http://eprints.lse.ac.uk

CLARA DEVLIEGER
London School of Economics and Political Science

Contractual dependencies:

Disability and the bureaucracy of begging in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

ABSTRACT
One of the most conspicuous livelihood strategies for physically disabled people in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, is a particular style of begging known locally as "doing documents." Confronted with the stigma of begging, disabled beggars create documents in an attempt to legitimize and regulate begging through formalization and bureaucracy, presenting their relationship with donors as NGO fund-raising and government tax-collecting. The dynamics of petitioning for these "contractual dependencies" provide a nuanced perspective on desired dependencies: dependencies can be presented in multiple ways, and people consider some dependencies more legitimate and valuable than others. Recipients are not passive but play a defining role in shaping these relationships, seeking a balance between proximity and desired distance to patrons. [*dependence, disability, distribution, bureaucracy, begging, temporality, Democratic Republic of Congo*]

BOKUSE
Na Kinshasa, moko ya bamayele ya kobika po na bato bazali na tengu (*handicapés*) ezali oyo babengaka: "kosalela badocument" to "kosalela mikanda". Bato ya tengu basenga-sengaka lisungi pe ebimisaka bango bisenga-senga. Po na kokima ebimiseli wana, bato ya tengu bamisalela mikanda po na kondimisa kosenga na bango bo ete eyebani na mobeko. Na boye bakomisa yango bo likambo ezali kosalama na nzela pe endimami na leta pe eyangelamaka na mikanda. Epayi ya bato bakopesa mosolo, bamibimisaka lokola Lingomba ya bokumbeli makambo ya leta te (ONG) ya bokongoli mosolo ya lisungi pe ya mpako ya leta. Loyenge ya bolakisi mikanda ya "boyokani po na kosalisama" epesi mwa bokeseni na etaleli ya kosalisama oyo bango balingi. Kosalisama ekoki kolakisa na banzela ebele. Na kati ya boyokani yango, bazwi-lisungi bamitikaka te kasi bamitiaka nde na esika ya basengi na bolukaka ndelo ya malamu kati na bango pe bakolo mimbongo. [*kosalisama, tengu, bokaboleli, boyangelami na mikanda, bisenga-senga, botango, Ekolo Kongo ya Demokrasi*]

Begging is among the most prominent economic activities pursued by physically disabled people (*handicapés*) in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.[1] Marc was a middle-aged disabled man with disfigured legs because of childhood polio, who had alternated between begging and other livelihood activities throughout his life. He told me that in Kinshasa there were three categories of disabled beggars. The first he called beggars who sit (alone), *bamendiants bafandaka*, because "it's too difficult for them to walk." The second was beggars who walk alone or in pairs, *bamendiants batambolaka*, and usually make rounds on Friday and Saturday. On Friday, they would go to mosques and businesses belonging to Muslims, mostly merchants who were Lebanese and from West African backgrounds. Saturdays, he told me, were days for everyone; it was the generally accepted day for beggars to make their rounds.

But the defining practice of disabled people who beg in the center of Kinshasa today formed the third category: those who "do documents" (*batu basalaka documents*), also known as *documentaires*. In contrast to other categories of beggars, they formed large groups of up to 15 people. While most beggars approached potential donors with pleading looks, extended hands, and gestures expressing hunger, *documentaires* took a different tack: they presented a potential donor with a photocopied document requesting contributions for a specific purpose (see Figure 1). *Documentaires* described the system to me as an agreement or "contract" between beggar and donor. If the donor "bought" the document and the group was successful in obtaining funding, donors kept it as a receipt and hung it up to display. It showed that the giver had donated to disabled people and was no longer obliged to give to other groups. In the exchange, the group of beggars would not return to solicit
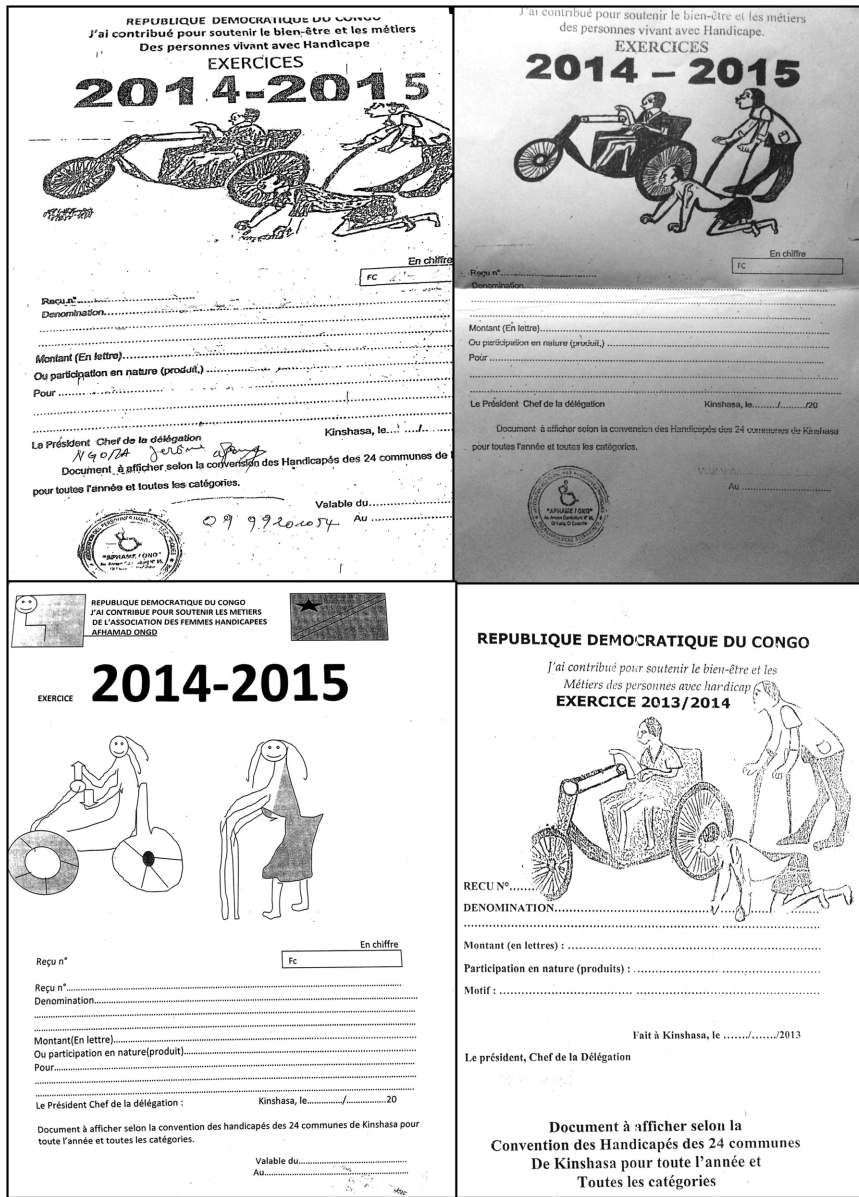
Figure 1. Examples of documents used by some beggars in Kinshasa, in 2013 and 2014. These documents, presented by a group of beggars to a potential donor, requested contributions for a specific purpose. If the donor "bought" the document, the donor kept it as a "receipt." In exchange, the beggars agreed not to solicit contributions for the purpose written on the document for another year.

contributions for the purpose written on the document for another year.[2]

In many descriptions of begging, the obligation to give is framed in terms of religious charity, particularly from the givers' point of view (Appadurai 1990; Iliffe 1987; Renne 2010). For *documentaires*, in contrast, religious charity was at best a minor undertone. Their system instead deliberately evoked NGO fund-raising and government tax-collection. Adapting to Kinshasa's multicultural and multifaith social makeup, *documentaires* chose to persuade people to give by speaking the secular language of the state and that of international humanitarianism.

Begging has been described as a form of interaction that subverts ordinary systems of exchange, since beggars bargain from a position of weakness, making claims based not on what they can reciprocate but on what they lack (Gomm 1975, 536). The practice of the *documentaires* shows the reality of this subversion, yet, faced with perceptions of begging as unidirectional and inappropriate, they tried to present their relationship with "donors" as reciprocal. Presenting themselves as an NGO, the "receipt" beggars gave was meant to represent an understanding between the beggars, the donor, and (implicitly) the government, thus legitimizing the act of begging by imitating the practices of

a state bureaucracy. Yet while the *documentaires*' system rests on an ideal of social welfare entitlement, it operates in tension with a moral logic of dignity derived from personal independence and "honest" work, a logic that often clashes with common perceptions of disabled beggars as suspect and aggressive. Questions of entitlement, the nature of obligation, and how to identify those who "deserve" aid and care are at the contested heart of a fractious relationship between beggar and donor.

The practice of "doing documents" provides an opportunity to reconceptualize desired relationality within subordinate relationships, exploring the conflicting moral imagination surrounding independence or desired dependencies (Ferguson 2013). Because begging is highly controversial, presenting a dependent relationship as "contractual" and spreading such relationships over a wide network are beggars' strategies to manage a stigmatized occupation and maintain a degree of desired autonomy. The act of solicitation, examined from a petitioner's point of view, demonstrates that dependencies are multiple and that certain types of dependent relationships are more valued than others. Overemphasis on the benefits of being attached or detached from others risks obscuring the effort dependents put into delineating the boundaries of desired dependencies. Rather than passively maintaining subordinate relationships, petitioners play an active role in shaping how they are portrayed and temporally regulated. They do this by, among other things, drawing on the symbolic and regulatory power of bureaucracy.

Dependency and the desired social contract

In its form and language, the *documentaire* system most clearly echoed the history of increased secularization and specialization of welfare institutions (Iliffe 1987, 193), and especially the "NGOization" of Kinshasa since the 1990s. Documents presented beggars as an NGO, using drawings of themselves as beneficiaries and a congratulatory phrase praising shopkeepers' "contributions" as benefactors giving for a good cause.[3] The wider "NGOization" of social movements has profoundly affected how people express claims to membership by, among other things, orienting people toward discourses of "development" (Ferguson 1990) or citizen "empowerment" (Prince 2013), discourses that express a desire to live free from dependence on others.

But the NGO form of the *documentaire* system also reflects the state's position in estimations of social welfare. Particularly in Kinshasa since the early 1990s, civil society associations have become "vital components of the survival strategies invented by Kinois [inhabitants of Kinshasa] to replace the state in many areas of public life" (Giovannoni et al. 2004, 99). They are a critical means by which Kinois obtain resources and express claims of membership. Modern states often outsource governance rather than

governing directly (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 16). But while NGOs increasingly act on the state's behalf, the ideal of the state as responsible for the welfare of citizens in Kinshasa remains strong. Presenting the begging group as an "NGO" goes hand in hand with presenting the activity as "tax collecting." By presenting their livelihood through the lens of more acceptable forms of raising revenue, *documentaires* try to navigate an occupation that is widely stigmatized as the ultimate form of negative dependency, an occupation opposed to the values of independence that are embedded in languages of "development."

In many societies, one becomes a person through multiple attachments to others rather than by conceptualizing the self as an independent individual (e.g., Mahmood 2005; Strathern 1988). The degree to which personhood is shaped by valuing (in)dependence inevitably affects perceptions of disability. Where sociocultural environments place strong emphasis on independence, such as the Euro-American West, the dependency of disabled people on others can attract discrimination and stigma, since people perceive them as unable to fulfill ideals of independence (e.g., Albrecht 2003; Kittay 1999; Murphy 1987). But disability in other societies can be more associated with the "sociocentric" value of being part of social networks of dependencies rather than with individual work capacity, appearance, or ability (e.g., Livingston 2006; Nicolaisen 1995; Whyte and Ingstad 1995, 11). Dependencies on others, in this perspective, can be not a backward system but a valued achievement and a route toward social mobility (e.g., Ferguson 2013; Penfield 2017; Scherz 2014). In sub-Saharan Africa, "wealth in people" (Guyer 1993; Miers and Kopytoff 1977) as a mode of political power and a way of becoming a valuable person demonstrates how dependencies can be desired. In precolonial southern Africa, for example, dependence was a social system built around political leaders who competed for followers (Ferguson 2013). Far from being a passive condition, dependency on a powerful leader was a "mode of action" (Bayart 2000). Relations of dependence continue to be sought after, James Ferguson (2013) argues, because this is not only a way of structuring society but also a way of constructing persons. If disabled people cannot fulfill ideals of "independent" labor, they may still be able to find value as persons through dependent relations with others. But not all forms of dependency are equal. In common perception, people in Kinshasa widely considered begging an activity that diminishes a person's value; people often referred to beggars as "worthless people" (*batu pamba*) because they viewed them as relying entirely on others and unable to support dependents of their own. Tensions over value judgments were critical to the *documentaires*' performance.

Dependencies are enacted and performed in value transactions, particularly in displays of giving. Whereas analyses of such acts traditionally privilege matters of giving and take the giver's viewpoint, considering the act

of solicitation and the active role of the receiver highlights these relationships' unequal nature (cf. Retsikas 2016; Widlok 2013; Woodburn 1998). A social and historical perspective demonstrates how people are affected by changing ideas about (in)dependence (e.g., Fraser and Gordon 1994; Lamb 2013). Careful attention to practices of solicitation in one historical moment, however, reveals that people view certain types of dependencies as more dignified and moral than others, and that recipients are far from passive in shaping the asymmetrical relationships they seek. Petitioners can present the controversial dependencies they engage in as positive by, among other things, portraying these dependencies as governed by mutually agreed-on limits. Where there are multiple opinions about the acceptability of relying on others, informal bureaucracies can regulate unequal relationships.

Making the rounds

Many people I met during my fieldwork engaged from time to time in "doing documents." For some, "documents" was a permanent full-time activity; others dipped in and out. Even the full-timers combined earnings from "documents" with other sources.

Since I was familiar with at least one group member, I was generally not considered an object of begging; on the contrary, groups often insisted on sharing profits with me. But the response to the prospect of my accompanying them varied considerably. Where one group of women feared that donors would refuse to give on the assumption they were receiving money from me, one group of men paraded me and put me forward as a mascot: they presented me to every shopkeeper and sometimes told the shopkeeper half-jokingly to "watch out" and to "treat them well" because I was doing research and could portray them negatively. That my presence affected their performance was obvious, yet how they involved or excluded me in the practice was illuminating in itself.

Routine and negotiation

I went out one day with a pair of disabled women named Esmerelda and Jacqueline, accompanied by Esmerelda's baby and a pair of young able-bodied helpers. Groups of *documentaires* were often single sex; splitting into gender groups was apparently a newer technique that was advantageous for women. When shopkeepers told beggars that they had already given to disabled people, they would reply that the donors had given to men and that they also needed to give to women.

The documents that Esmerelda and Jacqueline "sold" to shopkeepers were somewhat typical of the genre. They resembled formal Congolese correspondence. Each displayed the national flag at the top and a stamp and signature from the leader of the delegation at the bottom,

and presented the begging group as an NGO or non-profit organization (*association sans but lucratif*), confirming its legitimacy and official authority. Along with an (often crude) illustration of disabled people, the middle of the document had the layout of a receipt. Before arriving at a business, whoever could best read and write would fill in a photo-copy with the name of the business, an optimistic sum to be donated, and a purpose for the money: new school year expenses, a disabled people's home, or just food. Finally, the document often encouraged the donor to feel good about themselves and display their generosity, carrying the motto "I've contributed to support the well-being and occupations of disabled people."

But the document's sentiment of conviviality and official regularity was often at odds with the exchange itself. After several disappointments in the late morning, we moved on to a shop selling air-conditioning systems. The two women told their young helpers to raise them up on the pavement in front of the shop, and Esmerelda blocked the door with her tricycle. "The person who deals with [*koyamba*, lit. to welcome, to receive] that isn't here," someone said from inside. "We'll give him the document." Esmerelda gestured to one of her young men to take the document inside, but a security guard came over and said Esmerelda would have to go herself; he did not want a street child going inside. She got into a loud argument with him but climbed off the tricycle, taking her baby with her, and tried to go in with crutches.

One of the shop assistants told her to calm down, and she declared, defiantly, "Come get the document so we'll get money. We'll sit here for two hours!" Jacqueline too got off her tricycle and moved to the middle of the shop floor, clients and workers sitting around her on chairs. Esmerelda continued to block the door with her tricycle, and both of them started declaiming, "They pay! They pay! [*Bafuta! Bafuta!*]" They were making a scene; people stared, and inside the clients and workers looked on, embarrassed.

Workers tried to persuade the women to come back the next day, but Esmerelda and Jacqueline refused. After another loud argument, they eventually gave in. "This is a rendezvous you're giving us," they said, implying that they had reached a business agreement. As we were leaving, the shop woman who had persuaded them waved and beamed at Esmerelda's baby, bringing out smiles from the mother as well. They grinned and waved as we left, the rancor of the previous scene apparently forgotten.

Esmerelda and Jacqueline's experience was rather typical for a first approach to a new business, a certain routine involving force, negotiation, and performance. It was common for employees to claim that the shop owner was absent, that the business was doing badly or that there was no money on hand at the moment, and to attempt to remove the *documentaires*. The disabled beggars forcefully

Figure 2. *Documentaires*, or those who beg using documents in Kinshasa, wait outside a housewares shop while their spokesperson approaches shopkeepers inside, February 19, 2014. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

imposed their bodies and tricycles to escalate the situation from proposition to demand. They did this, they told me, because too often they were told to come back without result. They would tell the person they would wait, often taking up a substantial amount of the business space (see Figure 2). "Soliciting … anticipates a partnership, and thereby creates the position of the donor, as well as prefiguring the act of giving itself," observes Kostas Retsikas (2016, 4).

Once the right person accepted a document, the situation calmed down and more ordinary processes of negotiation would begin. In contrast to situations in other societies in which beggars combine a latent menace with a performance of humility and subservience (e.g., Appadurai 1990; Iliffe 1987, 18–19, 32–33, 249; Staples 2007, 184), interactions between *documentaires* and donors mirrored local practices of (market) bargaining. Beggars varied in their personal styles: some acted submissively and dressed shabbily, while others, usually group spokespeople, were assertive and better taken care of. A business owner usually declared that the amount requested was far too high and offered a smaller amount. The beggars would then likely refuse to take the money, saying it was too little, or try to persuade the donor to give more. The donor might raise the amount, telling them to take it or leave it. Negotiation could lead to heated discussions, although the tone would be largely positive; once they had begun negotiating, the beggars knew they would not be leaving empty handed.

Audience, performance, and cultural codes

In theory, beggars wrote three or four purposes on the documents. Most successful were collections to celebrate New Year's festivities and for the return of children to school, while less so were solicitations to celebrate Independence Day and Easter or to fix up housing. In practice, however, beggars did not necessarily use the money they collected for the purpose they declared on the document, and they sometimes returned to businesses with other reasons for their request.

Beggars also changed their routines when they anticipated an exceptional gift from certain donors, and professional beggars kept track of where and when they might expect such extravagances. Those who were well informed had an advantage in accessing these exceptional gifts, which donors gave on a first come, first served basis. Private, large-scale factory businesses gave gifts of money or goods at certain times during the year, especially around New Year. A soap factory gave free soap to 500 disabled people once a month, a cement company was rumored to give $10,000 once a year, a bank $1,000 a year, a bread factory $5,000 twice a year.[4] But from time to time companies or individuals performed an unexpected, truly sensational act of generosity.

The first time I participated in begging, I witnessed such an exceptional event with a group of disabled men. After several unsuccessful visits, we walked to the large home of a prominent politician in an upmarket residential area. Waiting for the politician to leave his compound, the group secretary took out his folder full of papers and started preparing a document. After praising the politician's activities as a "work of art," he said they were asking for help to send 36 children of disabled people back to school. Previously, they had presented him with the gift of a bronze sculpture from the local art market, along with a letter applauding his political work.

After a long wait, the politician left the compound, and from our space in the hot sun they praised him, loudly. He was visibly irritated, but when he returned from his visit next door, he suddenly called the group president into his compound and presented him with 3 million francs (ca. $3,333), a small fortune. The group sped away with the money, followed by several onlookers, and went to a quiet place to calculate how much they had received and how to distribute it among themselves. Everyone who had been part of their operation received a share of the cash, from the policemen who guarded the politician's house and had not chased them away, to the newspaper sellers and other young men who served as the beggars' "legs" (as they called them) by informing them that the politician was around, to the young boys who pushed some of the disabled people's wheelchairs.

Since beggars usually ended the day with only $5 to $10 each, this event became legendary. A year later, people still spoke about how they might, once again, persuade the politician to give. Later, I was told that the politician had refused to give anymore, angry that disabled people kept coming back and in larger groups. Yet occasionally I would still hear that he had promised money, and those who were informed would cancel all other plans to wait outside his residence.

A routine verbal activity can easily become familiar as a genre of performance (Barber 2007), and the gestures of force and negotiation between beggars were just such a familiar performance. As Arjun Appadurai (1990, 108) has pointed out, begging is "not completely removed from the arena of . . . performance" because the conventions of interaction are "public and highly orchestrated." In Kinshasa, as elsewhere, beggars invoke shared social codes when trying to appeal to potential donors, and the genre characteristics of petition depended on these codes.

While the document's form most clearly referenced the dynamics of NGO fund-raising, in addressing potential donors the *documentaires* tried to invoke a moral relationship between superior and inferior. As part of the performance, Esmerelda and Jacqueline's defiant and angry demand for payment, or the beggars' praise of the politician, was not intended to represent their inner feelings. They drew rather on a shared understanding of disabled people as "deserving poor" in a recognized system of redistribution. They deployed "coercive subordination" to "trap [potential benefactors] in the cultural implications of their roles as superiors, that is, in the obligation to be generous" (Appadurai 1990, 101; cf. Staples 2007). Flattery and gift giving are local cultural practices employed to evoke this obligation, practices in which leaders are fashioned as fathers expected to "feed" their inferiors in return for their loyalty (Schatzberg 2001), and in which generous giving engenders prestige.

As the example of the politician demonstrates, begging could easily merge into gift exchange between clients and patrons, since verbal praise and the bronze sculpture were "exchanged" for the lavish donation. Politicians in Kinshasa often make public displays of distributing goods to "vulnerable" populations such as disabled people, orphans, or the elderly. Furthermore, the beggars' written and oral flattery invokes models of patronage common in many parts of Africa (e.g., Barber 1989; Irvine 1989; Vail and White 1991), and which hold a prominent position in various aspects of Kinois popular culture (e.g., White 1999; Pype 2015). Beggars performed deference as a "declaration of dependence" to extract resources (Bonilla 2013; Penfield 2017), and the declaration had a coercive edge.

Begging as an occupation

From "deserving" to "dishonest": The tense relationship between beggar and donor

Benefactors were not always willing participants in beggars' performances. Many benefactors, and indeed the beggars themselves, were often ambivalent about the acceptability of begging as a livelihood, describing *documents* as a legitimate occupation on one occasion, while condemning begging on another.

In a positive assessment, beggars and nonbeggars alike presented begging as an acceptable and necessary form of making a living for disabled people when they were considered "deserving poor." Disability may qualify disabled people for occupations such as begging (Fassin 1991; Iliffe 1987; Whyte and Ingstad 1995, 14), especially if a society defines disability as an inability to do productive labor (Rose 2015). People would commonly tell me that disabled people were not to blame for their situation and that, because of their physical condition and lack of education, they understandably could not work. Even if a disabled applicant had a diploma, interlocutors were quick to point out, companies in Kinshasa would refuse the hassle associated with hiring and employing them. They therefore accepted begging as the regrettable but sole solution for survival. People in Kinshasa associated the plight of the disabled with lack of government support, invoking ideals of redistribution through state-organized social welfare and responsibility toward a deserving citizenry. During one begging trip, I talked to a man visiting a neighboring compound. When I told him about my research, he told me,

> If you see them, you have to give without hesitation. Look at them, they can't do anything in that condition, so you have to give to them. You shouldn't take them as beggars [*mendiants*] but as disabled people [*handicapés*] at the end. A disabled person can't work fields, do commerce. [. . .] It's necessary that someone explains [this] to the government to help them. Even if they have work, it's necessary to give them money at the end of the month. They're abandoned. The state has to help them, not leave them. [. . .] The state should build large building blocks for them where you can live with 5,000 people . . . . The state should give them tricycles, flour, rice, and $200 a month.

More often, however, people countered, supplemented, or voiced the opinion that begging is necessary or even positive simultaneously with the idea that begging, even for disabled people, is unacceptable. Stigmatization is readily apparent in the language used to refer to the *documentaire* system of solicitation. The term *documentaire* itself is a euphemism, used by practitioners and their entourage to distinguish it from outright "begging" (*mendier*), the

activity framed as "asking for help" (*kosenga assistance*). The term *documentaire*, furthermore, is ironic and fits with the dry humor of Kinshasa (Devlieger 2018). Adding the French nominal suffix *-aire* to the end of *document* euphemistically turns the word into a name for an occupation for "someone who does documents" in the same way it does for *parlementaire* (parliamentarian) or *bibliothécaire* (librarian). Morphologically turning "documents" into a profession produced a smirking laugh when someone heard the term for the first time, since it tacitly conflated begging with salaried, "respectable" occupations.

Because of its ironic subtext, some *documentaires* found the term embarrassing and did not use it to describe themselves. Those who did refer to themselves as a *documentaire* exploited its irony and were confident enough to make antiestablishment jokes using the term. Most beggars whom I asked about their occupation referred to themselves as NGO workers. If I was able to ask further, they would more often reluctantly tell me they "do documents," or softly tell me they were, after all, a *mendiant*.

Many people, however, thought begging was not merely an embarrassing but a "dishonest" occupation, one adopted by people with a "bad mentality." Suspicions colored the willingness of potential donors to give, because they doubted whether the petitioner was a suitable recipient (Bornstein 2012). Many said disabled people were perfectly capable of engaging in ordinary livelihood strategies but were unwilling to do so; beggars (and not only disabled ones) were dishonest, "undeserving poor," likely faking a disability or otherwise lying about their ability to pursue "good honest work" (Groce, Loeb and Murray 2014; Retsikas 2016). "They're faking [*bazokosa,* from the verb *kokosa*]," suspicious donors regularly warned me, the Lingala word carrying the meaning of both verbal deception and forgery. Stories of beggars' tricks went around among (especially foreign) business owners: beggars faking blindness with the help of a pair of sunglasses, fooling new business owners into paying for false market taxes, sending children to beg while an adult hid behind a car, or working together with police to arrest a (foreign) business owner for an "infraction."

Along with suspected dishonesty, people were discontented about how *documentaires* were rumored to extract donations. While disabled people were widely stigmatized as "difficult," many people in Kinshasa often considered *documentaires* particularly aggressive, potentially violent, and prone to apply mafia-like tactics to gang up on those who refused to pay. Disabled people invoked both compassion and fear; deformed legs served as a metonym for incapacity, but accompanying crutches or sticks could swiftly become dangerous weapons. Able-bodied people could express a degree of sympathy or comprehension for the frustrations of disabled people, yet they described disabled beggars as extorting criminals. One journalist writing in the early 2000s described large groups of disabled beggars in Kinshasa as ferocious, using "gangsterish tactics" to make frightened shopkeepers pay up, threatening to smash windows and beat up guards (Wrong 2001, 7–8). "At times," Christian Lund (2006, 697) observes, "there is a fine line . . . between collecting a market-place tax and running a protection racket." Rather than a positive, moral relationship of dependence, unsympathetic donors could equally view disability "taxes" as extortion.

"The hungry stomach has no ears," admitted Claude, a middle-aged disabled man with a limp hand damaged by polio. A professional beggar, he kept a schedule on a piece of paper of who was giving what, when, and where; when there were no specific events to heed to, he spent most of his time walking between businesses with a relatively fixed group of beggars. He gave me examples of when things could escalate: when security personnel blocked access to the boss; when beggars could tell that a business had an abundance of money yet refused to give; when they received several appointments to collect and were continuously put off; or when donors called the police to chase them away. In these cases, beggars felt they were getting blocked or disrespected, or that promises were not being kept. Matching the suspicion of the donors, the beggars suspected universal deceit over the reality of disposable, or distributable, income.

But both beggars and potential donors could connect the reputation for violence to the illegitimacy of the enterprise. Marc, an ex-beggar, was particularly negative. He had changed from begging to border trade when an opportunity came up to work with a friend, making the change because he started having children and he did not want them growing up seeing him like that. "[I stopped] so I'll have honor, value," Marc said. "I didn't want people saying 'the man of [that] woman asks for money.'" Explaining the difference between *documentaires* and other beggars, he specified, "Those who do documents take things by force and brutality. It's not good." He confessed that he had also done it in the past and that sometimes it would get very "hot." "All of it is bad," he explained, referring to the aggression at the heart of the *documentaire* practice. "The money you're getting isn't with a good heart . . . . The money for your children's schooling is [soiled by] sins."

Bureaucratic imitation: Taxes and contracts

The relationship between donor and beggar had not always been so contested, beggars told me. During Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorship, giving to people with disabilities had been a social "obligation," but the end of the regime and the economic collapse of the 1990s brought a whirlwind of changes: the number of beggars rose, fewer people gave, and charity was increasingly criticized as treating the symptoms rather than the cause. Beggars' accounts of patrons'

Figure 3. An untitled painting by Kinshasa artist Bosoku Ekunde, 2014. The painting depicts *documentaires*, or those who beg using documents in Kinshasa. While the artist made the painting at the author's request, he chose to depict the international population from which beggars request donations. From left to right, he shows *documentaires* begging from people of West African, Asian, and Congolese origin; both beggars and donors point at documents. In the foreground, he depicts individual beggars. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

Figure 4. A shopwindow full of documents used by some beggars in Kinshasa, January 28, 2014. In the lower left-hand corner are market tax receipts. [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

dwindling support mirrored the increased dissolution of kinship obligations. While men increasingly could not fulfill responsibilities to provide, women and young people could appropriate existing patterns of authority in new and flexible ways by, for example, disengaging from family expectations and responsibilities (De Boeck and Plissart 2004, 194). Unable to count on patrons or kin, beggars experienced increasing shame and hostility while resources diminished with nothing to fill the void.

In this tense, contested situation, the document emerged as a social code through which beggars tried to ease communication between themselves and the various (frequently hostile) potential donors. While the beggars were familiar with practices associated with religious traditions, the universal and bureaucratic language of NGO fund-raising and state tax-collection proved most useful in a multicultural capitalist economy, dominated by foreigners who did not necessarily feel affiliation with local logics nor adhered to one dominant religion (see Figure 3). Documents simultaneously enact a range of regulatory authorities (McKay 2012). Next to the beggars' documents, one paper often found taped to shopwindows was the governmental receipt for market taxes (see Figure 4). When the *documentaires*' self-presentation as an "NGO" failed to convince potential donors that they were industrious and deserving, evoking taxes implied that people should view donations as obligatory rather than voluntary, and not just in an extortionate manner.

The beggars collect donations in much the same way as the state collects taxes, going from shop to shop. The disabled beggars' letter was structured as a formal receipt, named the country, and invoked the city of Kinshasa, and thus closely resembled tax documents. During my fieldwork, businesses paid taxes for many ministries and services, but not for the Ministry of Social Affairs, which was notionally responsible for *handicapés*.[5] Business owners knew this, and many disabled beggars did as well; beggars explicitly invoked this social gap in public provision to justify the autonomous collection of disability "taxes." The logic of governmental order and responsibility implied in the *documentaires*' letters, therefore, is echoed by some to justify begging as an indictment of state absence, in which disability is a mark of entitled incapacity that the state ought to compensate.

People often viewed an ideal state welfare system as conforming to the values of a hierarchical social system in which superiors are expected to be generous and responsible for care, as witnessed in the beggars' encounter with the politician. The documents gave this desired responsibility a notional reality between donor and petitioner, indicting the absence of the state even as they evoked its regulation. Conversely, a document could appeal as protection against what suspicious donors perceived as predatory behavior. Proof of payment for market taxes safeguards one from getting taxed twice by a "smiling-snarling" state (Schatzberg 1988) that provides little services for taxes; displaying proof of disability "taxes" followed similar logics of prevention.

Begging is viewed as a failure of the welfare state by Western academics and politicians as much as by the *documentaires* of Kinshasa (Dean 2000; Muñoz and Potter 2014). It is, in fact, the most institutionalized form of social security (Renne 2010, 70), but it operates outside the state. It can even seem opposed to the state, or at least to state interests; in Kinshasa and elsewhere, local communities can

see beggars as a menace (Groce, Loeb and Murray 2014; Iliffe 1987, 93). Beggars may be affected by the city's large-scale "cleanup" operations, or directly targeted by operations aimed at removing and rehabilitating them (e.g., Kassah 2008; Silla 1998).[6]

Beggars' use of state-like bureaucracy to bring the image and form of the state into the field of begging thus goes beyond appealing to cross-cultural symbols to calm tensions that delegitimize begging. Documents can realize desired realities (Bear 2001; Mathur 2012), a capacity that is closely related to the imagination and reproduction of state and civil society organizations (Gonçalves 2013; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Poole 2004). Postcolonial bureaucracies often function by combining official regulations with informal norms, resulting in processes of "informal privatization" when government officials offer services for personal payment (Blundo 2006; Olivier de Sardan 2008).

Through their practices of power (Mbembe 1992), *documentaires* engaged with the idea of NGOs and the state, if not with the institutions themselves, and in doing so they adapted processes of "informal privatization" to suit their needs. As Veena Das (2004, 245) observes, the state can be "multiplied, literalized through court papers, certificates, and forged documents, it can enter the life of the community." The state can remain elusive and yet leave its "signature," a "spectral presence materialized in documents" (250–51) that can extend the state into domains of private life that are otherwise inaccessible to bureaucratic practices. *Documentaires* seek, even forge, this signature, and they evoke the spectral presence of NGOs and the state behind their request for assistance.[7] The act of appropriation in the documents was therefore less about the power of the state than about its legitimate authority (Meagher 2012). The signs of regulation evoked by documents could lend legitimacy to a practice that, in its bare forms, was too easily dismissed as illegitimate (Lund 2006, 692).

Balancing acts: Between autonomy and dependence

Autonomously collecting social security payments was thus a personal social contract as much as one between state and citizen, and in a positive judgment of the activity this contractual relationship was paramount. With beggars I got to know well, there was more space to discuss positive aspects of "documents" as something akin to relationships with previous employers. Sometimes they justified and defended themselves defiantly, without prompting from me, indicating how aware they were of the negative view on their activities. Claude, for example, had held various occupations in his life. He had traded across the border between Kinshasa and Brazzaville (Republic of Congo) from 1987 to 1997, but he had gone bust when authorities in Brazzaville destroyed his goods around the fall of Mobutu. He then managed a

shop belonging to a West African merchant until 1999, when his boss went bankrupt and left the country. Ever since the pillages started by underpaid soldiers that swept through the country in 1991 and 1993, he had tried occasional begging, which became full time when his boss departed. Like others, Claude made a strong distinction between *mendiants* and *documentaires*:

Claude: OK, you see this [*points to the paper*], the paper I gave you?

Clara: Yes.

Claude: This is a contract we sign with them once a year. It's a document you give, like a tax of the disabled. You give me money and I leave you the paper.

Clara: Yes.

Claude: But when [an individual *mendiant*] puts out their hand like this [*shows the palm of his hand*], you give him [money], but he won't give you a paper. [. . .] Our paper is a convention we sign with economic operators [. . .] even though ours is [also] help [given] [*aide*], ours is on paper [. . .] [and it's only] once a year, that's it. [. . .] You see, so the difference is large.

Clara: OK, I see that with documents you're kind of organized . . .

Claude: Yes, it's a [type of] begging that's well organized.

At the heart of his distinction, echoed by many others, Claude distinguished "documents" from other types of begging by the importance of a good relationship with donors. For Claude, it was a more "responsible" and "organized" type of begging, upholding these good relationships, bound by a "contract," which was exchanged for donations, giving recognition to the donor, with an agreed time limit on repeated requests. The "contract" was an attempt to regularize the temporalities of precarious dependencies. "Ours is on paper"; the document here symbolized their agreement and formalized the relationship and transaction. The "sale" of a document implied the start or continuation of a relationship rather than the end of it; it was a way of complying with the will of a donor, who would appreciate the temporal regularity and organization expressed in the promise of being obliged to donate only once a year. Documents can thus be used to manipulate the timing of policy implementation, which produces and reinforces bureaucratic authority (Gonçalves 2013). In an environment marked by a presentist orientation to time (Jewsiewicki 2013), the "contract" was an attempt to harness this ongoing authority and temporality. Again, the comparison to tax collecting and the eternal (absent) power of the state played an important role: paying taxes is a never-ending duty, an ongoing relationship

rather than a single transaction. Time and authority were marked on paper, records that were kept and displayed.

Begging is "an activity which allows an individual to call upon people with whom he or she has no close ties for small donations to meet basic needs" (Groce, Loeb, and Murray 2014, 2), but for Claude it was more. A sociable person, Claude had spent many years building a wide network of relationships through begging. Compared to other beggars without such relationships, he was self-confident about "documents," while others were ashamed. While these others stressed desperation, for Claude there was more to it than absolute need. His network gave him social value, and upholding the relationships required social skills that not everyone could master. In cultivating "deliberate dependencies" (Englund 2006, 189), he found freedom in building up continuing relationships with donors through a literal paper pledge to loyalty, the temporal continuity being more socially and morally valued than short-term relationships based on one-off transactions. He considered his mode of begging more meaningful and valuable than that of the individual beggars, who remained seated with outstretched hands.

Except when dealing with a naive newcomer to the city, donors were well aware that *documentaires* rarely represented a substantive NGO and that the money was likely to be used for a range of immediate needs rather than the purpose stated on the document. The amount they gave was always substantially lower than the amount stated on the paper. Rather than reflecting reality, the formal petition document was a tool to be employed as a means to an end; as Matthew Hull (2012, 253) has pointed out, bureaucratic documents are not "neutral purveyors of discourse, but mediators that shape the significance of the signs inscribed on them and their relations with the objects they refer to." For the *documentaires*, what mattered was what the document *did*. While giving is often presented as relatively indeterminate despite the necessary time interval between gift and countergift (Bourdieu 1998), bureaucratic regulation can provoke affective interactions (Mbodj-Pouye 2016; Navaro-Yashin 2007), and it ties transactions to a calendar (Graeber 2011; Guyer 2012, 491). Obligation and debt became matters of regulation, allowing for a temporally regulated relationship with a donor, translating the act of begging into mutually acceptable, legitimate "disability taxes." In the process, *documentaires* attempted to transform what donors viewed as a voluntary gift into an entitlement (Bornstein 2012).

Contractual dependencies

Despite some of the *documentaires*' denials, most people continued to refer to "documents" as a type of begging rather than "fund-raising" or "tax collecting," while those who were particularly negative rejected begging as "criminality." Beggars' attempts to transform bureaucratic imitation into substance, and gift into entitlement, were not entirely successful. But this does not mean that the system was a failure or that imitation was redundant. Mimesis brings together a wide variety of unstable meanings that cannot be reduced to practices that do only one thing at a time (Lempert 2014); in this case the practice of exchanging documents expressed a desired form of membership (Ferguson 2002; Lund 2006, 697), and this was not just an echo of the state but a key element of the practice. The affect generated by personal documentation was vital for *documentaires*' social status, respect, and livelihoods, since they saw in documents a form of support that was otherwise unavailable. Creating these systems of registration meant giving substance to a civic ethos of regulated inclusion rather than relying on the kindness of strangers.

For all its appeals to the regularity of state power and state legitimacy, however, the *documentaire* system lacked institutional support. The success of the petition, of its symbols and logics, relied solely on an interpersonal exchange; beggars ultimately depended on the willingness of donors to give. Beneath the imagery of inclusion in the grand and impersonal schemes of state and society, documents were about cultivating the kind of personal relationships that beggars really wanted, between the different valuations of dependency and independence. For Claude, "responsible" begging fulfilled the value of building a wide and meaningful network of people he could depend on and giving him the social respect he desired, while the ex-*documentaire* Marc condemned begging as based on brutality rather than social skills. Marc's revolt against begging also absorbed some of the logic of the suspicious donors, questioning the personal value of the work of *documentaires*. "If you give once, you have to continue giving," the Lebanese businessman and regular donor Mr. Amir told me. He refused to give to a father who came with five children because he did not want those children growing up with the mentality that begging was acceptable and that they did not have to work to earn money. Like Marc, he viewed continuous giving as problematic. Begging was the opposite of "work": degrading, making a person entirely reliant on the labor of others, while with "work" a person had dignity in being notionally independent.

But despite their disagreement on the desirability of Claude's choice of livelihood, Mr. Amir reflected something of Claude's conception of the value of their engagement. Giving to someone meant entering into a relationship with them; the beggar would continue to come back, and so choosing beggars was also choosing relationships. Like Claude, Mr. Amir found value in reciprocal dependent relationships, and both agreed that the state had a responsibility to care for its vulnerable citizens. But value judgments were never stable. From time to time, Claude and Mr. Amir disagreed about who "deserved" aid and why, as well

as who should fill the void of unfulfilled state responsibility. People often had mixed feelings, or their opinions changed from one day to the next, be it Marc's opposition to the brutality involved in "documents" or the opinions of beggars who were defiant on one day and ashamed the next. It was also apparent in donors' opinions, constantly shaping the choice of who was "deserving" and who was not.

The first time I met Mr. Amir with Claude, he described this form of begging as acceptable, telling me he chose to give to Claude and his group because they had a long-term relationship. He appreciated Claude's calm behavior and said *handicapés*' lack of work resulted from their physical condition. A couple of months later, however, he expressed suspicion about how beggars used his donations; he told Claude he was capable of working, but the problem was his mentality. The relationship between donor and beggar was vital. It justified the donor's decision to judge the recipient deserving, and it strengthened the beggar's choice to pursue an activity of reliable income and, at least at first, of social respect, in the face of widespread censure. Yet it was a relationship that was undoubtedly thin.

In the shifting judgments of this relationship, it is impossible to draw a strong distinction between understandings of personhood wherein self-reliance or dependent connections with others are more strongly valued. In the language of both claim and criticism, the *documentaire* relationship suggests that a person's worth can be conceived in terms of individual achievements as well as in terms of relations to others; people in Kinshasa attach personal value both to independent work and membership in a community, and one does not win out over the other. But as much as they conceive "work" as independent, labor itself can be an institutionalized form of dependence (e.g., Ferguson 2013; Grischow 2011). The Belgian colonizers fashioned Kinshasa as a colonial labor camp from which the unemployed were systematically removed, and where dependence on an employer was a criterion for inclusion. This history is still evoked by Kinshasa's geography; most beggars live in shared communities in the townships (the *cités*) that emerged as migrant labor camps during the colonial period, but they come into the commercial center and former European heart of the city (the *ville*), to find their contractual donors. While relationships give value, citizenship in this context was associated with labor, and as such it comes as no surprise that beggars today prefer to refer to themselves as NGO workers; they simultaneously claim the value of honest, individual labor alongside its inclusionary, dependent quality. Doing documents is an organized occupational activity that exaggerates such institutionalized forms of dependence.

Ultimately, the contractual form of the relationship encapsulated its contradictions. Representing the documents as "contractual" reflected the way bureaucracies express a social contract between citizens and officials (Bear and

Mathur 2015). The "contract" notionally distributed responsibility and organized it according to an agreed timetable, serving as a placeholder for a dependent relationship both parties knew was precarious. It allowed *documentaires* to cast the brittle beggar-donor relationship as that between employer and employee, a relationship that could allow the chronically unemployed to partially, if ironically, engage in the idea of being employed while claiming their "rightful share" (Ferguson 2015) of deserved unemployment benefits. Dependence can be understood as a valued achievement, and *documentaires* showed the explicit rendering of such dependence as a form of work. Connoting a formalization of mutual duties and the autonomy of independent actors entering into a defined yet limited relationship, the "contract" implied their search for balance between fulfilling the values of "desired dependency" and independence, reaping the benefits of both. A donor paid their dues, and in return the beggars agreed to leave them alone for a year. Intimacy and dependence, distance and autonomy, and the relationship's temporality were defined and regulated by a contract of exchange.

Dependency can be a mode of action, but in cultivating contractual dependencies, beggars also seek a relative distance and independence from their donors. Poverty can make life provisional (De Boeck 2015); since dependencies can be temporary and precarious (Bolt 2013), beggars seek an agreement through which they can count on sponsorship a number of times a year, which helps them manage economic insecurity and establish a social value of "employment," but without increasing untenable obligations and limited freedom for themselves. "The Maussian gift is sticky," remarks Tom Hall (2005, para. 2.3), potentially leading to unwanted social obligations of reciprocity. The contract therefore clarifies the extent and temporality of the exchange, limiting both and thereby maintaining a certain distance between the contracted parties. Creating distance with donors allows *documentaires* to keep open strategies of force and compulsion through which their relationships stay brittle, but which may remain necessary to employ from time to time. The document can therefore help bridge the tensions of moral criticism and value conflict, yet the distance remains; a beggar is always at risk from a sudden rebellion from a donor who wishes their gift to be an act of chosen benevolence and not obligation or debt. The risk of dependence is thus best distributed among many patrons, to compensate for such likely shifts in the moral debate.

Depending on the situation, therefore, beggars can find more flexibility, security, and value in a large network of looser relationships—in which they wield a power to compel that often destroys their hope of receiving—than in a small number of deeper relationships with more mutual obligations. In an unpredictable urban environment, begging allows disabled people to flexibly create a great number of looser relationships, regulated by the "contract,"

the quantity of which can make up for the quality of a single employer-employee relationship. Personal success depends on demonstrating a wide network of contacts that one can call on when in need without being too dependent on one or the other contact. Contractual dependencies may limit the extent of obligations and dependencies in the petitioner's interests, as much as in those of an ambivalent or doubtful donor. As they balance views of begging as acceptable, positive, or shameful, the relationships that beggars pursue remain a compromised, unsatisfactory, yet uncomfortably rewarding system of brittleness and suspicion.

Contracts and compromise

Begging in Kinshasa offers an informal strategy for the economic support of disabled people in the absence of a state-organized system of social security. As an exceptional and innovative type of begging in Kinshasa, the *documentaires* have created a remarkable system that reflects the tensions of social judgment in the city. Rather than using references to religious charity, they speak the language of NGO work and state responsibility for deserving citizens, while also evoking civic obligations of contractual dependency between individuals. Aiming to achieve essential economic support, they use symbols and strategies that suggest an attempt to fulfill the apparently contradictory social values of independence and dependence. The dynamics of cities allow beggars to be "more anonymous and autonomous" (Groce, Loeb, and Murray 2014, 3), making begging an inherently urban phenomenon. But the urban environment is also apparent in begging's explicit appeal to bridge diverse multicultural codes and values that are brought into contact, or conflict, in such environments, including the desirable limitations of anonymity and autonomy. The *documentaires* create dialogue between these values, and through their "contract" briefly achieve a semiconsensual compromise.

Yet the contract is easily broken. The beggars' position remains vulnerable and, often, uneasy in Kinshasa society. Unenforced by the institutions it imitates, and established only through donors' consent, it is at best a temporary settlement in an ongoing debate about who is "deserving" and which activities count as "work." The performances of coercion that speckle the performances of urban conviviality between "intimate strangers" (Nyamnjoh and Brudvig 2014) reveal this brittleness, under threat from judgments on both sides of the exchange.

But for all this brittleness, both beggars and donors expected their relationship to be ongoing, even if donors did not want this, or did not reach the depths of the "responsible begging" that Claude described. The contract was always in danger of being broken, but it was always possible and even likely to be reinstituted, under renegotiated terms. It was a temporary commitment that entailed a long-term engagement. Never resolving the moral tensions over value judgment, by stipulating an end date to their contractual dependency on others, the *documentaires* succeeded in building a future that perhaps could not be relied on but could at least be anticipated and therefore managed.

Despite assumptions to the contrary, personhood is not something that must be universally conceptualized in liberal frameworks of sustainability and self-reliance, and subordinate relationships are not always paired with lack of control or freedom (Englund 2006; Ferguson 2013; Kowalski 2016; Mahmood 2005; Penfield 2017; Scherz 2014). Ultimately, however, attention to practices of petitioning reveals that even if the practicalities of asking for help are very similar, people consider some dependent relationships more morally valuable than others. Soliciting may take many forms, but while some styles present a petitioner as problematically dependent on a giver, via others a petitioner emerges as an enterprising individual.

While people may talk about the relationships associated with these activities in binary terms of (in)dependence, practices they view as entirely reliant on others may provide the security associated with being independent. Petitioners seek a balance between an ability to rely on others in dependent connections and freedom from potentially entangling reciprocities. They may navigate these tensions by carefully selecting whom they establish hierarchical relationships with. Contractual dependencies, therefore, are not a passive imitation of organized welfare, but a way of maintaining a balance between dependency and a degree of desired autonomy from superiors. For both sides, having agreed rules to regulate such unequal relationships can be valuable, even if neither petitioner nor giver actually follows these rules. The "contract" allows dependents to maintain a desired degree of morally valued distance; invoking shared frames of reference and criticizing their absence or failures, informal bureaucracies may lend temporal regulation to subordinate relationships. The contract, contrary to its image, frees subordinates from substantial reciprocity while enabling them to voice claims about entitlement.

Notes

1. When I refer to "disabled people" or use the emic term *handicapé* (a rough translation of the same), I refer to people who have

physical disabilities. Most of my interlocutors were polio survivors, and a few were amputees. I use pseudonyms for all my interlocutors. People spoke in a combination of Lingala and French; all translations from both languages are my own.

2. I conducted research with disabled people in Kinshasa from December 2012 to August 2014, with a follow-up visit from July to August 2015. I spent most of my time interviewing disabled people and engaging in participant observation with them in their various livelihood activities.

3. Few could afford to make this act official; acquiring state documents to become an official NGO is lengthy and expensive, and this discouraged most of them from pursuing this strategy.

4. All dollar amounts given in this article are in US dollars, which Kinois often use for larger denominations. Although people cited gift amounts in US dollars, it is possible that the money was distributed in francs. If that were the case, the numbers would be about 9,000,000 francs ($10,000), 900,000 francs ($1,000), and 4,500,000 francs ($5,000). During my fieldwork, the exchange rate fluctuated from 900 to 930 francs for $1.

5. The Ministry of Social Affairs was another place in front of which groups of disabled people spent hours in hopes of receiving support. One employee told me they were a constant presence; they came regularly to ask for help with various expenses, such as funerals, medical care, and housing.

6. Before and during my fieldwork, my interlocutors had been affected by several "cleanup" operations. Beggars who frequented the international border zone were removed when Kinshasa hosted the international meeting of francophone states in 2012. In 2013–14, government officials cleared out two informal disability settlements where many lived. And when the government carried out a violent operation against gangsters (*kuluna*) in 2013–14, rumors went around among beggars that friends had disappeared.

7. In playing with boundaries between fake and real, their activities were not unlike those of other urban dwellers such as scammers (Newell 2012) or "false pastors" (Pype 2012, 42).

References

Albrecht, Gary. 2003. "Disability Values, Representations and Realities." In *Rethinking Disability: The Emergence of New Definitions, Concepts and Communities*, edited by Patrick Devlieger, Frank Rusch, and David Pfeiffer, 27–44. Philadelphia: Coronet Books.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. "Topographies of the Self: Praise and Emotion in Hindu India." In *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, edited by Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz, 92–112. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barber, Karin. 1989. "Interpreting Oríkì as History and as Literature." In *Discourse and Its Disguises: The Interpretation of African Oral Texts*, edited by Karin Barber and P. F. de Moraes Farias, 13–23. Birmingham: Centre of African Studies.

———. 2007. *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bayart, Jean-François. 2000. "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion." *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (April): 217–67.

Bear, Laura. 2001. "Public Genealogies: Documents, Bodies and Nations in Anglo-Indian Railway Family Histories." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 35, no. 3 (October): 355–88.

Bear, Laura, and Nayanika Mathur. 2015. "Introduction: Remaking the Public Good: A New Anthropology of Bureaucracy." *Cambridge Anthropology* 33, no. 1 (Spring): 18–34.

Blundo, Giorgio. 2006. "Dealing with the Local State: The Informal Privatization of Street-Level Bureaucracies in Senegal." *Development and Change* 37, no. 4 (July): 799–819.

Bolt, Maxim. 2013. "Producing Permanence: Employment, Domesticity and the Flexible Future on a South African Border Farm." *Economy and Society* 42, no. 2 (March): 197–225.

Bonilla, Oiara. 2013. "'Be My Boss!' Comments on South African and Amerindian Forms of Subjection." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 2 (May): 246–47.

Bornstein, Erica. 2012. *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Das, Veena. 2004. "The Signature of the State: The Paradox of Illegibility." In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, edited by Veena Das and Deborah Poole, 225–52. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

De Boeck, Filip. 2015. "'Poverty' and the Politics of Syncopation: Urban Examples From Kinshasa (DR Congo)." *Current Anthropology* 56, no. S11: S146–58.

De Boeck, Filip, and Marie-Françoise Plissart. 2004. *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City*. Tervuren, Belgium: Ludion, Koninklijk Museum voor Midden Afrika.

Dean, Hartley, ed. 2000. *Begging Questions: Street-Level Economic Activity and Social Policy Failure*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Devlieger, Clara. 2018. "Rome and the Romains: Laughter on the Border between Kinshasa and Brazzaville." *Africa* 88, no. 1 (March): 160–82.

Englund, Harri. 2006. *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fassin, Didier. 1991. "Handicaps physiques, pratiques économiques et strategies matrimoniales au Sénégal." *Social Science and Medicine* 32 (3): 267–72.

Ferguson, James. 1990. *The Anti-politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2002. "Of Mimicry and Membership: Africans and the 'New World Society.'" *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (November): 551–69.

———. 2013. "Declarations of Dependence: Labour, Personhood, and Welfare in Southern Africa." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 2 (June): 223–42.

———. 2015. *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fraser, Nancy, and Linda Gordon. 1994. "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State." *Signs* 19, no. 2 (Winter): 309–36.

Giovannoni, Marco, Theodore Trefon, Jérôme Kasongo Banga, and Charles Mwema. 2004. "Acting on Behalf (and in Spite) of the State: NGOs and Civil Society Associations in Kinshasa." In *Reinventing Order in the Congo: How People Respond to State Failure in Kinshasa*, edited by Theodore Trefon, 99–115. London: Zed.

Gomm, Roger. 1975. "Bargaining from Weakness: Spirit Possession on the South Kenya Coast." *Man* 10, no. 4 (December): 530–43.

Gonçalves, Euclides. 2013. "*Orientações superiores*: Time and Bureaucratic Authority in Mozambique." *African Affairs* 112, no. 449 (October): 602–22.

Graeber, David. 2011. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. New York: Melville House.

Grischow, Jeff. 2011. "Kwame Nkrumah, Disability, and Rehabilitation in Ghana, 1957–66." *Journal of African History* 52, no. 2 (July): 179–99.

Groce, Nora, Marie Loeb, and Barbara Murray. 2014. "The Disabled Beggar—a Literature Review: Begging as an Overlooked Issue of Disability and Poverty." *Gender, Equality and Diversity*

Branch Working Paper No. 1, Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Guyer, Jane I. 1993. "Wealth in People and Self-Realization in Equatorial Africa." *Man* 28, no. 2 (June): 243–66.

——— 2012. "Obligation, Binding, Debt and Responsibility: Provocations about Temporality from Two New Sources." *Social Anthropology* 20, no. 4 (November): 491–501.

Hall, Tom. 2005. "Not Miser Not Monk: Begging, Benefits and the Free Gift." *Sociological Research Online* 10, no. 4 (December). http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/4/hall.html.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Fin Stepputat. 2001. *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hull, Matthew S. 2012. "Documents and Bureaucracy." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41:251–67.

Iliffe, John. 1987. *The African Poor: A History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irvine, Judith. 1989. "When Talk Isn't Cheap: Language and Political Economy." *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 2 (May): 248–67.

Jewsiewicki, Bogumil. 2013. "Historical Memory and Representations of New Nations in Africa." In *Historical Memory in Africa*, edited by Mamadou Diawara, Bernard Lategan, and Jorn Rusen, 53–66. New York: Berghahn.

Kassah, Alexander Kwesi. 2008. "Begging as Work: A Study of People with Mobility Difficulties in Accra, Ghana." *Disability and Society* 23, no. 2 (March): 163–70.

Kittay, Eva Feder. 1999. *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency.* New York: Routledge.

Kowalski, Julia. 2016. "Ordering Dependence: Care, Disorder, and Kinship Ideology in North Indian Antiviolence Counseling." *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 1 (February): 63–75.

Lamb, Sarah. 2013. "Personhood, Appropriate Dependence, and the Rise of Eldercare Institutions in India." In *Transitions and Transformations: Cultural Perspectives on Aging and the Life Course*, edited by Caitrin Lynch and Jason Danely, 171–87. Oxford: Berghahn.

Lempert, Michael. 2014. "Imitation." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43:379–95.

Livingston, Julie. 2006. "Insights from an African History of Disability." *Radical History Review* 94 (Winter): 111–26.

Lund, Christian. 2006. "Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa." *Development and Change* 37, no. 4 (September): 685–705.

Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mathur, Nayanika. 2012. "Transparent-Making Documents and the Crisis of Implementation: A Rural Employment Law and Development Bureaucracy in India." *PoLAR* 35, no. 2 (November): 167–85.

Mbembe, Achille. 1992. "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony." *Africa* 62, no. 1 (January): 3–37.

Mbodj-Pouye, Aïssatou. 2016. "Fixed Abodes: Urban Emplacement, Bureaucratic Requirements, and the Politics of Belonging among West African Migrants in Paris." *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 2 (May): 295–310.

McKay, Ramah. 2012. "Afterlives: Humanitarian Histories and Critical Subjects in Mozambique." *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 2 (May): 286–309.

Meagher, Kate. 2012. "The Strength of Weak States? Non-state Security Forces and Hybrid Governance in Africa." *Development and Change* 43, no. 5 (August): 1073–101.

Miers, Suzanne, and Igor Kopytoff. 1977. *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Muñoz, Cristian Pérez, and Joshua D. Potter. 2014. "Street-Level Charity: Beggars, Donors, and Welfare Policies." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 26, no. 1 (August): 158–74.

Murphy, Robert F. 1987. *The Body Silent.* New York: Henry Holt.

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 (March): 79–98.

Newell, Sasha. 2012. *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nicolaisen, Ida. 1995. "Persons and Nonpersons: Disability and Personhood among the Punan Bah of Central Borneo." In *Disability and Culture*, edited by Benedicte Ingstad and Susan Reynolds Whyte, 38–55. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nyamnjoh, Francis B., and Ingrid Brudvig. 2014. "Conviviality and Negotiations with Belonging in Urban Africa." In *Routledge Handbook of Global Citizenship Studies*, edited by Engin F. Isin and Peter Nyers, 217–29. London: Routledge.

Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre. 2008. "State Bureaucracy and Governance in Francophone West Africa: An Empirical Diagnosis and Historical Perspective." In *The Governance of Daily Life in Africa*, edited by Giorgio Blundo and Pierre-Yves Le Meur, 39–72. Leiden: Brill.

Penfield, Amy. 2017. "Dodged Debts and the Submissive Predator: Perspectives on Amazonian Relations of Dependence." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23, no. 2 (April): 1–18.

Poole, Deborah. 2004. "Between Threat and Guarantee: Justice and Community in the Margins of the Peruvian State." In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, edited by Veena Das and Deborah Poole, 35–66. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Prince, Ruth J. 2013. "'Tarmacking' in the Millennium City: Spatial and Temporal Trajectories of Empowerment and Development in Kisumu, Kenya." *Africa* 83, no. 4 (November): 582–605.

Pype, Katrien. 2012. *The Making of Pentecostal Melodrama: Religion, Media, and Gender in Kinshasa.* New York: Berghahn.

———. 2015. "Funerary Comedies in Contemporary Kinshasa: Social Difference, Urban Communities and the Emergence of a Cultural Form." *Africa* 85, no. 3 (August): 457–77.

Renne, Elisha. 2010. *The Politics of Polio in Northern Nigeria.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Retsikas, Kostas. 2016. "The Other Side of the Gift: Soliciting in Java—a Discussion." *Heidelberg Ethnology Occasional Paper No. 4.* https://doi.org/10.11588/hdethn.0.0.29971

Rose, Sarah F. 2015. "Work." In *Keywords for Disability Studies*, edited by Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, 187–90. New York: New York University Press.

Schatzberg, Michael G. 1988. *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— 2001. *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Scherz, China. 2014. *Having People, Having Heart: Charity, Sustainable Development, and Problems of Dependence in Central Uganda.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Silla, Eric. 1998. *People Are Not the Same: Leprosy and Identity in Twentieth-Century Mali.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Staples, James. 2007. *Peculiar People, Amazing Lives: Leprosy, Social Exclusion and Community Making in South India.* New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Vail, Leroy, and Landeg White. 1991. *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

White, Bob. 1999. "Modernity's Trickster: 'Dipping' and 'Throwing' in Congolese Popular Dance Music." *Research in African Literatures* 30, no. 4 (Winter): 156–75.

Whyte, Susan Reynolds, and Benedicte Ingstad. 1995. "Disability and Culture: An Overview." In *Disability and Culture*, edited by Benedicte Ingstad and Susan Reynolds Whyte, 3–34. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Widlok, Thomas. 2013. "Sharing: Allowing Others to Take What Is Valued." *Hau* 3, no. 2 (Summer): 11–31.

Woodburn, James. 1998. "Sharing Is Not a Form of Exchange." In *Property Relations: Renewing the Anthropological Tradition*, edited by Chris Hann, 48–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wrong, Michela. 2001. "Out on a Limb." *Transitioni*, no. 88, 4–11.

Clara Devlieger
Department of Anthropology
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street
London, WC2A 2AE, United Kingdom

c.devlieger@lse.ac.uk