spatial strategies constituted a geography of resistance, through which the girls protested and refused their exclusion from mainstream society. Their socio-spatial movements were suppressed or disrupted by the state; however, the girls were used to prosecution and respond by making use of new locations and spaces.
actors. Such city spaces can become the "off-stage social sites in which resistance is developed and codified," and where the 'hidden transcript' of the disenfranchised grows (Scott 1990: 119). Among Dar es Salaam youth, this 'hidden transcript' is encoded in street language and infuses the lyrics of freestyles and hip hop tracks. Moreover, it is inscribed on the walls of youth-appropriated places in the form of graffiti art. Spaces of resistance are created through visual representations and also through language and music. To a certain extent, urban space is being used to resist and contest the 'public transcript' of the dominant, 'insider' group.

Figure 6.2

Geographies of resistance. Musa Juma Ninja posses by some military inspired graffiti at a Kigamboni maskani. (Photograph by Danya Fast)

Spatial strategies are employed to enact geographies of resistance. It has been suggested that these strategies are carried out by individuals with a certain amount of power, who are conscious of the ultimate goals of their actions, and who expect to accrue some sort of long-term benefit from such actions (De Certeau 1984). Alternatively, spatial tactics are designed to maximize the concrete, immediate environment in which one has to operate (De Certeau 1984). Actors are conscious of the immediate benefits of their actions, and act within certain structural constraints to maximize available opportunities.

83 For example, Moyer (2004; 2003) has also discussed the spatial marginalization of young men living and working in Dar es Salaam. She observes that those who must navigate the spatial boundaries of urban centers are "intimately aware of the ways in which mechanisms of exclusion keep them on the fringes" (Moyer 2004: 119). Whether a barbed wire fence separating a golf course from the everyday pathways of the poor, or the social boundary that exists between street youth and the men whose cars they wash, masela skillfully negotiate the invisible - and not so invisible - lines of spatial segregation (Moyer 2004). They know which 'open' spaces they can use to sell merchandise, and which street corners and intersections can be transformed into businesses. Moyer concludes that the young people she worked with "constantly employ[ed] spatial tactics to improve the quality of their work and leisure." (2004: 132; emphasis added).
Based on my observations, I would argue that Dar es Salaam street youths’ actions are more accurately described as tactical rather than strategic; through mobility and elaborate social-spatial networks that require insider-knowledge to penetrate, *masela* are acting to maximize personal advantage given the present environment. Street youths’ geographies are highly transient; what I recognized is that mobility is of critical importance to maintaining social networks, finding *madili*, avoiding police, and pursuing good health. In other words, it is crucial to surviving on the streets. This *spatial tactic* can be viewed as a challenge to the *spatial strategies* employed by the state and other elites (Moyer 2003), aimed at ridding the streets of informal businesses and the entrepreneurs who run them. Dar es Salaam street youth are not resisting government control of space through outright rebellion or collective protest; rather, they are attempting to navigate geographies of power by drawing on the resources available to them. Such tactics can produce ‘spaces of hope’ (Harvey 2000) or ‘moments of freedom’ (Fabian 1998), in which a different and better future is imagined (Moyer 2003).

6.2 Acknowledging the power of space and place

In order to feel *freshi*, well, first you have to be alive.

– Omary Rashidi

Space and place are not merely useful analytical concepts for understanding the lives of young people. It is also essential that we recognize the power of space and place to shape lives and determine futures. At present, the struggle over public space in Dar es Salaam feels for many like a matter of life or death. We must recognize that “the built environment is not a neutral stage for the unfolding of social relations” (Caldeira 2000: 298), and that this can have real implications for health and wellness.

Geographies of power restrict movement through urban space, and influence the quality of social interactions that take place between those classified as ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders.’ These social interactions – for example, between a

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84 Moyer (2004) concludes that the street youth she worked with employed *spatial tactics* in order to navigate geographies of power, while Beazley (2002) discusses *spatial strategies* and geographies of resistance. Both arguments are compelling, but we must be aware that in many contexts, describing street youths’ use of space and place as ‘geographies of resistance’ – or even as spatial ‘strategies’ – may be to commit what has been aptly labeled ‘the romance of resistance’ (see Abu-Lughod 1990).
well-dressed, well-fed upper-class business man and the impoverished *msela* he angrily pushes past on his way home from work - are embodied and affect how young people feel in particular urban spaces and places. In their day-to-day lives, street youth feel better or worse about themselves, their lives and their futures depending on the spaces and places they frequent, and the nature of social interactions within them.

Perhaps even more importantly, however, geographies of power also influence the extent to which the poor are able to make use of urban space and place in order to secure basic necessities such as food, clothing, bus fare, school fees and shelter. When street youth are prevented from engaging in informal business on the streets, their physical health suffers, and they also suffer from heightened anxiety and confusion regarding the conditions of their lives and the uncertainty of their future.

Of course, geographies of power do not determine social interactions absolutely; within the city, “there is always room for diverse and sometimes subversive appropriations of spaces” (Caldeira 2000: 298). Spatial tactics - such as mobility and extensive social networking - are employed in order to meet needs in spite of geographies of power. Sometimes, spatial strategies - such as the graffiti art and slogans inscribed on building walls, or the subversive hip hop lyrics spoken in *maskani* - are enacted in order to combat one’s exclusion from mainstream society, resulting in geographies of resistance that are encoded in the language of streetwise slang. Geographies of power restrict movement through urban space, but geographies of resistance and spatial tactics enable movement - in both the literal and symbolic senses. To what extent street youth are able to successfully enact geographies of resistance - or in a more limited way, employ spatial tactics - influences overall feelings of self worth, and the extent to which young people can secure those material things that are necessary for survival and wellness on the streets.
Chapter 7 - Giving youth space

I believe that all masela who have money did not get it easily. All have struggled to get money. So even us, we can struggle now to get money one day. Some people are born with money, and others have to struggle. Us, we have to struggle, but majita,85 we don't have to lose hope.

- Evander Lee

7.1 The ethnography of lived topographies86

The ethnography of lived topographies calls for the use of space and place as framing concepts for the study of human experience, interaction and meaning-making. One goal of this thesis has been to illustrate that such an ethnographic endeavor is a worthy one.

We have seen that the view of street youth as 'children out-of-place' is far too simplistic. As anthropologists, we need to look not only at how street youth may be uprooted, unrooted, out-of-place or outside of the processes through which space and place are constructed. We must focus equally on how homeless street youth make use of and experience space and place in everyday life; how they may be simultaneously in-place as well as out-of-place on the streets of urban centers.

particularly, we can focus on the construction of space, or on the shared and private meanings that are generated from 'nowhere' places and in-between spaces (De Certeau 1984) through social interaction and imagination. Liminal, indeterminate spaces without literally inscribed meanings and histories can become sites of enjoyment and new possibilities. It is within these spaces that street youth construct their own understandings of what is means to be poor and successful, young and modern, healthy and unhealthy.

Also, we can focus on human connection to place, or more specifically, on the extent to which lived relationships with place are embodied and powerfully inform self-identity. Places are lived, known, remembered, yearned for, imagined, voiced, contested and struggled over (Feld & Basso 1996; Casey 1996). The emplacement of human interaction and meaning-making is useful for

85 Friends
86 Taken from Basso (1996: 58)
understanding why street youth feel the best in the spaces and places within which their subcultural capital – or the forms of knowledge and skills particular to youth street culture – holds the most value.

Figure 7.1
Meaningful spaces. Mussa Juma Ninja and Kindo Emanuel pose with Che Guevara at a Kigamboni masakani. (Photograph by Danya Fast)

A focus on young people’s ability to “fracture public space and reinvent or even bypass it” raises new and important questions (De Boeck & Honwana 2005: 1); however, it must be accompanied by an ongoing consideration of the socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and historical forces that powerfully shape experiences of space and place for those living on the fringes of urban society. In spite of resilience and health-seeking strategies that include the creative use of space, the adverse outcomes of life on the street – whether physical, psychological or emotional – are well documented (Veale et al. 2000; Raffaelli 1999; Scanlon et al. 1998; Wright 1990a; 1990b).

Thus, an additional goal of this thesis has been to show that space and place are not only useful analytical concepts. At present, Dar es Salaam street youth are being forced off the streets by an aggressive anti-street vending policy and the police hired to enforce it. The state of the world we live in has led many to argue for the primacy of place and space as sites of power struggle, contestation and resistance. In Dar es Salaam and elsewhere, the processes of globalization, modernization and urbanization have greatly impacted spatial organization in city centers. Overwhelmingly, these processes
have resulted in uneven development and heightened spatial segregation; public space is used to differentiate between the rich and the poor, or between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots,' and to signal a state-sponsored commitment to modernity. We must recognize that this spatial segregation has real and immediate implications for the health and wellness of young people living and working on the streets.

Figure 7.2

Spaces of health. A group of kids play a game of football at maskani pece (peace). (Photograph by Danya Fast)

The challenge for an ethnography of lived topographies is to balance a focus on the role of power in shaping experiences of space and place with a commitment to situate those experiences within the bodies of people with feelings and desires (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003). We need to be aware of how geographies of power shape everyday realities of health and wellness among those who live and work on the streets; at the same time, we should look at how street youth appropriate and make use of space and place to meet needs, and at how experiences of health and wellness may be multiple and shifting, depending on the kinds of spaces and places frequented.
7.2 In the name of ‘international development’: giving youth space

[In English] We are a poor country, but we have many rich people. On the streets, we are fighting for money, and fighting for our lives. If I could have the chance to meet the government, I would sit with the president, and tell him all of the troubles of street boys. I would tell him that I think the government forgot us.

- Kindo Emanuel

Figure 7.3
Finding space. Kamisi Julius, Kindo Emanuel and two young street boys do their homework on the hood of a car at maskani Amazoni. (Photograph by Musa Juma Ninja)

I have argued that space and place are useful analytical tools, but equally important, we must recognize that - in Dar es Salaam and elsewhere - the struggle for space and place can be a matter of life or death, or at least a matter of eating or not eating.

Couched in the rhetoric of international development and empowerment, we often hear calls for ‘the creation of spaces for youth.’ Indeed, I have been a part of development projects aimed at doing just that. Based on my experiences in Dar es Salaam, however, I would argue that what we need is not always to create spaces for youth; rather, in Tanzania and perhaps elsewhere, we would do well to allow youth to access some of the space they need to pursue their own definitions of a meaningful life - definitions that hardly vary from those of mainstream society. When I asked young people what they would do if one day they won the lottery, the majority responded by outlining a relatively well thought-out business plan. If we truly want to help marginalized youth, then perhaps we should assist at least some of them in pursuing what are in many cases sound plans for a better future. I am not suggesting that we simply give young people money and then allow them to do as they please on the streets of...
downtown Dar. Young people do need various kinds of assistance - not all money-related - in order to establish viable businesses and other enterprises.

It is time we recognize that youth are capable of creating their own spaces, and of regulating conduct within them. Oftentimes, what they need is to be facilitated and not hindered in this process. If given the opportunity to create, or even participate in the creation of, new spaces of business for example, the results may be encouraging and have positive implications for a significant number of young people. Masela all over Dar es Salaam are already connected to each other through an elaborate social-spatial network; by helping youth to turn some of these spaces into more permanent, established centers of activity, we would be facilitating the development of something that could reach and meaningfully assist a large number of young people. At the very least, I hope I have demonstrated that in order to ‘help’ street youth achieve better health and wellness, we need to first learn how to listen to young people and to better understand how they articulate and prioritize their concerns.

7.2 Leaving Bongo

It’s noon and we all gather around the laptop to view a draft of the thesis. The sun is shining as usual and one of the ten Bongo Flava hits on constant repeat over here plays in the background. I leave in less than 24 hours. Saying goodbye seems impossible, but after just three short months in the field it is time to leave.

Kindo, Ema, Dotto, Emanuely, Gideon, Baraka, Ninja, Evander, Albo G, Khamisi, Omray and Chimo are all here with me. Kindo has brought the front and back covers; his creativity and artistic skill are outstanding. After Heri finishes giving them a final overview of the content in Swahili, I watch the boys’ faces as they view their photography, artwork and hip hop rhymes amidst the text and headings. The commitment and insight that each of them has demonstrated in approaching this project still amazes me. I can see that they are proud of their contributions. Before I have the chance to get too emotional in front of these streetwise hustlers, I suggest to them that we end with one more freestyling session. I pull out my camera to start filming. Albo G, Baraka, Chimo, Ninja and Omray have already started warming up their vocals with what are now familiar rhymes and choruses.
Later in the evening I am in a local bar. The rich notes of the Islamic call to prayer waft through the air and echo across the city, as different Mosques click on their loudspeakers and prepare to call an end to another day. It is time for me to say goodbye to my assistants, Athumani and Heri. I can’t imagine this project without them. I remember my first days in Dar, hopping alongside Athumani in and around the crowded streets of Kariakoo and babbling on in broken Swahili, while he fended off potential pickpockets and orchestrated everything with ease. And then a few weeks later we met Heri at my home in Mwembe Chai uswahilini - he was then so quiet and shy. I think of all that we have gone through since: so many arguments, and so much laughter.

If there is one thing I can take from my time in Tanzania, it is that so often there is no fairness in life. I will fly away to Amsterdam to finalize and defend this thesis, before flying home to Canada to find a job or pursue further studies, while the young men I spent three months working with stay in Tanzania, fighting for a life and a future that each of them deserves but is so far from certain. All of this is simply a matter of luck, a spin of the wheel in the cosmic order of things. To ‘fairly’ compensate those who have contributed to this project is impossible. For me, this thesis - this degree - will unlock opportunities in any country I chose to live in. For them, it has been a chance to express their views and to demonstrate the talent and creativity that goes largely unrewarded in a place where opportunities continue to be few.

These are the things I am thinking as I board the plane and prepare to return to the Netherlands. I hope I have adequately expressed my gratitude towards these young men. I hope that the hours of work I put into writing this piece has begun to do justice to all that they shared with me. It is only by telling these stories in ways that can be heard and felt that perhaps things will start to change, that we who have so much will begin to fight for a world in which others can have a fraction of what we take for granted everyday. I want to believe that each young person who was involved in this project will manage to successfully fight for a meaningful life on the streets, despite so many obstacles. Most of all, I want to believe that each of the msela who introduced me to Dar es Salaam’s streets, and welcomed me into their maskani and into their lives, will be able to stay healthy until that time when I am able to return to Bongo, and greet them again.
Apu Apa
Don’t be surprised
This is the gangster life
Watoto wa mama they can’t do like we do
Watoto wa mama you will get a surprise
Every time we are chilling with chicks

But I am talking about life niger
When am I going to get up out of this life?
Every morning I wake up
And it is worse than yesterday
I have to pound mpaka dolla 87
So that I can get up out of this life of kisela

I have no work to do or job
Yet I am so fast
This is a street education
Even hip hop’s stars they will get a surprise
So don’t be surprised

Apu Apa
Watoto wa mama don’t talk
When you see us roaming the streets of the center
You think we are kudata
But it is this life that forces us to do like we do
But one day we too would like to be
Running while sitting 88

This life does not allow
us to do so
But I am going fast
And I will not give up
I’m still a youth
So I will fight until the end
And that is why Solota
I am still suffering for the good life

And that’s why
Solota I am still suffering
And that’s why
Solota I am still suffering
Sometimes life is tight
Sometimes it changes
And that’s why
I’m not giving up
I’m still fighting
I’m going fast
I’m going mjerajera

Sometimes I win
Sometimes I lose
But one day god will send me something

- Emanuely ‘Solota’ Rodeck

87 I.e. to change British pounds to American dollars; to make a lot of money
88 I.e. moving fast in a car; driving
No one lives in the world in general. Everybody, even the exiled, the drifting, the diasporic, or the perpetually moving, lives in some confined and limited stretch of it - 'the world around here.'

- Clifford Geertz (2006: 262)

Ubiquitously accepted as natural, normal, and unexceptional... sense of place rests its case on the unexamined premise that being from somewhere is always preferable to being from nowhere. All of us, it asserts, are generally better off with a place to call our own.

- Keith Basso (1996: 87)
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Appendix A

Constellations of meaning. The inability to do mishemishe is at the center of what it means to be unhealthy as a young man on the streets of Dar es Salaam.
Appendix B

Constellations of meaning. The ability to do mishemishe is at the core of what it means to be healthy as a young man on the streets of Dar es Salaam.