THE WEIGHTLESS STATE: PowerPoint and the Everyday Work of Making Senegal Matter

CAROLINE MELLY
Smith College
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1404-7585

With a deep sigh, I looked up from my laptop and surveyed my surroundings. Scattered across my desk were disheveled piles of brochures, World Bank reports, a battered notebook, and Xeroxed masters theses. My laptop screen, too, was littered with dozens of open files and websites, including an online repository, accessed via intranet, that contained hundreds of archived PowerPoint files and other institutional documents. In this sea of materials, it was hard to keep my own file—and my broader mission—straight. Just a few weeks earlier, in March of 2006, I had begun a *stage* (internship) at APIX, Senegal's national investment-promotion agency.[1] Housed in an elegantly appointed building just a few blocks from the president's residence, APIX fashioned itself as the vanguard of state governance and innovative policymaking in contemporary Senegal. It thus seemed an ideal ethnographic site from which to consider the re-making of the state after structural adjustment, a state that was paradoxically configured as both a hindrance to and a medium for neoliberal economic reform in Africa. I had been particularly interested in probing the substance of the state: in making ethnographic sense of how state officials made their institution, their mission, and their own daily work tangible and present in an era of largely eroded state power and legitimacy.

With this ambition in mind, I had spent the first several weeks of my *stage* shadowing staff members, studying reports and promotional materials, and familiarizing myself with office routines and investment regulations. After I settled into my makeshift desk, Elhadji, my supervisor and new office mate, gave me my first official assignment: to assemble a PowerPoint presentation for his upcoming presentation to potential investors in South Africa. To produce the presentation, I had to log onto the agency's password-protected intranet archive. This heavily trafficked online repository was filled with hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of PowerPoint files, composed in almost a dozen languages, including French, Arabic, English, Spanish, and Italian. The slides described APIX's founding and mission, the agency's structure and investment procedures, and its grand projections for economic growth. Many of the slides proved remarkably uniform in content and design, echoing the same tale of a streamlined state and an economy ripe for investment. Yet they also contained fascinating discrepancies and inaccuracies: national and household economic statistics and general population estimates varied widely, for instance, as did anticipated dates for Senegal's economic "emergence," information about the dependability of electricity and other infrastructures, and details about investment sectors. It was not just the repository that was overwhelming; though I never admitted it to Elhadji at the time, in truth I had never even used PowerPoint before arriving at APIX. And so I found myself scrambling that afternoon not only to piece together incompatible economic data and find ethnographic footing in the hectic office but also to grasp the basics of this unfamiliar presentation program.

Sensing my mounting frustration, Elhadji came to stand beside me. A charismatic man in his mid-forties, Elhadji had a quick wit and spoke English with an accent that might easily be mistaken as American. His parents had worked for the United Nations when he was a child, so he had moved around the African continent frequently. After finishing lycée (French-style high school) in Dakar, his family had assumed that he would follow in his father's footsteps and head to France to study, just as many of his peers were doing at the time. But Elhadji saw himself as an intellectual trendsetter and instead persuaded his parents to send him to university in Canada. After completing his degree, he worked in the private sector in Canada and then briefly in California, where he honed his skills as a captivating presenter and savvy businessman. By the time he arrived at the embryonic APIX in the early years of the new millennium, he had built a reputation as an innovator and a PowerPoint guru of sorts. And so, with the air of a seasoned guide, Elhadji put a firm hand on my shoulder and offered some advice. By this point, he had

spent several days patiently fielding my questions, guiding my searches, putting me in touch with colleagues, and directing me back to the online repository. But as his eyes scanned the physical and virtual clutter that surrounded me, he could tell I was still adrift. "It's simple, Caroline," he coached me. "Above all, our job is just to guide the investor. No one will want to invest if the structure appears heavy [*lourd*]. So keep things lightweight [*léger*]."

Though I did not realize it at the time, this mentoring exchange would come to shape my thinking about state-making and technological development in contemporary Senegal. APIX is a relatively small but influential state agency charged with mediating between (mostly foreign) investors and the Senegalese ministry system, frequently cast by foreigners and Senegalese alike as cumbersome and opaque. It is a quintessential information-age bureaucracy (see Dean 2002): staff members' routines revolve around the collection, consolidation, packaging, and distribution of information, framed as an unequivocal social good that can pave the way for economic investment and, by extension, a deepening of democratic governance. During my time there, employees spent their days meeting with potential investors and assisting them with paperwork, perfecting presentations for trips abroad, sketching investment "roadmaps," and collaborating with offices and agencies across the city and beyond. By keeping things "lightweight," as Elhadji had admonished me to do, my colleagues managed to extract, bundle, and circulate information more quickly, widely, and effectively and, in turn, to project a particular vision of the Senegalese state. Administrators and staff thus worked relentlessly to rid their office spaces, investment pitches, and organizational structures of bulk and clutter. PowerPoint, I quickly realized, proved critical to this effort. The program's design demanded that staff members condense complex truths about Senegal's economy and state into crisp bullet points. And it allowed for a performance and circulation of that information that broke with colonial-era bureaucratic conventions, rendering information transportable and ephemeral.

Taking Elhadji's advice seriously, this article traces the ascendancy of weightlessness as an aspirational material property in this information-driven bureaucracy. During the past two decades, anthropologists have written extensively about the "tyranny of transparency" (Strathern 2000) that has come to shape bureaucratic cultures and social life more broadly. They have documented how various instruments and techniques used to generate transparency—from digital mapping projects in Nairobi's slums (Poggiali 2016) to e-governance strategies in India (Mazzarella 2006)—in fact produce uneven and often paradoxical effects (see also Ballestero 2012; Hetherington 2011; Hull 2012b; Sharma 2013; Thomson

2012; West and Sanders 2003). By highlighting the instability of transparency as an institutional goal and cultural concept, this body of scholarship also illuminates the ways in which contemporary governance is inextricable from both the ideological and material realities of media and technology. In Senegal, the tension between what is seen or disclosed (*zahir*) and what is hidden or not visible (*batin*)—both concepts borrowed from Arabic—has long animated religious and social life (Buggenhagen 2010, 2014; Roberts and Roberts 2003). Concerns with transparency and opacity certainly stood at the forefront of APIX's agenda and routines. But it was my colleagues' keen attention to weightlessness, transparency's twin property, one might say, that caught my attention. If we define transparency as the "visual quality that an object is said to have if one can see beyond it to something of greater interest—in this case, information" (Hetherington 2011, 153), we might think of *weightlessness* as the material quality that makes this information transportable, transferrable, and consumable.

My conceptualization of weightlessness builds on the work of Tim Ingold (2007), who writes against scholarly tendencies to theorize materiality without attending carefully to materials and their properties. For Ingold, properties are not innate and objective attributes of things, but rather emerge relationally in the flux of everyday life and over time. "In that sense," he explains, "every quality is a condensed story. To describe the properties of materials is to tell the stories of what happens to them as they flow, mix, and mutate" (Ingold 2007, 14). In this essay, then, I approach weightlessness as a history of relations and transformations that have deep and consequential effects. That history, I argue, has something important to tell us about how technological development, postcolonial statecraft, and business cultures enmesh over time in unexpected ways. I begin by situating both PowerPoint and the APIX state form within the same geohistorical current. I consider how weightlessness emerged within this current as a persuasive and desirable property, and I then trace how efforts to coax forth weightlessness shape everyday state practice and media forms. Throughout the essay, I pay careful attention to the relentless fluctuations in material substance and heft that characterized PowerPoint practice.

Two important insights emerge. First, it becomes clear that PowerPoint is not simply a technology *of* the state, a means of communicating *about* the state, deployed *by* the state. Instead, I argue here that this ascendant state form and this banal office software are in fact inextricable from each other. To tell the story of PowerPoint's emergence in Senegal, then, also means to tell the story of state restructuring, global migration, bureaucratic documentation regimes, and the

resilience of oral performance. It also means to take seriously Brenda Chalfin's (2010) admonition that we carefully consider the ways in which state authority and presence have been dramatically transformed by decades of austerity and open market reforms, rather than assume a temporality of decay and decline (see also Boone 1990; Clark 2005; Elyachar 2005; Hibou 2004; Roitman 2005). My vantage point within APIX offered particular insights into the emergent role of states as "entrepreneurial subjects" responsible for branding the nation to attract global capital (Graan 2013), an increasingly pervasive phenomenon throughout the Global North and South (Badaró 2020; Jansen 2008; Kaneva 2011; Manning 2010). As institutions like APIX crop up in Africa and around the world—there are in fact hundreds of affiliated investment agencies of this sort—we require careful ethnographic work to understand how local and global imperatives, histories, and vocabularies are melded and fused to produce new state forms, and how these emergent governing bodies come to shape policy and engage internationally.

Second, we come to see that these technologies and governing structures are not merely imported from the Global North, reinterpreted and adapted for use in the Global South. Instead, by placing their work squarely in the flux and flow of these material exchanges, APIX staff members cast themselves as legitimate experts, subverting narratives that presume Africa's peripherality to the grand narrative of technological and political innovation. In this way, Elhadji's instructive words and guiding hand subtly reiterated my status as an apprentice within this global workspace and recentered APIX as a hub of knowledge production and instruction. Proceeding from this perspective, this essay considers what we might learn about state-making, technological development, and African innovation by training our ethnographic gaze on everyday efforts to "keep things lightweight."

ORIGIN STORIES

First unveiled by Microsoft in 1990, PowerPoint is now reportedly installed on more than 1 billion computers around the world (Parks 2012, np). It began to take shape in the 1980s, when self-proclaimed creator Robert Gaskins and his colleagues fused the logics and aesthetics of 35mm slide presentations, flip charts, and overhead transparencies with the emergent capacity of Windows and Macintosh computing systems to build a program that designed transparencies for laser printing (Gaskins 2012, 120–22). By the early 1990s, it had evolved into a rudimentary graphics program that prepared identically formatted slides for projection using a computer. PowerPoint's swift advance marked the culmination of rapid advancements in personal computing, growing sets of complex data, and institutional

imperatives to synthesize and repackage information for an interdisciplinary audience. Not only were users able to streamline complexity to communicate across departmental or institutional boundaries using PowerPoint, but the files were easily portable and thus facilitated local and even global collaboration, exchange, and movement. One of its most notable innovations, according to Gaskins (2012, 85), was that it empowered the presenter to take individual control over the presentation. No longer was there a need to rely on assistants or other intermediaries to tediously produce 35mm slides or transparencies by hand. Instead, individual users could themselves tinker with ready-made templates, trim unruly data into tidy bullet points, and import clip art for visual effect. What resulted was a novel way of bundling information into "presentations," the cornerstone of business culture beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, according to Gaskins. And so, by the 1990s, PowerPoint had cemented itself as "a cog in the great machine," becoming a global powerhouse with 95 percent market control (Parker 2001). What once was an underdog startup venture with dubious economic potential had quickly solidified into a standard mode of communication adopted by national governments, international and nongovernmental organizations, educators, and private-sector firms around the world.

Yet while PowerPoint is an indisputably pervasive feature of many anthropologists' field and worksites, there has been scant ethnographic research on this program, its artifacts and performances, and its powerful effects on institutional life and the production of knowledge.[2] If we do not entirely "see right through" PowerPoint slides and practices as users and researchers, counting on them to quickly and transparently convey information, we typically dismiss them as hopelessly reductive and uncreative, or as a troubling sign of the increasing corporatization of our work environments and routines.[3] During my early days at APIX, I likewise gave very little thought to PowerPoint's material and ideological ascendancy at the agency. I suppose I had imagined the program as a straightforward Western import that had arrived there belatedly, carried to Dakar along a current of refurbished keyboards, modems, and floppy disks, or tucked into the briefcase of an expatriate employed at an international organization in the city. Much of the scholarly and popular literature on the rise of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Africa has described precisely this kind of North-South diffusion.[4] In such accounts, Africa frequently figures as a vibrant secondhand market for electronic goods or as a site of technological reconfiguration, but not necessarily of primary invention or production, a point Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (2017) makes clear in the introduction to his edited volume on Africa and technology. Driven

by material lack, infrastructural instability, and cultural ingenuity, enterprising Africans adapt Western devices, platforms, and practices to local contexts, indigenizing their meanings and functions, elaborating unexpected possibilities, and repositioning Africa as a continent on the brink of economic, political, and technological transformation (Archambault 2017; Burrell 2012; de Bruijn 2009; Donner 2007). Julie Soleil Archambault (2017), for instance, has demonstrated the complexities of technological uptake in urban Mozambique, exploring young people's ambivalent but ingenious incorporation of cell phones into their everyday lives and relationships. In the hands of these youth, technology designed elsewhere takes on very specific local meanings and purposes, and both technology and intimacy are altered in the process. Likewise, Jonathan Donner's (2007) work explores the strategic use of cell phone "missed calls" to communicate predetermined messages, pointing at the capacity of Rwandans' technological practice to shake up cell-phone design and marketing practices more broadly.[5]

These frameworks offer an essential theoretical and political intervention, restoring agency to African users, but they did not prove particularly helpful for making sense of my APIX colleagues' engagements with PowerPoint. For those with whom I worked, PowerPoint had not made its way belatedly to the African continent, and APIX staff were not simply putting a Senegalese touch on an imported Western invention. Quite to the contrary, APIX executives described themselves and their agency as intimately implicated in PowerPoint's emergence. Just as PowerPoint was gathering form and taking off in the 1980s and 1990s, so, too, were structural adjustment reforms in Senegal. These reforms would help spur the creation of APIX in later decades, but they first dismantled legacies of dependable public-sector employment, spurred rapid urbanization, and sharply devalued the regional currency, sparking economic and social upheaval (Melly 2017). As a direct result, migration abroad intensified, especially to the United States (Diop 2008; Riccio 2005). This was particularly the case for cosmopolitan elites like Elhadji, who used their economic advantage to (temporarily) escape conditions at home, fueling *la fuite des cerveaux* (brain drain) from the continent. With few exceptions, APIX's top-level administrators had attended university in the United States, Canada, or France during this time, where they studied business, finance, international development, English, or marketing.[6] After completing their degrees, most of them accepted positions in various private-sector offices and worked for several years before returning to Senegal. It was within these companies that APIX employees first encountered and contributed to an embryonic PowerPoint culture, honing skills, developing vocabularies, and accumulating experiences that they
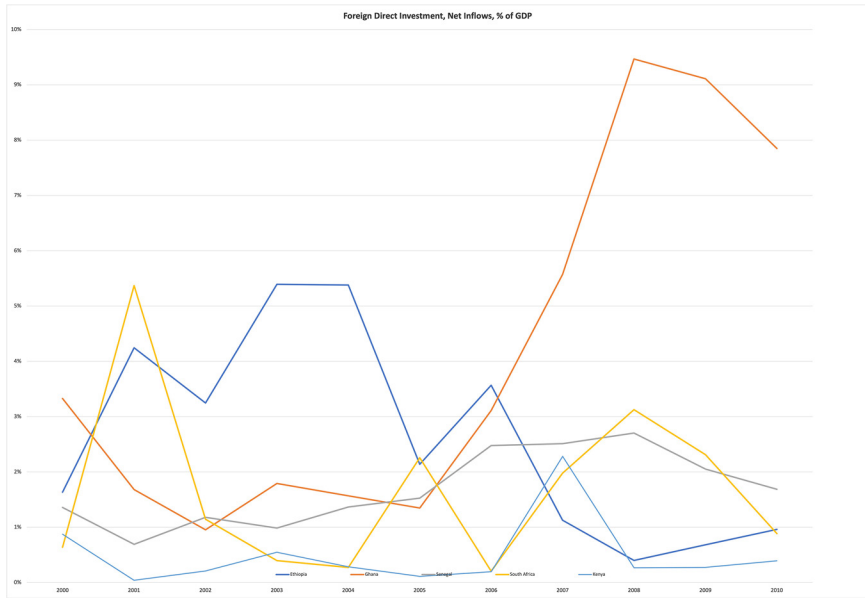
would come to draw on later. And it was there—in the Senegalese diaspora—where they began to reconsider what both the Senegalese state and bureaucratic work could look like.[7]

Many of my APIX colleagues felt impelled to return to Senegal after the landmark election of President Abdoulaye Wade in 2000. Wade's political ascendancy marked the end of forty years of single-party rule, and it ushered in a new era of national optimism built on intensified neoliberal reform (see Diouf 2013). Launched just months after Wade's election, APIX was one of the most visible instantiations of these aspirations. It was a hybrid institution of sorts: it was assembled by the World Bank using an existing template, built on the remnants of an earlier state program, and situated outside Senegal's conventional ministry system, with the agency's director general and her staff reporting directly to the president rather than a minister.[8] The agency is currently a member of the World Bank Group's Multinational Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). MIGA member organizations throughout the world, currently totaling more than four hundred (not all of which are affiliated with nation-states), are given access to expertise and resources aimed at creating, maintaining, and promoting a business-friendly environment in any context. A quick glance at a handful of websites managed by other MIGA members reveals the profound similarity in approach and form shared by member organizations—from the "one-stop-shop" concept to the designation and promotion of "priority sectors." Thus, APIX is at once culturally distinct, tethered tightly to Senegalese democratic traditions and structures, and yet astonishingly similar in form to many other contemporary offices like it. In their presentations, APIX executives spoke little of the World Bank's role, preferring to celebrate the agency as an achievement of the Senegalese state, even as they adopted global priorities and vocabularies to deliver these presentations.

Luring investment to Senegal—a country with scant natural resources, a largely "unskilled" labor force, and relatively few proficient English speakers—was no easy task. With so many developing countries "opened up" by pro-market reforms during the past two decades, it was challenging to convince foreign investors to build an enterprise in Senegal when they could invest in more developed and promising markets. During the time of my *stage* and in the years that followed, foreign direct-investment (FDI) rates thus remained relatively flat and accounted for a tiny proportion of the country's gross domestic product (see Figure 1), as was the case even in African countries with more established foreign-investment circuits. What did set Senegal apart, my colleagues believed, were its strong democratic traditions and its long-standing commitment to regulatory reforms. And

so APIX executives focused their efforts on simplifying legal codes, streamlining processes, and devising ways to "accompany the investor" through an unfamiliar and assumedly precarious economic terrain.

Figure 1. Foreign Direct Investment (2000–2010), net inflows (percentage of GDP), comparing Senegal with Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Ghana. Data courtesy of World Bank Indicator. Figure courtesy of Doug Wright.

My APIX interlocutors quickly identified PowerPoint as central to this work. "We have always used PowerPoint here," Elhadji boasted during my initial tour of the headquarters. PowerPoint, he explained, offered an ideal means of organizing and relaying information for potential investors, who themselves were presumed adept users. So convinced was he of the transformative potential of the software that Elhadji had even brought in a PowerPoint "expert" to hold a workshop for staff members during the agency's infancy. The consultant introduced them to particular aesthetic conventions, suggesting things like the standardized use of a singular, clear font that would make slides legible to the audience. "This also allows us to share the slides within the office more easily," he added. APIX staff members adopted these suggestions with zeal, Elhadji recounted, certain that this routinized and standardized aesthetic would streamline office practice and extend the agency's reach. At the same time, employees saw PowerPoint as a platform for experimentation, one that enabled them to assert their personal styles and business acumen in globally legible ways. PowerPoint file making was nothing like the more

mundane bureaucratic tasks of filling in forms or writing formal letters, Elhadji insisted to me. As another colleague, Moussa, explained, "PowerPoint allows me to apply my skills. I couldn't do this kind of creative work in a ministry office." PowerPoint, in other words, signaled a new kind of aspirational state practice, one centered (at least ostensibly) on creativity, innovation, and extrovertedness, rather than on rote form-following and provincialized state politics. It enabled staff members to link postcolonial governance with technology and business culture in visible and tangible ways.

Writing about various ruined architectural landmarks of postwar Monrovia, Liberia, Danny Hoffman (2017, 87) has argued that modernist architecture "belongs in and to African cities no less than to cities anywhere on the planet." Monrovia's monumental spaces—and their excesses, aspirations, and inaccessibilities—are not peripheral to the modernist project, but rather integral to and constitutive of it. Similarly, my APIX colleagues did not see PowerPoint as an imported tool that they belatedly adopted and vernacularized to suit their African environs. Instead, they imagined themselves as contributing in early and important ways to the program's global ascendancy. As they tinkered with a fledgling PowerPoint program in offices and institutions throughout the diaspora, future APIX executives were in fact experimenting with modes of working, collaborating, and presenting ideas that they would soon use to reimagine the Senegalese state. "I always knew I would return to Senegal," said Sidi, whom everyone called "the American" for his tall stature and years spent living in the United States. "And so I learned as much as I could [in the United States] so I could build things here." This perspective forces a crucial shift: "Instead of being a mere user," Mavhunga (2014, 16) has persuasively argued in his work on African technological development, "the African becomes a designer who makes technology, not just someone who appropriates or (mis)uses incoming technology." Diasporic networks become critical "transient workspaces," borrowing from Mavhunga, in which innovators work out global technological futures.

It was amid these frenetic encounters and transfers that weight began to emerge as a distinctly consequential property, one that could determine how effectively and expansively information could move across institutional and nation-state boundaries, and how, in turn, the Senegalese state was perceived as a global actor. These preoccupations with weight were informed by international discourse about economic development and good governance, by everyday engagement with technologies like PowerPoint, and by national anxieties and aspirations. They were also implicitly shaped, perhaps, by cultural conceptions that linked heaviness (*diis*)

with difficulty and burden, and lightness (*woyof*) with openness and friendliness, though my colleagues never articulated these connections in any precise way.[9] In what follows, I examine how APIX staff members coax forth weightlessness and to what effect.

COAXING WEIGHTLESSNESS

Situated on a quiet, tree-lined street a short walk from the presidential palace, APIX's stately headquarters stands as a testament to a new kind of African state. Many Senegalese ministries are housed in aging independence-era structures that are dimly lit, poorly ventilated, and sparsely furnished. People from various economic and social backgrounds shuffle through these spaces each day, as they file petitions, pay fees, seek official stamps, or request documents. In stark contrast, APIX's headquarters is not open to the general public; visitors must have a prearranged appointment to proceed past the uniformed guards at the agency's entrance (see Figure 2). By signaling out and catering to a global elite, these spaces make a bold statement about the level of attention and care an investor—not the country's citizenry as a whole—can expect from the Senegalese government. Once inside, guests sip Nescafé and browse glossy brochures in the reception area, where contemporary paintings by renowned local artists share wall space with brightly colored posters promoting Senegal as an ideal investment destination. Heavy doors lead into the main services area, called the "One-Stop Shop" (Le Guichet Unique), where a young and predominantly female staff interfaces directly with potential and current investors (see Figure 2). Here, blank forms and promotional materials are kept in short, neat stacks on meticulously ordered shelves. Investor dossiers are filed away out of sight; a few are discreetly pulled out at a time and kept in small tidy stacks on desks or photocopied, reviewed, and replaced. In adjoining offices, representatives from various government bodies—including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finances and Budget (MEFP), the Ministry of Labor, and the African Organization for Intellectual Property (OAPI), and Customs—circulate in and out throughout the day, dispensing expertise, collecting documents, and issuing approval at various points in the investment process. A short hallway leads to the agency's "documentation center," a small but welcoming space that boasts elegant shelves filled with World Bank documents, brightly colored promotional materials, master's theses, and quarterly reports, all tidily ordered and perpetually weeded out. To the left, a sweeping staircase leads to spacious upstairs conference rooms and amply appointed administrators' offices. Here, too, paperwork is largely contained from view, filed away in cabinets or stored in digital form.

Figure 2. Entrance to the Agence pour la promotion des investissements et des grands travaux (Agency for the Promotion of Investments and Major Works, or APIX) headquarters.

These open layouts are intended to appeal to an international clientele, promote teamwork among senior staff members, and enable collaboration with representatives from other public and private-sector offices throughout the city. "Team members" are expected to work together on projects, to troubleshoot when problems arise, and to "do a little bit of everything," in the words of one staff member, rather than focus solely on their own workload and duties. In our conversations, APIX staff took pride in the fact that meetings at the agency began on time, deadlines were firm, and standards of performance were exacting, "just like in American corporations." One employee described to me the great satisfaction he gained from working for an organization where results were "immediate and visible" in ways they would not be within a ministry office.

I spent much of my time among the agency's airy and fluid second-floor offices. I shared an office with Elhadji, PowerPoint facilitator extraordinaire, and Moussa, a young, tech-savvy associate who worked on the communications team. Moussa was excited to be able to translate his skills in marketing and design into state work—tinkering with layouts for promotional materials, helping produce radio advertisements, collaborating on translations, and, of course, assembling PowerPoint presentations. "APIX is constantly working to anticipate the future and to figure out what tools we need to communicate effectively with the public," Moussa explained early in my tenure at the agency. This stood in stark contrast to typical state offices, which he and his colleagues perpetually cast as slow to innovate. On one particular afternoon, Moussa was busily preparing to launch a new initiative that would use text messages (SMS) to alert investors, media, and other relevant parties about APIX developments or upcoming events. This strategy, he

proclaimed, would enable the agency to "occupy space" (*occuper l'espace*) in entirely new ways. In contrast to posters or newspaper advertisements of yore, text messages transmitted information in targeted, sophisticated, and relevant ways. They permeated networks effectively and dissipated quickly, leaving behind no material trace.

APIX's streamlined spaces and Moussa's text-messaging campaign, I argue, form part of a broader effort to transform the materiality of bureaucracy at the agency. Paperwork is, perhaps, the most salient sign of bureaucratic life (Gupta 2012, 143; see also Hull 2012a; Weber 2009), and it was a sign that deeply troubled APIX staff members. As a spate of rich ethnographic work has explored, documentary practices are a crucial technique for imposing rational order and cultivating modern habits and institutions, particularly in colonial and postcolonial contexts (Das and Poole 2004; Gitelman 2014; Göpfert 2013; Gordillo 2006; Hull 2012a, 2012b; Navaro-Yashin 2007; Tarlo 2003; Weber 2009). For Bruno Latour (1986), documents achieve these feats by "deflating" vast troves of information, much of it contradictory or complexly nuanced, into tight paragraphs, tidy charts, and clean graphs. It is through the process of inscription, as Latour calls it, that the document itself—and not the complex practices, technologies, relationships, and negotiations it distills and encodes—comes to have social worth, agency, and mobility. Inscription thus involves a distillation and physical compression of the material record, which enables, in turn, a more effective circulation of information. PowerPoint, I argue, plays a key role at APIX in continued processes of the inscription of information.

Despite its quite modern surfaces, APIX has inherited this institutional emphasis on bureaucratic documentary practice. Indeed, during my research years, formal processes of investment in Senegal involved a good deal of paper. Just as the file is regarded as the "workhorse" of Pakistani postcolonial bureaucracy (Hull 2012b, 113) and "the critical unit that organizes bureaucratic life" in contemporary India (Gupta 2012), so, too, did the dossier form the cornerstone of APIX office practice. Investors were required to assemble a physical dossier—which included criminal records, tax forms, declaration forms, information about assets, and proof of capital—and to deposit this collection of physical paperwork in person or (in the case of some foreign or diasporic investors) by proxy.[10] These dossiers circulated through and beyond APIX's walls, linking various state offices. APIX is also a key node in the mobilization of various other kinds of documents, including brochures, posters, standardized forms, official letters, memos and other interoffice communications, and reports. Staff members of all ranks spent a significant part of

their days filtering, filing, hauling, studying, retrieving, approving, signing, stamping, rejecting, destroying, and photocopying paperwork.

All this paper provoked a great deal of anxiety. APIX staff members frequently spoke of their fears that paper would pile up and clutter the agency's modern and appealing offices, that dossiers would be misplaced or that document practices would stall, slowing down the office. Potential or current investors, in turn, would be turned off by what they would see as a bumbling and outmoded bureaucracy. One afternoon, for instance, I was shadowing Bintou, a staff member in the One-Stop Shop, as she worked directly with clients depositing dossiers. When one potential investor came in to add a missing document to his file, Bintou quietly excused herself and a hushed but frantic search ensued, as the dossier was nowhere to be found. Though Bintou eventually managed to track down the file—it had gotten wedged inside another dossier and traveled upstairs with a stack of paper—the incident spurred Bintou's manager to begin the afternoon's staff meeting with a discussion of changes they might make to avoid similar mishaps in the future. As I have written about in greater detail elsewhere (Melly 2017), keeping papers moving and avoiding bureaucratic *embouteillages* (bottlenecks) was a critical daily preoccupation during the time of my research. To help facilitate paper flow and avoid tie-ups, various ministry offices, such as the Senegalese customs office, have installed representatives in satellite offices that cluster around the One-Stop Shop, as I gestured to above. In this way, both the institutional layout and daily routines have been profoundly structured by the necessary presence of paper and by the looming threat of unruly piles. These institutional bottlenecks, Moussa explained one day, were a legacy of French colonialism: Though colonial paperwork practices helped to organize and legitimize the postcolonial state, he said, they also made the institution "heavy" (*lourd*) and slow. In this sense, documents and dossiers were for my APIX colleagues as much a sign of modernity's arrival (Riles 2006) as they portended its imminent unraveling.

Paper thus remained comparatively absent from APIX's physical spaces and future-focused imaginaries, even if it was always there. My colleagues made explicit that these containment policies formed part of a concerted effort to distinguish the agency from conventional ministry offices, where disorganized piles of paper are perhaps the most striking feature of the workspace, and where tedious and all-consuming concerns about paper itself are thought to distract state workers from effecting "real" change. On several occasions, I overheard APIX staff workers chide their colleagues for their lax attention to the documents spread or stacked on their desks. "This is not a ministry office!" some would quip, seemingly in jest.

Similarly, when I would return from meetings or interviews at other government offices in the city, my colleagues would sometimes jokingly inquire about how much paper I encountered while there or how long I'd spent just waiting around. Staff members imagined their work as an antidote to the kind of bureaucratic "red tape" that Gupta (2012) describes. For Gupta, the work of bureaucratic writing—and the unevenness and arbitrariness of inclusion, redistribution, and care that writing processes necessarily entail—inflicts a kind of structural violence on the lives of the poor. My APIX colleagues, by contrast, worried more about the materiality of paper—its physical and visual weight, its uneven and strained movements—and its impacts on investors and state workers themselves.

Figure 3. *Le Guichet Unique* [The "One Stop Shop"]. Promotional photo of Le Bureau d'Appui à la création d'entreprise (the Business Creation Support Bureau, or BCE). Note the relatively contained presence of paper.

In a sense, PowerPoint offered a technique to further compress the state's material record—for turning paper into less paper—and for loosening the agency from the grip of postcolonial bureaucracy. But distilling decades of often vague and incompatible information into clean charts and simple bullet points required a lot of work and a bit of creative decision-making.[11] While working to proofread and edit a colleague's English PowerPoint presentation one afternoon, I encountered a slide that estimated Senegal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita to be about $500 US dollars. This seemed out of sync with another presentation I had completed just the week before, and so I began to dig more deeply, pulling up previous presentations and doing online database searches. I quickly uncovered dozens of different estimates that ranged anywhere from a few hundred dollars to nearly two thousand dollars. When I asked Elhadji for advice on how to proceed, he obligingly picked up his phone and called the director of the agency's documentation center downstairs. After the two men had chatted amicably about their families, traffic jams, and a recent soccer game, Elhadji asked the director if he had an updated GDP figure. The call ended quickly thereafter, and Elhadji reported

that there was no consensus. After all, he explained, statistics like these varied widely in a country where it was difficult to draw the boundaries around the formal economy. Peering at my laptop screen, Elhadji pointed to the figure $1,700—which I had drawn from the CIA World FactBook—and suggested I simply delete the "1" and leave it at $700. That figure seemed more credible (*fiable*), he said, especially since the dollar had recently fallen. It fell in line with many of the other recent presentations in the online repository. $1,700, he worried, might seem too ambitious a figure and leave investors skeptical of APIX's pitch, while anything lower might deter investors who did not have experience working in low-income countries. A "credible" figure in this instance simply meant an inconspicuous one, one that faded into the background without attracting sustained scrutiny.

Staff members also exploited PowerPoint's crisp bullet-point form and eye-catching graphics to produce an unambiguous portrait of economic possibility and political reform in Senegal. In anticipation of an upcoming investment pitch in Spain, for instance, Elhadji prepared a slide that he titled "Key Dates." In crisp yellow text set against a dark blue background, he assembled half a dozen important historical events. He had made some of the entries larger than others, he told me, to reflect their relative importance in Senegal's history. Interestingly, the largest entry—larger even than Senegal's independence—was "1994: Devaluation of Currency—Turning Point." When I pressed, Elhadji explained that he intended to focus on this point in his presentation, as it would hold the most interest for the potential investors in attendance. Devaluation, he continued, had been *un épreuve* (a hardship, a trial) that had tested Senegal's fortitude, but it had also paved the way for APIX's interventions (see also Melly 2013). This explanation did not surprise me, as Elhadji often spoke of currency devaluation as transformative. Thanks to the stylistic affordances of PowerPoint, he was able to frame a particular historical narrative that placed economic liberalization and APIX itself at the center of the story.

Economic austerity and neoliberal restructuring have met with plenty of skepticism and resistance in Senegal (see Melly 2013), both in the general public and among political factions and more conventional ministry offices. But PowerPoint helped transform the variation, ambiguity, and uncertainty at the heart of these controversial projects into clear and confident bullet points. APIX staff members also used PowerPoint to provide potential investors with an overview of the investment process in Senegal. They crafted flowchart-style slides that described the evolution and movement of the investor dossier, presenting the process as seamless, predictable, and without bureaucratic bottlenecks. They then

uploaded these presentations onto the agency's website or projected them during investment pitches. In these instances, PowerPoint files rendered visible and transparent APIX's everyday activities, expectations, and structure, thus fulfilling the agency's mission of relaying information, guiding and "accompanying" the investor, and keeping the state out of the way of the "real" work of economic transformation. They channeled the audience members' attention, guiding them through presentations, but also offering potential investors an institutional map for navigating the investment process. Indeed, the sparse and graphic form of PowerPoint itself helped produce a vision of the streamlined state and its partners for potential investors and APIX staff members alike. Moreover, stashed from view on the agency's intranet, PowerPoint files did not clutter offices in the ways that official reports, investment forms, and brochures threatened to do. Executives downloaded and stored PowerPoint files on USB drives, which could easily be stowed in a briefcase or suit pocket and carried along on an investment pitch abroad, accompanied by just one or two APIX staff members. In this way, PowerPoint had enabled a vision of the state that was compact and spectacularly portable, tailored precisely to an international clientele.

One afternoon, however, as the lights flickered in our downtown office, I was reminded of just how tenuous these aspirations of compressed state presence and global portability really were. Electricity outages, which staff members typically cast as an effect of the "incomplete" privatization of public assets, occurred quite often during the time of my research.[12] Bracing themselves for another disruption, my office mates rushed to produce backup copies of the PowerPoint presentations and other projects on which they had been working. In an instant, the large communal printer in the hallway outside my office whirred to life, sputtering piles of paper. As I watched my colleagues return to their desks with arms full of printed presentations and documents, I marveled at the amount of paper this supposedly weightless state required after all. In an era of unrelenting economic austerity, infrastructural overload, and meager economic growth, APIX's ambitions for an unfettered state existed in uneasy tension with bureaucracy-as-usual. What resulted was a very complex and incomplete transformation of the state's material and ideological form, one that undermined any facile notions of the African state's seeming progress or decay. Indeed, by probing weightlessness ethnographically, we begin to perceive both the Senegalese state and PowerPoint as complexly relational forms, as caught up in "the processes of the world's ongoing generation and regeneration" (Ingold 2007, 9).

PROJECTING THE STATE

Underwhelmed by the bland and predictable presentations I had found in APIX's intranet repository, I set my sights on becoming a PowerPoint innovator in the early days of my internship. I'd spend hours searching for compelling clip art and experimenting with font and color choices, eager to put my college art degree to good use—and perhaps to earn some credibility in my new office. But when I unveiled my first presentation draft to Elhadji, he promptly suggested a series of changes to bring my slides into alignment with the others in the repository. APIX had adopted Arial as its standard typeface, he explained, because studies had shown that it was easier for audiences to read and thus would make the state's message clearer to readers. Bold color choices and unnecessary graphics might likewise distract the audience. Indeed, it quickly became clear that my APIX colleagues assembled PowerPoint files with a high degree of restraint rather than with a sense of brash creativity. They carefully worded every bullet point, cautiously selected each icon. They built their slide presentations on previous files, in terms of both form and content, and they saved them anonymously in the intranet database, stripping the files of any sense of clear authorship or singularity.

Mirco Göpfert (2013) describes the aesthetic pleasures of report writing among Nigerien gendarmes, attending in particular to the ways in which they open up space for creativity and individual expression amid the confines of bureaucratic form. At APIX, particularly well-crafted PowerPoint slides likewise garnered praise and attention from executive staff members; notably effective slides were copied and pasted into future slide decks. But in contrast to the reports Göpfert describes, an ideal PowerPoint file was one that called little attention to itself or its creator or creators. Instead, a successful PowerPoint slide receded into the background, allowing the presentation—and the presenter—to instead take center stage. APIX's most charismatic presenters were skilled at using spare bullet points to keep their performances on track, while also embellishing these points to engage audience members. They spoke fluently, confidently, and convincingly in the language of the audience. Through embodied performance and oratory strategy, APIX executives temporarily and spectacularly expanded the state's material record and presence once again, giving the state a new weight and substance.

Though most presentations took place abroad, I did have the opportunity to attend a few PowerPoint presentations within APIX's headquarters and elsewhere in the city. At all these presentations, storytelling took center stage. During a presentation to a visiting contingent of high-ranking Nigerian military officials, for instance, Elhadji recited lively tales of Senegal's first president, the

preeminent Léopold Sédar Senghor. Taking his cue from a singular, succinct bullet point—"Senghor: Forefather of Independence"—Elhadji unraveled an elaborate story of Senghor's commitment to publicly funded education, global democratic engagement, and religious and ethnic tolerance. His narrative seemed to blur the mythical and the historical. As he spoke, he drew a clear contrast between the sociopolitical histories of Senegal and Nigeria, playfully teasing his military guests about their country's history of coups, ethnic and religious tensions, and corruption. I shifted somewhat uncomfortably in my seat at his comparisons, worried that he might offend his audience, but his guests responded with hearty laughter and applause, just as he had anticipated they would. Elhadji was in fact retooling a repertoire of joking practices imagined to bridge frictious ethnic and kinship divides (Radcliffe-Brown 1940).

Similarly, at an investment fair held at what was then the premier hotel in Dakar, Nafissatou used her schooling and professional experiences in Senegal and abroad as a means to describe the educational possibilities and challenges facing the country's youth. "It's often thought that girls should stay at home, find a husband," she said wryly, coaxing laughter from her all-male, largely South Asian and Arab audience. Like Elhadji, Nafissatou used humor to work across cultural and gender divides. Dressed in a perfectly starched white boubou and standing in front of a brilliantly illuminated screen, the lights dimmed, her physical presence was captivating and her stories commanded attention. She contrasted her own transnational educational and professional itinerary with the life of her mother, working to tease out larger trends in post-independence education, gender relations, and professional development. As she spoke, she painted a compelling picture of an African state deeply invested in public education and democratic empowerment, enriched by an appreciation of tradition.

Though strikingly modern in many ways, PowerPoint presentations were also an accumulation of centuries of performative culture and oral documentary practice. To be sure, Elhadji, Nafissatou, and other APIX executives spoke frequently of the presentation skills and approaches they acquired while studying or working abroad. But they were also explicit about the fact that oratory artistry and display have long animated religious, political, and social life in Senegal. "We [Senegalese] tell stories," Elhadji told me plainly during one of our afternoon chats. Senghor once theorized oral culture as "a fundamental aspect of blackness" (cited in Mbaye 1990), and such descriptions of nation and orality persist in contemporary Senegal. Elhadji's lauding of Senghor was reminiscent of Senegal's griot (*géwél*, in Wolof) performers—musicians, poets, and storytellers noted for their facility

with language and charged with preserving cultural history (*cosaan*) and genealogies (Tang 2007; see also B. Hoffman 2001). Nafissatou's recitation of her own life story was likewise vaguely reminiscent of female griots' praise poetry (*taasu*), which often takes on an autobiographical bent (McNee 2000). Griots are caught up in a web of patron-client relations: they perform a highly specialized kind of labor in exchange for remuneration from families of higher social standing. Their performances continue to mark major life transitions like weddings and births, but they also infuse political rallies and other public events, keeping ancestors alive, celebrating the continuity of lineages, and carrying treasured collective values into the present and future. Interestingly, Judith Irvine (1995, 253–54) points out that griots are traditionally imagined to be "lightweight," excitable, and theatrical, character traits thought to complement the "heavy," measured, and stolid character of noble socio-occupational groups and to rouse them to action. APIX's executives are not modern griots, but the ways they approach their work have most certainly been shaped by centuries of praise-singing, storytelling, oral documentation, and patron-client relations.[13] Their PowerPoint presentations bear the traces, too, of Wolof-language theatrical dramas that grapple with social change or historical events (Coulibaly 2019); of long-standing performative joking practices that both illuminate and maintain social hierarchies between ethnic groups, generational cohorts, or family clans (de Jong 2005; Gueye 2011); and of the marked emphasis placed on "sartorial mastery" as a mode of communication (Mustafa 2001; see also Grabski 2009; Heath 1992) among both women and men. In ways both implicit and explicit, Elhadji and Nafissatou drew on established performative conventions to breathe new substance and weight into the otherwise thinly developed slides. These elaborations were as much enabled by the PowerPoint form as by the preconditions for the form's flourishing at APIX. At once heavily embellished and spectacularly immaterial, APIX's staff members' presentations both responded to and defied calls for weightlessness.

A successful presentation entailed more than personal charisma and oratory prowess; it also required a dependable physical and technological infrastructure (see also Larkin 2008; Von Schnitzler 2013). An essential part of the PowerPoint performance involved properly connecting necessary cables, turning on the projector, accessing the USB drive, locating and opening the appropriate file, and projecting the slides onto the wall. The successfully illuminated slides frequently elicited quiet awe and relief among APIX staff members, if not among members of their audience, who typically took PowerPoint for granted. This was, in part, because the technology made spectacularly visible APIX's privileged connections

to the nation's electricity supply, to the internet, and to global circuits of expertise and business practice. It was also because these slides made the Senegalese state materially present in specific and important ways: Although the slides commanded attention during a presentation, they would disappear as soon as the presentation was concluded, when they would promptly become just another file in the virtual archive until they were resurrected, edited, reformatted, printed, projected, or translated for reuse elsewhere. The files moved with ease—from computer screens at APIX to meeting rooms elsewhere in the city to forums in Spain or presentations in China—making Senegal substantively present, without leaving a trace of the state behind. In this way, PowerPoint files fulfilled the agency's objectives of guiding investors, streamlining procedures, and illuminating Senegal's future—work that people themselves could not do alone. The files both resembled and engendered the good structurally adjusted state—a state that was properly contained and restrained and that worked in the service of neoliberal expansion and global integration. At the same time, it was a state enriched by precolonial traditions of engaging audiences, chronicling and performing histories, and highlighting obligations. It was a state form that eschewed the heavy residues of French bureaucratic culture even as it produced new "weight" of its own. Indeed, the APIX state form relied on a much heftier infrastructural apparatus—of computers, projectors, drives, electrical networks, cables, international aircraft—than its paper-driven predecessor. This insight recalls observations offered by scholars studying transparency, who have demonstrated that "the will to transparency has a tendency to reproduce opacity," as William Mazzarella (2006, 500) has put it. "One of the great structuring ironies of our age," he continues, "is the tendency for increasingly elaborate systems of mediation to be deployed in the pursuit of immediation." The weightless state, emptied of its postcolonial bloat, seemed only to take on new substance, new complexity, new weight as it became entangled with PowerPoint.

MAKING SENEGAL MATTER

"The properties of materials," Ingold (2007, 15) reminds his readers, "are not attributes but histories" that emerge over time, relationally and processually. In this essay, I have likewise approached weightlessness as a history of movements and encounters spanning many decades and several continents. Focusing on these material fluctuations has enabled me to shift my gaze away from PowerPoint or APIX as an accomplished entity or a determinative force and instead toward the ways in which "the state" and "technological media" rub up against, unravel, reshape,

and become entangled with each other. What emerges, in many ways, is a history not only of "weightlessness" as an institutional goal but also perhaps of African state-making and technological innovation more generally. It is a story that un-settles standard narratives about technological uptake and global flow, which tend to position Africans as passively, reluctantly, or belatedly involved in technological and political developments alike. As they stashed piles of papers from view, down-loaded and circulated PowerPoint files, selected subdued colors and standard fonts, connected cords, entered passwords, tightly framed bullet points, and finessed their oral presentations, APIX staff members made Senegal *matter* in specific and consequential ways—they gave the small African state substantive form, and they made that form worthy of attention.

While most of APIX's foreign investment-promotion work took place abroad, at a distant remove from the agency's Dakar headquarters, I did have the chance to engage with potential investors on occasion, when they passed by the office to deposit paperwork or when they attended investment fairs or other events in the city. Many foreign investors seemed rather unconvinced by the agency's investment pitches and PowerPoint slides. After Nafissatou's presentation at the seaside hotel, for instance, a cadre of investors from Dubai approached me during the coffee break with deep reservations about investing in Senegal. Nafissatou's presentation had been well polished and engaging, they acknowledged, but Senegal itself did not make for a particularly distinct or compelling investment destination. Nothing shared during the presentation had convinced them otherwise. One told me, "It would make more sense to take our money to Ghana, perhaps. Senegal's port is still sleeping. And at least in Ghana they speak English."

APIX executives took investor feedback and lagging FDI rates quite seriously. They used this information to continuously redirect their approach and pitch, to rally for changes to regulatory codes, or to find ways to streamline bureaucratic processes. But to see the work of APIX, or indeed of PowerPoint presentations, as merely aimed at generating investment would misapprehend the nature and complexity of this kind of work altogether. Indeed, Elhadji, Nafissatou, Moussa, Bintou, and their colleagues saw themselves instead as shaping and circulating new modes of governance and communication. "APIX is a trendsetter," Elhadji loved to proclaim. The agency had won a few international awards during my time there for its innovations in investment promotion and communication. But for Elhadji, the systematic and innovative use of PowerPoint constituted one of their great-est accomplishments. He had been invited to host workshops at state ministry offices to introduce them to the software program and its affordances. And the

Nigerian military officials we had met with had likewise tried to cajole him into helping teach state ministry workers in Abuja. APIX executives and staff were just as intent on transforming the material substance and public presence of the state and shaping African media, then, as they were on luring foreign capital. "Senegal" comes to matter for these state workers not just as an investment destination, as a recipient of foreign capital or imported technology, but as both global node and consequential substance in the information era.

ABSTRACT

Executives at APIX, Senegal's state investment-promotion agency, cast their office as the vanguard of a new kind of state formation, one remade through decades of austerity and resolutely focused on the nation's future. They imagined PowerPoint as especially critical to this mission, as it had the potential to move the state beyond the confines of paper form and parochial bureaucratic routine and into the wider world. In this article, I explore the complex relationship between this state agency and this presentation software package. More specifically, I examine how preoccupations with weight shape state work and technological practice. By attending to everyday aspirations for weightlessness and resultant shifts in material forms, I argue, we might better understand the complex and consequential relationship between state and media in Senegal and elsewhere. [state; technology; Africa; materiality; PowerPoint; structural adjustment; media]

NOTES

1.   APIX stands for L'Agence Nationale pour la Promotion des Investissements et des Grands Travaux.
2.   Notable exceptions to this include Stark and Paravel 2008, Wakeford 2006, and Prentice 2019.
3.   The vast majority of scholarly and public writing about PowerPoint is focused on evaluating it as "good" or "bad." For examples, see Kaplan 2011, Tufte 2003, Bumiller 2010, Thompson 2003, and Cyphert 2004.
4.   For an excellent critique of this sort, see Mavhunga 2014.
5.   This theoretical stance extends to sociopolitical formulations like capitalism and democracy. Frederic Schaffer (2000) offers an excellent analysis of local understandings of *demokaraasi* in Senegal, demonstrating that democracy is not simply an "import" but rather complexly imbricated with indigenous modes of governance and collective action.
6.   Transnational migration has long played a critical role in keeping national and household budgets afloat in Senegal, particularly in the decades following structural adjustment

(Melly 2017; see also Diop 2008). Moreover, top positions in government and the private sector are frequently awarded to candidates educated abroad, as was the case at APIX. All four of Senegal's presidents have received some of their education in France.

7. Critical to my thinking here is Victoria Bernal's (2014) pathbreaking work on nation-making, new media, and transnational migration in the Eritrean diaspora.

8. Senegal's system of governance is modeled on that of France, with a popularly elected president who chooses a prime minister to serve as head of government. In consultation with the president, the prime minister appoints a Council of Ministers to lead more specialized posts. The number of ministries in operation varies, as new ministries are instituted and others are folded together or dissolved.

9. Importantly, my APIX colleagues discussed the weight of things—and indeed most matters—in French rather than the more widely and frequently spoken Wolof, as French has long been the language of institutional governance in Senegal. Wolof was sometimes spoken with Senegalese investors in the One-Stop Shop, but never (aside from a phrase here and there) in the executive offices.

10. There was no internet-based mechanism for submission, though staff members expressed hopes of eventually creating one.

11. Morten Jerven's *Poor Numbers* (2013) does an excellent job elaborating the sociohistorical context in which this statistical uncertainty arises and describing the impacts of such wildly divergent and often inaccurate economic data.

12. In 1999, Senelec (Société National de l'Electricité de Senegal), Senegal's national electricity company, was privatized and became part of an energy consortium with a Canadian company. This partnership was broken just a year later, in 2000, and Senelec returned to state control. Many of my colleagues at APIX interpreted the relentless electricity outages as a sign of the dangers of incomplete privatization. While the office did have a generator, it only ran equipment deemed "essential," and this did not include computers and printers at the time.

13. There is a fascinating literature on the figure of the "modern griot" in contemporary Senegal, including work that highlights griots' contributions to hip-hop and rap production (Tang 2012), their employment as academic historians and "private detectives" (Panzacchi 1994) as well as critiques of these more expansive interpretations (Sajnani 2013).

REFERENCES

Archambault, Julie Soleil
    2017   *Mobile Secrets: Youth, Intimacy, and the Politics of Pretense in Mozambique.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Badaró, Máximo
    2020   "Nation Branding for China: Global Brokers in International Real Estate in China." *City and Society* 32, no. 3: 508–29. https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12356
Ballestero, Andrea
    2012   "Transparency in Triads." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 35, no. 2: 160–66. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1555-2934.2012.01196.x
Bernal, Victoria
    2014   *Nation as Network: Diaspora, Cyberspace, and Citizenship.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Boone, Catherine
    1990   "State Power and Economic Crisis in Senegal." *Comparative Politics* 22, no. 3: 341–57. https://doi.org/10.2307/42196
Buggenhagen, Beth
    2010   "Islam and the Media of Devotion in and out of Senegal." *Visual Anthropology Review* 26, no. 2: 81–95. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-7458.2010.01069.x

2014   "A Snapshot of Happiness: Photo Albums, Respectability, and Economic Uncertainty in Dakar." *Africa* 84, no. 1: 78–100. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972013000612

Bumiller, Elisabeth
2010   "We Have Met the Enemy and He Is PowerPoint." *New York Times*, April 26.

Burrell, Jenna
2012   *Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafés of Urban Ghana.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Chalfin, Brenda
2010   *Neoliberal Frontiers: An Ethnography of Sovereignty in West Africa.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clark, Gracia
2005   "The Permanent Transition in Africa." *Voices* 7, no. 1: 6–9. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-7423.2005.tb00021.x

Coulibaly, Bojana
2019   "Senegalese Theater Unabashed: Wolof Drama and Cultural Liberation." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 39: 123–48. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26596426

Cyphert, Dale
2004   "The Problem of PowerPoint: Visual Aid or Visual Rhetoric?" *Business Communication Quarterly* 67, no. 1: 80–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569904671008

Das, Veena, and Deborah Poole, eds.
2004   *Anthropology in the Margins of the State.* Suffolk, U.K.: James Currey Publishers.

Dean, Jodi
2002   *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

De Bruijn, Mirjam
2009   *Mobile Phones: The New Talking Drums of Everyday Africa.* Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG.

De Jong, Ferdinand
2005   "A Joking Nation: Conflict Resolution in Senegal." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines* 39, no. 2: 391–415. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25067489

Diop, Momar Coumba
2008   *Le Sénégal des migrations: Mobilités, identités et sociétés* [The Senegal of Migrations: Mobilities, Identities and Societies]. Dakar: Karthala Editions.

Diouf, Mamadou
2013   "Abdoulaye Wade et le régime libéral à l'examen: Réalisations, mirages, et abus d'une alternance démocratique" [Abdoulaye Wade and the Liberal Regime under Review: Achievements, Mirages, and Abuse of a Democratic Alternation]. In *Le Sénégal sous Abdoulaye Wade : Le Sopi à l'épreuve du pouvoir*, edited by Momar-Coumba Diop, 13–20. Dakar: Karthala Editions.

Donner, Jonathan
2007   "The Rules of Beeping: Exchanging Messages via Intentional 'Missed Calls' on Mobile Phones." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1: 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00383.x

Elyachar, Julia
2005   *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Gaskins, Robert
2012   *Sweating Bullets: Notes about Inventing PowerPoint.* San Francisco, Calif.: Vinland Books.

Gitelman, Lisa
2014   *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents.* Durham N.C.: Duke University Press.

Graan, Andrew
> 2013   "Counterfeiting the Nation? Skopje 2014 and the Politics of Nation Branding in Macedonia." *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 1: 161–79. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2012.01179.x

Grabski, Joanna
> 2009   "Making Fashion in the City: A Case Study of Tailors and Designers in Dakar, Senegal," *Fashion Theory* 13, no. 2: 215–42. https://doi.org/10.2752/175174109X414268

Göpfert, Mirco
> 2013   "Bureaucratic Aesthetics: Report Writing in the Nigérien Gendarmerie." *American Ethnologist* 40, no. 2: 324–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12024

Gordillo, Gastón
> 2006   "The Crucible of Citizenship: ID-Paper Fetishism in the Argentinean Chaco." *American Ethnologist* 33, no. 2: 162–76. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2006.33.2.162

Gueye, Marame
> 2011   "Modern Media and Culture in Senegal: Speaking Truth to Power." *African Studies Review* 54, no. 3: 27–43. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41304793

Gupta, Akhil
> 2012   *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Heath, Deborah
> 1992   "Fashion, Anti-Fashion, and Heteroglossia in Urban Senegal." *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 1: 19-33. https://doi-org.libproxy.smith.edu/10.1525/ae.1992.19.1.02a00020

Hetherington, Kregg
> 2011   *Guerrilla Auditors: The Politics of Transparency in Neoliberal Paraguay.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Hibou, Béatrice, ed.
> 2004   *Privatizing the State.* Translated by Jonathan Derrick. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hoffman, Barbara G.
> 2001   *Griots at War: Conflict, Conciliation, and Caste in Mande.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hoffman, Danny
> 2017   *Monrovia Modern: Urban Form and Political Imagination in Liberia.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Hull, Matthew S.
> 2012a   "Documents and Bureaucracy." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41: 251–67. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104953
> 2012b   *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ingold, Tim
> 2007   "Materials against Materiality." *Archaeological Dialogues* 14, no. 1: 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203807002127

Irvine, Judith
> 1995   "A Sociolinguistic Approach to Emotion Concepts in a Senegalese Community." In *Everyday Conceptions of Emotion: An Introduction to the Psychology, Anthropology, and Linguistics of Emotion,* edited by James A. Russell, José-Miguel Fernández-Dols, Antony S. R. Manstead, and J. C. Wellenkamp, 251–65. New York: Springer.

Jansen, Sue Curry
> 2008   "Designer Nation: Neo-Liberal Nation Branding—Brand Estonia." *Social Identities* 14, no. 1: 121–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630701848721

Jerven, Morten
> 2013   *Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to Do about It.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Kaneva, Nadia
    2011   "Nation Branding: Toward an Agenda for Critical Research." *International Journal of Communication* 5, no. 1: 117–41.

Kaplan, Sarah
    2011   "Strategy and PowerPoint: An Inquiry into the Epistemic Culture and Machinery of Strategy Making." *Organization Science* 22, no. 2: 320–46. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0531

Larkin, Brian
    2008   *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Latour, Bruno
    1986   "Visualization and Cognition: Thinking with Eyes and Hands." *Knowledge and Society* 6, no. 1: 1–40.

Manning, Paul
    2010   "The Semiotics of Brand." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 33–49. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104939

Mavhunga, Clapperton Chakanetsa
    2014   *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Mavhunga, Clapperton Chakanetsa, ed.
    2017   *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Mazzarella, William
    2006   "Internet X-Ray: E-Governance, Transparency, and the Politics of Immediation in India." *Public Culture* 18, no. 3: 473–505. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2006-016

Mbaye, Saliou
    1990   "Oral Records in Senegal." *American Archivist* 53, no. 4: 566–74. https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.53.4.pu7105854h265711

McNee, Lisa
    2000   *Selfish Gifts: Senegalese Women's Autobiographical Discourses.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press.

Melly, Caroline
    2013   "Ethnography on the Road: Infrastructural Vision and the Unruly Present in Contemporary Dakar." *Africa* 83, no. 3: 385–402. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24525580
    2017   *Bottleneck: Moving, Building, and Belonging in an African Capital City.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mustafa, Hudita Nura
    2001   "Ruins and Spectacles: Fashion and City Life in Contemporary Senegal." *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 15, no. 1: 47–53. muse.jhu.edu/article/422657

Navaro-Yashin, Yael
    2007   "Make-Believe Papers, Legal Forms, and the Counterfeit Affective Interactions between Documents and People in Britain and Cyprus." *Anthropological Theory* 7, no. 1: 79–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499607074294

Panzacchi, Cornelia
    1994   "The Livelihoods of Traditional Griots in Modern Senegal." *Africa* 64, no. 2: 190–210. https://doi.org/10.2307/1160979

Parker, Ian
    2001   "Absolute PowerPoint." *The New Yorker* 28: 76–87.

Parks, Bob
    2012   "Death to PowerPoint." *Bloomberg News*, August 30.

Poggiali, Lisa
  2016   "Seeing (from) Digital Peripheries: Technology and Transparency in Kenya's Silicon Savannah." *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3: 387–411. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca31.3.07

Prentice, Michael M.
  2019   "The Powers in PowerPoint: Embedded Authorities, Documentary Tastes, and Institutional (Second) Orders in Corporate Korea." *American Anthropologist* 121, no. 2: 350–62. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13209

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R.
  1940   "On Joking Relationships." *Africa* 13, no. 3: 195–210. https://doi.org/10.2307/1156093

Riccio, Bruno
  2005   "Talkin' about Migration: Some Ethnographic Notes on the Ambivalent Representation of Migrants in Contemporary Senegal." *Stichproben: Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 8, no. 5: 99–118.

Riles, Annelise
  2006   *Documents: Artifacts of Modern Knowledge.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Roberts, Allen F., and Mary Nooter Roberts
  2003   *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal.* Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

Roitman, Janet
  2005   *Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Sajnani, Damon
  2013   "Troubling the Trope of 'Rapper as Modern Griot.'" *Journal of Pan African Studies* 6, no. 3: 156–80.

Schaffer, Frederic Charles
  2000   *Democracy in Translation: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Sharma, Aradhana
  2013   "State Transparency after the Neoliberal Turn: The Politics, Limits, and Paradoxes of India's Right to Information Law." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 36, no. 2: 308–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12031

Stark, David, and Verena Paravel
  2008   "PowerPoint in Public Digital Technologies and the New Morphology of Demonstration." *Theory, Culture, and Society* 25, no. 5: 30–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408095215

Strathern, Marilyn
  2000   "The Tyranny of Transparency." *British Educational Research Journal* 26, no. 3: 309–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/713651562

Tang, Patricia
  2007   *Masters of the Sabar: Wolof Griot Percussionists of Senegal.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
  2012   "The Rapper as Modern Griot: Reclaiming Ancient Traditions." In *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, edited by Eric Charry, 79–91. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Tarlo, Emma
  2003   *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thompson, Clive
  2003   "PowerPoint Makes You Dumb." *New York Times,* December 14.

Thomson, Marnie Jane
  2012   "Black Boxes of Bureaucracy: Transparency and Opacity in the Resettlement Process of Congolese Refugees." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 35, no. 2: 186–205. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1555-2934.2012.01198.x

Tufte, Edward
    2003   "PowerPoint is Evil." *Wired Magazine,* September 3.
von Schnitzler, Antina
    2013   "Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes, and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa." *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4: 670–93. https://doi.org/10.1111/cuan.12032
Wakeford, Nina
    2006   "PowerPoint and the Crafting of Social Data." *Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference Proceedings* no. 1: 94–108 https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-8918.2006.tb00039.x
Weber, Max
    2009 [1946]   "Bureaucracy." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 196–244. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
West, Harry G., and Todd Sanders, eds.
    2003   *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.