

## CHAPTER 2

# Temporal Aesthetics

## *On Deleuzian Montage in Anthropology*

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"Cinema is modulation through and through."—Gilles Deleuze

My aim in this chapter is to consider the analytical mileage of applying a Deleuzian approach to cinematic montage when examining social identities and positions that derive their qualities by being what they are *not*. Among informal house builders on the outskirts of Maputo, Mozambique, it is crucial not to be completely identified as either "newcomer" nor "buyer," as this might potentially disrupt any aspiration of improving one's housing conditions by revealing the illicit nature of an ongoing transaction in land ("buyer") or by exposing one's lacking relational powers ("newcomer"). Paradoxically, it is equally important to *not* be associated with either of these identificational categories, as this will most likely make secure access to land impossible by concealing one's aspirations completely, thereby cutting one off from advantageous social networks. According to Deleuze, cinematic montage derives its particular qualities through the juxtaposition of seemingly incommensurable images (1995a, 1995b, 2005a, 2005b). This allows for a particular "cinematic perspective" to emerge in the intervals or gaps between connected images that gives to the montage composition its internal logic. In this chapter, it is consequently argued that the position in-between "buyer" and "newcomer" might fruitfully be considered as a "cinematic perspective," which derives its potency by being neither "buyer" nor "newcomer" while at the same time not negating the identificational categories completely.

During the last four decades, a rich body of work on the aesthetics<sup>1</sup> of social forms have produced a range of novel approaches to the study of reciprocal exchanges and social relationships in general (Iteanu 1988; LiPuma 1998; Strathern 1988, 1992, 1998, 2004; Wagner 1977a, 1979, 1981, 1986; Weiner 1993). A crucial insight from these influential studies is that different forms of sociality are not simply given conventional form (i.e., being represented) through quotidian reciprocal interactions. Rather, they are brought forth through patterned acts of elicitation,<sup>2</sup> such as ritualized marriage exchanges, which can then be seen as moments of invention where particular forms of social and political relations emerge and take effect (Strathern 1988: 228–32). The significance and potency of social relations thus depend on a particular kind of visibility created by appropriate aesthetic means. Basically, they will only be recognized (as social relations) if they are manifested in specific ways (Leach 2002: 717; Strathern 1999: 259). Indeed, as argued by Wagner, the "shape of reality is very much a consequence of the symbolic terms through which it is conceptualized" (1977b: 396).

To be sure, the recent emphasis on elicitory processes has forcefully made the invention of relations a matter of how forms are generated. It points out the

intimate ties between sociality and aesthetics of form that give to the inventive sequences of social life a “certain quality of brilliance” (Wagner 1981: 89). One might question, however, whether the imagery of this symbolic concatenation does not conceal an implicit assumption of stability that opposes the overall emphasis on invention through elicitation. The argument seems to be that provided sufficient aesthetics means, the expected social form will automatically follow. As an apt example, we might take Roy Wagner’s discussion of ritual differentiation, or interdiction, among the Daribi of Papua New Guinea (1977a). According to Wagner, the interdict serves to differentiate kinship ties in a universe composed of analogue relationships which are basically alike. It is consequently argued, “all that is necessary is for people to observe the niceties of the interdict and its concomitant exchanges and prerogatives, and the sociality (and its analogies of substantial flow) will take care of itself” (ibid.: 631). Although I concur with the overall assumption of seeing sociality as an outcome of aesthetic processes, I remain skeptical as to whether the social form being elicited will simply “take care of itself.”<sup>3</sup> Might we not imagine social forms being elicited that are incapable of conveying the coherence and imagined conventionality indicated by Wagner? Is it not possible to think of social forms that, while being conjured through aesthetic elicitory processes, assert themselves as inconsistent and heterogeneous potentialities? In other words, would it be possible to envisage aesthetic processes having the power to elicit “all sorts of meanings,” thus making the “ambiguity itself, the similarity among various interpretations . . . more important than the specific interpretations” (Wagner 1987: 56)?<sup>4</sup> As I shall argue below, in order to account for such differential processes, we need to make a significant analytical leap from an emphasis on the aesthetics of *form* to an aesthetics of *time*.

In this chapter, I wish to pursue the hypothesis that Gilles Deleuze’s analyses of time in cinematic montage open toward an anthropological understanding of elicitory processes that, although maintaining the importance of form, makes it an effect of variations and differentiations inherent to social life (Deleuze 1995a, 1995b, 2005a, 2005b). Social forms—say, kinship-based identities—may thus be conceived as being inherently unstable. According to Deleuze (2005a), conventional cinematic montage represents time as a structured movement from a beginning to an end where each shot constitutes a step toward the completion of the cinematic journey. In contrast, what might best be described as *disruptive montage* liberates individual images from a pre-given whole and present them alongside each other without assuming neither implicit order (say, the narrative structure of a film) nor a privileged point of view (say, that of the director). In the latter instance, then, time cannot be understood as a function of linearity where moments are somehow exterior to each other (e.g., moment A as occurring before and thus outside moment B). Rather, disruptive montage allows for a series of volatile connections to be established between incongruous images without committing the cinematic composition to an unequivocal representation.<sup>5</sup> In the gaps between the different images, a peculiar nervous energy subsists that continues to produce new constellations of meaning that transcend the content of each individual image. As the influential Russian director Sergei Eisenstein argued, this incessant production of meaning in the intervals between the images constitutes the very essence of the montage composition (Marrati 2003: 44). It reveals a flow of difference within and across the individual images that provokes radical changes in perspectives through the sensation of the momentary “tertium quid” (third thing) that emerges through the correlation of distinct movements (e.g., cinematic sequences). Following Deleuze (1995a), this flow of difference constitutes the workings of time in montage.

In his article “On the Movement-Image,” Deleuze explains how “time is the Open, is what changes—is constantly changing in nature—each moment” (1995a: 55). Put somewhat differently, time is the power of difference that propels incessant movements in and between the cinematic images. As such, it is the qualitative manner in which transformations occur and so it cannot be reduced to a forward-moving progression along a linear scale.

Hence, it is Deleuze’s argument that montage is a unique aesthetic art form through which time as differentiation is elicited. Directors, such as Vertov and Eisenstein, are described as creating cinematic compositions that allow time to operate as ceaseless transformation both within and across individual images. Whereas the above-mentioned anthropological analyses of elicitory processes emphasize the relative stability of social identities (e.g., the opposition between male and female), Deleuze shows how differentiation and variation may constitute the very core of aesthetic forms. Below, I shall consequently attempt to critically engage with current understandings of elicitory processes through an analysis of a Deleuzian approach to montage. I start by unpacking an extended case study from Maputo, Mozambique, dealing with notions of land and personhood among residents in a poor peri-urban neighborhood. As will be argued, it was through a series of reciprocal transactions of land that particular social positions were elicited and made relationally significant (e.g., the distinction between “newcomer” and “buyer”). Although widely acknowledged as the only viable strategy for improving one’s housing conditions, it is formally illegal to buy and sell land in Mozambique. Potential buyers of land therefore cannot make themselves too visible in the eyes of the state, as this will potentially expose them to the maneuvers of local-level officials taking advantage of their exposed positions. At the same time, however, potential buyers *must* make themselves visible, as they need to make their claims to land known by local administrative authorities in order to acquire access to basic infrastructure, such as water and electricity. Whereas buyers logically cannot apply for formal citizen-based rights, newcomers can easily approach state officials at different levels without fearing unwanted consequences. On the other hand, in contrast to the buyers who might have strong ties to former owners of land, newcomers are considered as being without relational power and are therefore completely dependent on the official governance system. As I shall consequently argue, it is essentially in the interval between buyer and newcomer that residents on the outskirts of Maputo seek to position themselves when engaging in informal transactions over land. After a detailed discussion of the Deleuzian approach to montage, I therefore return to the Mozambican context to show how the case study might be understood as a series of variations and differentiations running through social forms so that actualized positions were in effect always in-between social identities, such as those of newcomer and buyer. I conclude by fleshing out how an aesthetics of time might add to our anthropological understanding of elicitory processes through the emphasis on incommensurabilities and contradictions running both within and across the conceptual line distinguishing different social identities.

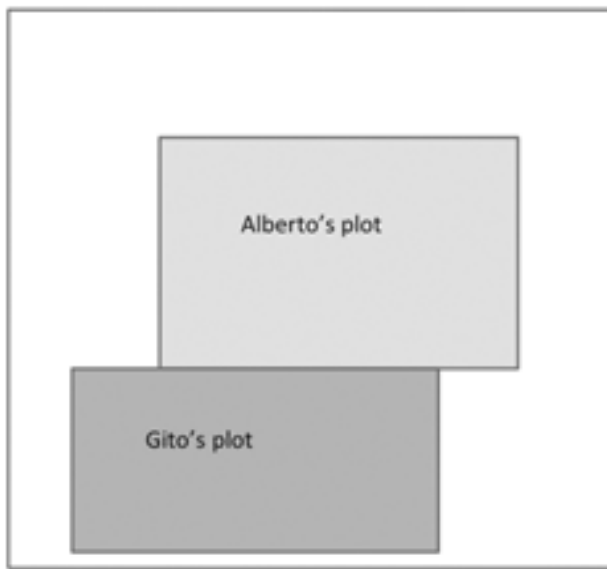
### **Alberto’s Reduced Plot**

In 2000, Alberto and Fernando both bought plots from old Mphumo, a *nativo* (native),<sup>6</sup> whose extensive lands have gradually been reduced through repeated trans-

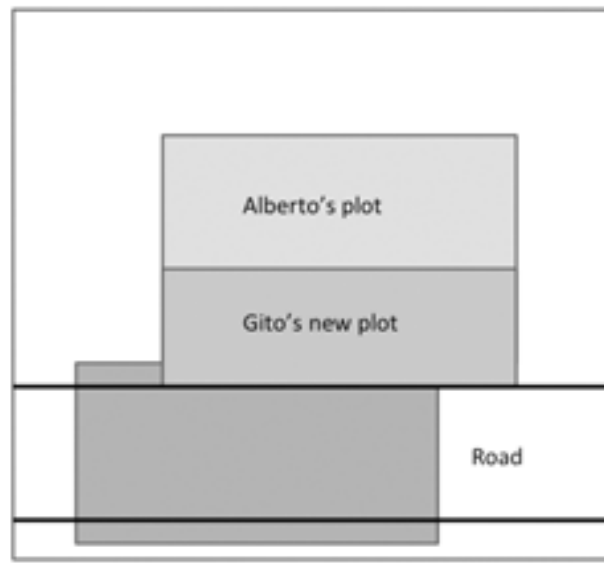
actions with needy newcomers. Mphumo's lands were located in Mulwene, a poor residential area on the northern outskirts of Maputo that was officially consolidated as an urban neighborhood in 2000 when victims of the devastating flooding that hit Mozambique in the first three months of the year were resettled in a section of the area (Nielsen 2008: 40–58). Whereas Alberto, a 28-year old newcomer, immediately moved into a one-room annex with his daughter and pregnant wife, Fernando bought the plot as an investment and let his nephew, Gito (who was also a newcomer), live there in a quickly erected reed hut. The area had never been formally parceled out and it therefore lacked precise markers. Still, both plots were relatively well defined, and the two new owners were in agreement as to where the boundary line was. The section of the neighborhood in which Fernando and Alberto bought their plots was located quite near the resettlement zone where flood victims had initially been installed in tents. Given that it was not included in the initial resettlement area, it was not parceled out in the immediate post-flooding process in 2000. With the increasing influx of people into the area this situation soon changed, and in 2003 Samuel, the land chief, commenced parceling out the area in collaboration with Fakhirah Omar, the local quarter chief, and an unidentified land surveyor.

Although this initial and downsized parceling process was limited to series of parallel roads going through the entire area without defining individual plots, it had serious repercussions for Fernando and Gito, as the former's plot lay almost entirely across the newly projected road (see figs. 2.1a–c). Fearing an imminent and forced relocation, Fernando therefore asked Mphumo to persuade Alberto into ceding part of his plot. As Alberto was still several installments short of having paid the full amount for his plot, Mphumo suggested that Alberto's debt could be reduced if he gave a part of his plot to Fernando and Gito. Given that the remaining plot would still measure approximately 30×30 meter (i.e., equivalent to two conventional plots), Alberto agreed.

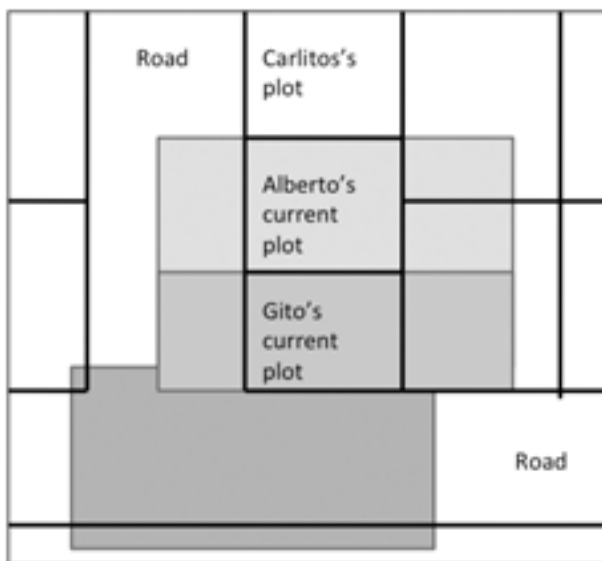
Later the same year, the situation was seriously aggravated when Samuel initiated a second process of parceling out in collaboration with Omar, the quarter chief and an architect who was apparently contracted informally by the neighborhood administration. Between the recently laid out parallel roads, the remaining tracts of land were parceled out in 15×30 meter plots grouped into blocks each consisting of sixteen plots. Since all the residents had bought their lands from local *nativos*, their parcels lacked both homogeneity and official markers. Consequently, in order to establish a uniform urban layout similar to those of the surrounding areas, many plots were significantly reduced. Furthermore, those houses overlapping the boundary lines between different plots had to be reconstructed within the new uniform parcels. As most people in this area were living in reed huts, this turned out to be manageable. The situation was somewhat more problematic, however, for those residents who had already built cement houses, such as Alberto. Since the small building he had erected as a temporary annex for his family was located precisely on the boundary line between two plots, it was, to say the least, quite problematic to divide the area into two uniform parcels without demolishing his house. Samuel's initial solution was therefore to parcel out three irregular parcels in an area intended for two plots with Gito, Alberto, and Carlitos, who had already been allocated the plot on the other side of Alberto's, as close neighbors. To make matters worse, both Alberto and Gito continued to lose large parts of their plots for a diagonal road on one side and neighboring plots on the other, which between them cut off approximately half of their previously quite extensive pieces of land.



Situation in early 2000



Situation after first process of parcelling



Current situation after second process of parcelling

**Figures 2.1a–c.** The changes to Alberto's and Gito's plots.

Hence, what were initially two large plots (approx. 20x45 meters each) were thus reduced to two significantly smaller parcels (approx. 15x20 meters each).

When the second parceling process occurred, Alberto was working out of town during the week as a road constructor in the neighboring region of Gaza. He therefore missed Samuel's door-to-door interviews at which all plot owners were registered. Given the tendency to perceive men a priori as natural household heads, Alberto's wife, Graça, was not interviewed. In contrast, Gito, who was unemployed during that period and therefore at home, managed to convince Samuel that he was, in fact, one of the two legitimate plot owners, the other being Carlitos. Although Alberto and his wife had been allocated temporary plot numbers before the first parceling process, they were therefore now defined as illegitimate squatters squeezed in between Gito and Carlitos.

It was apparent to all the parties involved that the simultaneous occupation of three households in an area intended for two plots would be untenable in the long run. In what apparently seemed a reasonable resolution, the neighborhood chief therefore told Alberto and Gito to decide among themselves who should remain in the plot. The one who left would then be allocated a plot elsewhere. In the following period, Alberto and Gito repeatedly tried to persuade the other to leave. According to Alberto, Gito even offered him 1.5 million MZM (US\$62), although the latter denies ever having made a monetary offer. Recognizing the impossibility of finding an amicable solution, the neighborhood administration then surprisingly decided that “since you do not want to leave, you will both have to stay together in the same plot.”<sup>7</sup> As both parties opposed this suggestion, an agreement was made implying that Gito and Alberto were to be transferred to plots in the remotest part of Mulwene. Although Fernando and Alberto agreed to this, Gito strongly refused to be resettled and continued to claim that he was the legitimate occupant of the present plot, something which could be verified, he argued, from the recent registration. After some consideration, Alberto also refused to move unless he was compensated not only for the blocks that had already been used for his house, but also for the 1800 blocks piled up on the plot which he would not be able to take with him to the new parcel. The request for compensation, however, was rejected by the neighborhood chief and Samuel.

Recognizing the impossibility of resolving the dispute within the neighborhood, Alberto solicited the district administrator for help,<sup>8</sup> arguing that Samuel had failed to allocate plots properly to needy newcomers.<sup>9</sup> In response, the district administrator ordered Magalhães and Samuel to inspect the actual plots in order to ascertain who could legitimately be ordered to leave. Without actually making any final decision, Magalhães limited his written response to verifying that Alberto had, in fact, erected a house overlapping two plots and that he was still refusing to be resettled unless he was given significant compensation.

During the next year, the already tense relationship between the conflicting neighbors was gradually worsened as both parties repeatedly accused the other of foul play. Alberto insisted several times that Gito had persuaded Mphumo, the seller, into attesting that Gito was the initial and therefore rightful owner of the plot. Gito was equally direct in his accusations. In a letter to the municipal councilor, he argued that “after the parceling process [*parcelamento*], Mr. Samuel receives a letter from the administrator of the Lhanguene cemetery, who is Sr. Magaia’s [i.e., Alberto’s] father-in-law. With this letter, Mr. Samuel became indifferent to the case, saying only that he did not know who should leave and who should stay in the plot, thereby creating a dispute between me and Mr. Magaia.”<sup>10</sup>

In 2005, a new district administrator was installed and from the outset he made land conflicts a top priority. As an initial attempt to reduce the number of pending cases, he assigned his previous secretary, Salomão, the important task of mediating in ongoing conflicts. On 17 October 2006, Salomão held a meeting at the district administration in Mulwene with the intention of determining how to finally resolve the case. Apparently, the impetus for holding a meeting at this particular moment was the recent process of registering plot owners in certain parts of Mulwene, which resulted in Alberto also being allocated a plot number. Gito perceived this as a clear indication that his rights were being reduced and thus had Salomão organize a meeting. As he told me before the meeting, Alberto was a simple newcomer without any ties to the community and he should therefore not be registered as official resident. Prior to the meeting, Salomão interviewed Mphumo,

the previous *nativo* owner, who admitted that Alberto was, in fact, the first person to buy land, which thus made him the owner of the plot. Although Fernando and Gito both strongly rejected this version, Salomão was convinced by it. A week later, Salomão made his final decision. Irrespective of the prior recognition that Alberto had legitimate rights to the plot, they were both given sixty days to leave on the basis that both Alberto and Gito had already been allocated other plots that were still unoccupied. If they refused to go, Salomão said, the police would be called to remove them by force. Despite the fear of forced resettlement, however, Alberto and Gito continue to be close neighbors in the two small plots, although they both find the situation untenable. Apparently, Salomão assumed that if they were threatened with forced resettlement, the two neighbors would somehow come to an agreement whereby he would also be able to prevent the lack of administrative capacities at both the municipal and state levels from being exposed. However, without viable alternatives, Alberto and Gito have preferred to stay, hoping that they will, eventually, respectively benefit from the prolonged dispute.

## The Aesthetics of Social Forms

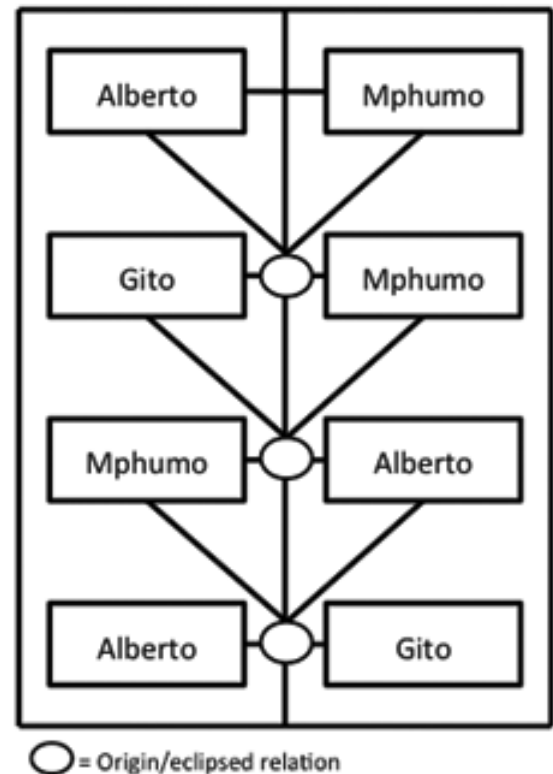
I shall now try to unpack some of the relational complexities in the case study described above in order to clarify how different social identities are being elicited. In southern Mozambique, the source of social agency is generally taken to be outside the acting agent, who merely functions as the effect of other people's actions (Paulo et al. 2007). In order to, say, realize a house-building project, residents engage in reciprocal encounters with neighbors, local leaders, and state agents in order to exchange what is, in fact, an "everted inside", i.e., an "interior state turned momentarily outside, subsequently to be folded back and concealed from view" (Strathern 1998: 140; cf. Nielsen 2012). A resident might thus agree to cede some of his hitherto unregistered plot to a quarter chief (who subsequently resells it to another client) in return for an assurance of continued secure occupancy, which is, so to speak, absorbed through the leader. Through these reciprocal encounters, where "inside and outside turn about one another" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 264), the house builder engages with and partially appropriates broader understandings of how to "make a life" (*kuzama utomi*) in a peri-urban context, e.g., regarding ideas of proper (reciprocal) integration within the local community and, more broadly, Mozambican society (Nielsen 2010). Hence, by clarifying the relational dynamics (or rather, the aesthetics of social forms) in the case study described above, we get a deeper understanding of how and why a series of reciprocal exchanges seem to condition social agency in fundamental social and, indeed, ontological ways.

At the outset, it is possible to describe the progression as a series of reciprocal actions and reactions where each person involved acquires social significance through the exchanges. Alberto willingly ceded a significant part of his plot to Gito, an unknown newcomer, in order to be relieved of his debt to Mphumo. To be sure, this was considered to be a beneficial situation for all parties: Mphumo did a favor for Gito, who was subsequently in debt to the old *nativo*. This relationship, however, "eclipsed" the favor done by Alberto (to Mphumo), without whom the reciprocal relationship (between Gito and Mphumo) could not be established.<sup>11</sup> Hence, we have three consecutive reciprocal connections (i.e., Mphumo:Alberto eclipsing Gito:Mphumo eclipsing Alberto:Mphumo) prior to the current dispute between Alberto and Gito. Bearing in mind that prior (eclipsed) sets of relations

remain implicit, though latent, in succeeding ones, the former can be understood as *origins* of the latter (Strathern 2005: 121, 1992: 179). In this eclipsing, we might detect a significant displacement on which the cause of an action is replaced by its assumed origin (Strathern 1992: 179–81, 186).<sup>12</sup> Hence, Gito's success in compelling Mphumo to enter into a debt manifests the extractability of the latter (of land/favor), who is thus configured as donor. This relationship was subsequently eclipsed when Mphumo approached Alberto and persuaded him to cede parts of his plots to Gito. As shown in figure 2.2 below, the relationship between Gito and Alberto therefore essentially found its origin elsewhere; i.e., in the three preceding (and eclipsed) relationships.

This reading of the dispute between Alberto and Gito outlines how social identities depend on a particular kind of visibility created by appropriate aesthetic means. Basically, in order to become recognized in the eyes of the other from whom benefits will be extracted, it is of paramount importance to assume the appropriate social form implied by the relation (Strathern 1992: 177). To be sure, all parties involved in the dispute constantly sought to position themselves as either cause or donor in order to benefit from subsequent relationships. The continuous disagreements can consequently be understood as stemming from individual attempts at securing these positions. Gito considered his relationship with Mphumo, whom he took to be the original owner of the land, as basis for his access to the plot and so Alberto's claims were inevitably considered as being illegitimate. Conversely, by ceding the land to Gito through Mphumo, Alberto eliminated his initial debt to the plot's former owner and was therefore unwilling to be positioned as donor once again. Thus, given the lack of reciprocal ties between Gito and Alberto, possibilities for resolving the dispute amicably without external mediation were few.

In *Property, Substance and Effect*, Marilyn Strathern argues that "for a body or a mind to be in a position of eliciting an effect from another, to evince power or capability, it must manifest itself in a particular concrete way. . . . One simply has to make or create oneself in a form that can be consumed by others" (1999: 259). It is my argument that the analytical account of the dispute between Alberto and Gito outlined above is very much in line with Strathern's description of elicitory processes. The legitimacy of individual claims to land was predicated on the social forms through which they were made explicit. In order for the contestants to activate relational ties, they made themselves appear in concrete aesthetic ways that then became the "elicitory trigger" (Strathern 1988: 181) for extracting the desired object (i.e., rights to land) from counterparts. What I wish to suggest now, however, is that we might expand the analysis by bracketing the initial proclivity for identifying aesthetic forms through which social values are elicited. While maintaining the importance of the aesthetics of elicitation, we need to focus also on processes of variation immanent to different social forms. If we analyze the inconsistencies conveyed by the case study above, we may detect a series of incommensurabilities and contradictions both within and across the conceptual line distinguishing



**Figure 2.2.** The progression of reciprocal exchanges.



different social identities (e.g., cause vs. donor). Hence, as I shall later argue, each social identity is characterized by an internal slippage, so to speak, which makes it always already what it is *not*.<sup>13</sup> Preempting the ethnographical argument slightly, I believe that each occurrence during the dispute can fruitfully be understood as movements between identities rather than a series of exchanges that had as their basis the stability of the former. Each position was consequently located in the interval between different social identities.

In order to explore this intricate process in detail, we need to make an analytical leap, then, from an emphasis on the aesthetics of form to an aesthetics of time (see also Nielsen 2011a). Below, I introduce Deleuze's analysis of cinematic montage that, I will argue, allows for a reinterpretation of the case study that captures inherent incommensurabilities and flows of variation within and between different social forms.

### Montage: Movement, Time, and the Non-Human Eye

Classic cinema presents us with a unified drama with a number of central characters and a linear movement that continues from beginning to end (Colebrook 2002: 44). Generally, the narrative development is witnessed from one position (i.e., director/narrator), which provides privileged access to the "true" interpretation of the unfolding cinematic occurrences. For Deleuze, this form of classic cinema is structured by an understanding of time and movement that relies on the construction of a series of causal chains between the actions and reactions of the characters (Restivo 2000: 174). A narrative story is consequently established when the cinematic motion is governed by a "sensory-motor-scheme, if it shows a character reacting to a situation" (Deleuze 1995b: 59). The result is a relatively unproblematic relationship between sensation and movement where characters respond to perceived situations in such a way that the initial conditions are gradually being modified in the progression toward the inevitable end.

As Deleuze emphasizes, the narrative form emerges when cinema has as its object the "sensory-motor" scheme of actions and reactions (Colman 2005: 153). We might therefore imagine other ways of using cinematic techniques provided that they are *not* anchored in the "sensory-motor" scheme. With the montage technique, film directors such as Eisenstein and Vertov did, indeed, break with the narrative form by exploring potentials that were already integral to cinema. Crucially, cinema makes it possible to see movement disengaged from the bodies and objects to which it seems to "belong." By physically moving the camera around the set while also experimenting with abrupt shifts in framing and speed, the cinematic image itself acquires status of "subject-that-moves" (Lambert 2000: 258). Hence, according to Deleuze, "cinema . . . achieves self-movement, automatic movement; it makes movement the immediate given of the image. This kind of movement no longer depends on a moving body or an object which realizes it. . . . It is the image which itself moves in itself" (2005b: 151). This unique potential clearly distinguishes cinema from all other contemporary art forms. It might be argued that the paintings of, say, Lucien Freud display a certain montage-like quality by juxtaposing different elements and figures in order to suggest new connections and meanings. The difference being, however, that movement is "made" by the viewer who uses his or her perceptive capacities to combine the different elements in the painting to a meaningful assemblage. In contrast, it is the cinematic image that by

*itself* generates movement detached from both spectators and the characters in the film.

What Deleuze argues, then, is that montage compositions acquire their unique temporal characteristics through the juxtaposition of framed images-in-movement that are cut off from their narrative structure (1995b: 58, 2005b: 33). At the outset, we can imagine each image as a slice of a (narrative) flow of a particular film. The image will consequently have a well-defined temporal context, what Deleuze describes as the “out-of-field” (2005a: 17), structured by the linearity of a plot. However, if the image is cut off from a narrative governed by the “sensory-motor” scheme of actions and reactions and juxtaposed with other seemingly incommensurable images, the relation to its “out-of-field” is radically transformed. As an apt example, we might take the image of spinning bicycle wheels in Eisenstein’s *October: Ten Days that Shook the World* (1927), a film that was commissioned by the Soviet government to honor the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. The scene where the revolution culminates is introduced with the titles “the cycles / are for the Soviets,” which refers to the armed bicycle corps responsible for security around the Winter Palace. Without actually showing soldiers joining with the Bolsheviks, Eisenstein cuts between shots of the revolutionary masses and images of bicycle pedals and wheels turning rapidly. By accelerating the montage, the speed of the movements seems to increase before reaching a crescendo with a shot of the delegates’ hands clapping to applaud the news of the surrendering soldiers.

In Eisenstein’s attempt to capture the revolutionary power of the Russian people, he uses the bicycle image to convey how “history . . . reaches a moment of pure dynamism” (Goodwin 1993: 89). From a Deleuzian perspective, we might argue that the image of spinning pedals and bicycle wheels functions as a singular image-in-movement. As spectators, we are presented only with their movement, which makes it impossible to establish a broader narrative structure. Rather, the image can be seen as “one flow of movement” (Colebrook 2002: 44) that crystallizes an “out-of-field” as unbounded differentiation rather than linear progression. In narrative cinema, successive images are held together by a logic of linearity which reveals itself, e.g., when a moving object, say a car, exits the frame and enters again in the next with similar speed and directionality. As such, narrative cinema gives us a sense of continuity between the framed image and the “out-of-field,” which invariably confirms time to operate in a linear manner. Conversely, an image-in-movement indicates a larger frame that exists entirely as modulation or differentiation. In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze outlines the differences between the two forms of “out-of-field”: “In one case, the out-of-field designates that which exists elsewhere, to one side or around; in the other case, the out-of-field testifies to a more disturbing presence, one which cannot even be said to exist, but rather to ‘insist’ or ‘subsist’, a more radical Elsewhere, outside homogeneous space and time” (2005a: 18).

Deleuze consequently wants us to imagine a temporal modality operating through images-in-movement, which cannot be distinguished simply by quantifying the individual moments. Rather, we need to focus on *how* time differentiates itself in an ongoing process of modulation and variation (Deleuze 1988: 39). As I will argue later, this qualitative notion of time can be understood as a particular kind of “temporal aesthetics” that may open toward a different approach to the study of elicitory processes.

To be sure, the crucial significance of the montage technique derives from the paradoxical juxtaposition of different images. As we have just established, the

individual image-in-movement (e.g., the spinning bicycle wheels and pedals), can fruitfully be understood as a "slice" of unbounded differentiation; it gives us a momentary perspective, as it were, of modulation as modulation (cf. Bogue 2003: 48). What happens, then, when these dynamic images are spliced together? According to Deleuze, the linear development cannot be withheld as the connected images-in-movement refer to contrasting "out-of-fields" and so "we get a circuit in which the two images are constantly chasing one another round a point where real and imaginary become indistinguishable" (1995a: 52). Each image interacts with other images rather than being organized in terms of a central perspective or narrative. In Eisenstein's dialectical montage (e.g., in "Potemkin" and "October"), an empirical reality is consequently not assembled as a pre-given whole. Rather, by emphasizing the abrupt shifts between incommensurable images-in-movement, he makes the very manner in which a dialectical reality is produced an integral part of the cinematic composition (Deleuze 2005a: 37–38). In these montage compositions, images are juxtaposed through abrupt temporal shifts, false continuities and cuts and what emerges is an expression of time that can be grasped only through the connections established. It is, in other words, the cinematic techniques proper to montage that make it possible to understand time as the power of difference (Maratti 2003: 44).

Through the intervals or gaps between seemingly incommensurable images, montage allows for a particular cinematic perspective of time to emerge (Zourabichvili 2000: 147). As Deleuze argues in his analysis of Dziga Vertov's cinematic experiments (e.g., 1929's *Man with a Movie Camera*), the perceiving eye in montage may not be that of the narrator (2005a: 83–85). Vertov's objective was to create a unique cinematic language of "variation and interaction" based on its own technical conditions. Given that the camera could be positioned in any imaginable location, each point of space became a possible point of view and in his often surreal montage experiments, Vertov connected "any given point in the universe with any other given point" (2005a: 146). This allowed for a decentering of the cinematic perspective which now emerged as an outcome of the ways that different images-in-movement interrelated and passed into each other. What montage does, then, is to establish a vision of a nonhuman eye *in* matter rather than *of* matter. Each image varies as a function of other images and the cinematic vision emerges as an oscillation in-between. Hence, whereas conventional cinema is anchored in a linear sequence divided between actions and reactions, montage finds its internal logic in the intervals between images that are correlated through their incommensurability. In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze succinctly sums up Vertov's approach to intervals and time in montage compositions: "The interval is no longer that which separates a reaction from the reaction experienced, which measures the incommensurability and unforeseeability of the reaction but, on the contrary, that which—an action being given in a point of the universe—will find the appropriate reaction in some other point [*point quelconque*], however distant it is" (2005a: 84).

Summing up, Deleuze argues that the unique quality and strength of montage derives from the juxtaposition of seemingly incommensurable images that relate to contrasting "out-of-fields." Rather than representing time as a linear unfolding of occurrences, montage compositions reveal how different cinematic rhythms and (dis)continuities are correlated to create a vision of incessant temporal variation and differentiation. Film directors such as Eisenstein, Vertov, and, later, Alfred Hitchcock and Stanley Kubrick, liberated the cinematic eye from the strictly narrative point of view and allowed for perspectives which were entirely those of the

montage. Indeed, as Deleuze tells us, “the eye is not the too-immobile human eye; it is the eye of the camera, that is an eye in matter, a perception such as it is in matter” (2005a: 41).

Based on this reading of Deleuze’s montage analyses, I return once again to the case study outlined above. I shall argue that the occurrences might fruitfully be understood as a series of variations between incommensurable social identities. In that sense, different actualized positions are always in-between social identities.

## Temporal Aesthetics: Correlating the Incommensurable

If we take seriously Deleuze’s claim that the aesthetic functioning of images in montage is predicated on the existence of internal incommensurabilities, what consequences might this argument have for our anthropological explorations of social exchanges? Surely, such an approach requires that we begin by exploring the differentiations and variations that run through social forms rather than taking the elicitation of the latter as an initial point of departure. From this perspective, then, social identities emerge as effects of the ways in which seemingly incommensurable elements intertwine and pass into each other. Returning to the dispute between Alberto and Gito, we consequently need to bracket the initial distinction between donor and cause and focus on the flows of differentiation that run within and between their irreconcilable positions.

As already discussed, close reciprocal relations with Mphumo, the original *na-tivo* owner, were considered as being crucial by both newcomers as they apparently secured legitimate claims to land. In Mozambique, it has been illegal to make transactions in land since Independence in 1975 when the ruling Frelimo party initiated a comprehensive nationalization campaign based on strict socialist ideals (Garvey 1998; Jenkins 1998; cf. Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995:30).<sup>14</sup> Residents who have bought their plots from previous landowners are thus formally considered as illegal squatters and can be forcefully removed on the basis of current land law legislation. Still, with a central administration that completely lack the financial and human capacities to monitor deviations from the law, transactions in peri-urban land plots are informally accepted by state and municipal agencies provided that they do not contradict official planning initiatives (Nielsen 2011b). To complicate matters further, in neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city, such as Mulwene, urban planning is often the outcome of informal processes where local administrative personnel contract architects to parcel out land in order to establish some kind of spatial regularity (Nielsen 2007, 2009). In many cases, these plans lack formal approval and are therefore not registered in the municipal cadastre. As a result, the strength of individual claims to land will most frequently be determined by the relational power of the claimant (cf. Lund 1998: 161). Still, as might be apparent by this brief description of urban land politics in Mozambique, the position of potential buyers, such as Alberto and Gito, rests on a fundamental paradox. They cannot make themselves visible as formal buyers as this would make the illegal occupancy too overt. Conversely, they *must* make themselves visible, as they need to make their claims to land known by the neighborhood administration in order to acquire future access to basic infrastructure, such as water and electricity.

In order to understand this peculiar relational aesthetics, it is perhaps useful to clarify the distinction between two identities already mentioned, buyer and newcomer. A newcomer is a priori without relational power and is therefore com-

pletely dependent on the official urban governance system, which, as we have just seen, functions in a highly irregular manner. At the same time, however, it is the newcomer who may formally apply for rights to a plot without having to rely on relational ties. In contrast, a buyer crystallizes an illegal system and is therefore exposed to the erratic maneuvers of greedy civil servants wanting to benefit from the situation, e.g., by confiscating and later reselling the land. Still, depending on his or her financial capacities, it is likely that the buyer acquires immediate access to land whereas a newcomer is generally required to wait several years before being allocated official use-rights to a plot (or having the initial request rejected) (Nielsen 2008: 59–66). As we saw above, it was crucial for both Alberto and Gito to have their houses registered by the neighborhood administration, as this would hopefully yield sufficient legitimacy to deflect attention from the illegal transactions with Mphumo while also delegitimize the opponent's claims. Unfortunately, the ongoing conflict only increased overall focus on their previous exchanges, which culminated in old Mphumo being summoned to shed light on the occurrences. The position that both Alberto and Gito considered as being the appropriate in order to claim rights to land was therefore in the "interval," to paraphrase Deleuze, between buyer and newcomer. Both contestants sought to attain the visibility from these identities without having to assume neither one nor the other. Stated somewhat differently, the positions that Alberto and Gito explicitly avoided were those which ipso facto canceled out internal incommensurabilities—i.e., newcomer without buyer and vice-versa. This analytical account is shown in figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3.** The elicitory space between "newcomer" and "buyer." The triangles indicate the points at which the opposite identity is canceled out.

Strong relations with Mphumo suggested to the neighborhood administration that the newcomer-cum-buyer had a consolidated position in the community. Most often, potential buyers were presented as being related by kin to the former owner, something that could be extremely difficult to refute (although it was apparent to all that the reciprocal relationship was, indeed, anchored in a financial transaction). At the same time, it was important not to make the connection too explicit, as this would potentially threaten not only the current transaction but also the continuous occupancy of residents having previously bought plots of land. When seeking to be registered by the neighborhood administration and thus potentially have access to basic infrastructure, it was consequently a matter of emphasizing the legitimacy acquired through the reciprocal relation to the former owner (but without assuming the status of buyer) while also appearing as having rights to the same benefits as any regular newcomer, which, given the former relation, might be achieved without having to endure the erratic nature of the administrative system (i.e., without assuming the status of newcomer).

If we return to Deleuze's analyses of cinematic montage, we might fruitfully see the opposition between newcomer and buyer as a contrast between seemingly incommensurable images connected to different "out-of-fields." As already outlined, in montage, the "cinematic perspective" emerges in the gap or interval between different images as they interrelate and pass into each other. The primacy of each individual image is thus canceled out by the "tertium quid" (third thing)

that emerges in the interval between the former. In a nutshell, the cinematic perspective in montage only exists because it is not exclusively attached to any one of the connected images. It is my argument that the elicitation of social identities on the outskirts of Maputo, Mozambique, may be understood in a strikingly similar manner. As I have tried to describe, images of newcomers and buyers were juxtaposed and displaced through a series of reciprocal exchanges. The elicitation of social identities thus emerged as a function of the variations created through the momentary interrelation of these images. If we accept Deleuze's understanding of time as the power of differentiation (1995a: 55), the case study can be said to reveal a peculiar temporal aesthetics that make sociality appear in the form of modulation as modulation. Whereas the fixed social positions implied by the terms *newcomer* and *buyer* were specifically avoided, the oscillation between them was not. In fact, although social identities emerged through the juxtaposition of these incommensurable images, they were elicited only in the interval between them. We might even argue that Alberto and Gito acquired social significance by *not* being either newcomer or buyer.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made two analytical readings of the same ethnographical case study. Focusing on an aesthetics of form, I outlined how a conflict over land in a poor peri-urban neighborhood in Maputo, Mozambique, could be interpreted as a series of exchanges through which the contesting parties sought to position themselves as either donor or cause. Sociality was consequently interpreted as an outcome of the appropriate elicitation of aesthetic forms. Inspired by Gilles Deleuze's analyses of cinematic montage, I then proceeded to make a different reading that emphasized the oscillation between social identities. According to Deleuze, time is first and foremost a power of differentiation and in his studies of montage he has outlined how it asserts itself through unstable connections between incommensurable images. In a similar vein, I have argued that sociality may also appear as a temporal aesthetics being elicited in the intervals between different social identities. Indeed, Alberto and Gito, the two contesting parties, sought to position themselves as rightful owners of the disputed plot by being neither newcomer nor buyer, while still asserting the legitimacy implied by both.<sup>15</sup>

If sociality is revealed through patterned acts of elicitation (cf. Strathern 1988: 181), then we might concur with James Weiner that aesthetics cannot merely be considered as "an attitude of detached contemplation," but needs to be understood as "an integral part of our life-constituting activities" through which we discover "the lineaments and forms of the world" (1995: 34). Primarily from the work of Marilyn Strathern and Roy Wagner, we have thus learned how sociality is made (or "invented," to use Wagner's term) through elicitory processes where people manifest themselves in order to be properly recognized by others. However, as Weiner also makes clear, what we and others take to be the outcome of elicitory processes might be very different (*ibid.*). In Melanesia, Strathern tells us, sociality is brought forth through appropriate aesthetic forms; hence, "a clan of men and women only appears as a 'clan', or a human child as 'human' rather than spirit, if the contours, the shapes are right" (1999: 14). Conversely, in Mozambique, social identities are brought forth through shapes and contours that are not right, so to speak. As we saw in the case study above, social positions emerge in the in-

terval between seemingly incommensurable images. Whereas in Melanesia, the outcome of elicitory processes is a series of relatively stable social forms, it is their differentiation that characterizes the aesthetic production of Mozambican identities. Rather than an aesthetics of form, it is an aesthetics of time.

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the invaluable comments from James Weiner and Morten A. Pedersen, the editors of this volume, and the two anonymous reviewers on previous drafts of this chapter.

## Notes

1. I follow Weiner's Kantian understanding of *aesthetics* as "the specification of the forms of perception by which phenomena are made to appear" (1995: 33).
2. Although the dynamics of elicitation will be explored in detail below, it might initially be defined as the process of bringing forth certain effects from significant others through appropriate aesthetic means, e.g. ways of acting, speaking or exchanging valuable items (Leach 2002; Strathern 1988, 2000; Weiner 1995).
3. As will be clear, I take Wagner and Strathern as particularly influential figures giving voice to predominant analytical approaches on the aesthetic of social relationality. Among contemporary scholars being inspired by the seminal studies by Wagner and Strathern, some do of course emphasize how social forms might be negotiated and recalibrated; see for example Reed 2007; 2011; Stasch 2009.
4. Although, as this quotation clearly shows, Wagner is aware of a potential symbolic instability, I will nevertheless argue that this pertains (in Wagner's work) to the process as such and not its effect, i.e., the social form, which remains relatively stable.
5. Given the analytical argument of this book chapter—and also to ease the reading—*montage* will subsequently refer to "disruptive montage" unless otherwise indicated.
6. *Nativo* is the locally used term for a person believed to have been born in the area.
7. *Informação à Administração do Distrito Municipal Nº 5* (26.05.04). Document in municipal archive in Mulwene.
8. Each of Maputo's seven urban districts is governed by urban administrators. Mulwene is located in Urban District 5.
9. *Exposição para Senhora Administradora do Distrito Urbano Nº 5* (27.04.04). Document in municipal archive at the district administration, urban district 5.
10. *Senhor vereador. Assunto: Exposição* (31.03.05). Document in municipal archive at the district administration, urban district 5.
11. The principle of eclipsing is based on the idea that the "content of whatever reading is eclipsed is present in the content of whatever is foregrounded. A view of the sun in eclipse is still a view of the sun, not the moon, though it is the moon one sees" (Gell 1999: 62).
12. Following Strathern, I take the *cause* to be what makes an item detachable, while the *origin* is the relation that produced it (1992: 179).
13. Strathern argues that potential identities are anticipated in the present one, e.g., when a daughter exchanged between clans is also already a future wife (1992: 186). What I wish to add to this argument, however, is the possibility of the social identity containing its own incommensurability.
14. Although there has been a gradual loosening of land regulations, the only formal way of securing access to land is by acquiring Land Use Rights (DUAT). According to the 1997 Land Law, DUAT can be obtained through customary occupation, occupation in good faith or legal authorization of a request (Art. 12).

15. Arguably, the positions in-between could be considered as actualizing a “liminal” state of transition (Turner 1967, 1974). Still, in contrast to the “interstructural situations” examined by Turner, which is characterized by an essentially unstructured becoming, the position in-between buyer and newcomer derives its potency by *not* assuming precisely these two identificational categories. It is consequently a much more narrowly defined space of modulation than a liminal state.

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