Buses in Bongoland
Seductive analytics and the occult

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Abstract
It is now common for anthropologists to argue that the occult is adequately explained as an oblique, metaphysical critique of the now, the new, the neoliberal. Indeed, such understandings have come to form a deep-seated anthropological analytic. Yet while this analytic has proved productive, the explanations it invites often hinge more on theoretical expectation than empirical demonstration. This may disable the very politics and ethics anthropologists seek to engage, insofar as it renders redundant the real-world inequalities and forms of exploitation they seek to understand. This article considers this analytic in relation to Tanzanian buses and the devils alleged to inhabit them. To re-engage anthropology’s critical politics and ethics, the article suggests that anthropologists pay sustained attention to historical processes, particularly, continuities. This requires we reconfigure some longstanding theoretical frameworks, lexicons, explanations and pre-theoretical commitments. The article concludes by providing some conceptual signposts to re-orientate projects on the occult.

Key Words
critique • epistemology • explanation • history • modernity • neoliberalism • occult • post-socialism • Tanzania • transport • witchcraft

In the 1990s, privatization, liberalization, and democratization blazed, like wildfires, across much of Africa. These dramatic changes, though continent-wide in their reach, have been most acutely felt in former socialist nations where command economies and ideologies have rapidly given way to capitalism, the free market and neoliberal thinking. In Tanzania, one such postsocialist place, these changes have come with many things, one of which has been growing concerns about the role of devils, witchcraft and the occult in quotidian life (Sanders, 2001a, 2003a; Green, 2005; Green and Mesaki, 2005). While this is true in many realms, one of the most striking can be found in the recently privatized transportation sector upon which millions of Tanzanians today crucially depend.

From the 1960s, Tanzania’s public transportation sector was owned and operated by the then-socialist government. In the 1980s however, under the crushing weight of the
IMF’s and World Bank’s structural adjustment programme, the sector was privatized and deregulated and, consequently, vastly expanded.

Side-by-side with the rapid rise of the free market and Tanzania’s transport sector has come the rapid growth of occult forces alleged to inhabit and animate them. Across the nation, but particularly in urban settings, manifold rumours today circulate about how specified and unspecified bus owners deploy spiritual forces to keep their buses on the road and to turn a tidy profit. Some Tanzanians go further, suggesting that, in order to boost their business, bus owners have been making secret contracts with the devil and/or employing a range of other spiritual forces. Unsurprisingly, such Faustian bargains are sometimes said to come at a high cost, for guaranteed material gains, the co-opted diabolic forces reputedly cause buses routinely to run down pedestrians, and occasionally to crash, in order to provide the devil with the requisite blood sacrifice.

To speak of the devil is to speak of Michael Taussig, at least for anthropologists. As is well known, Taussig argued in his early work that peasants in the Cauca Valley, Colombia, lived until recently in a natural, moral, pre-capitalist use value world; and that that world was shattered by capitalist penetration and the exploitative, immoral, exchange value system that came with it (1977, 1980). These radical changes were accompanied by the belief that some plantation workers were making secret contracts with the devil to increase their output and, hence, their wages. Such devil-talk, Taussig famously argued, provided Cauca Valley peasants with a way to explain new features of their rapidly changing world – like sudden accumulation and gross wealth differentials wrought by capitalist relations of production and wage labour – and a way to critique the unnaturalness of that world.

Without much difficulty a Taussigian tack could be taken to explain recent events in Tanzania. Prior to the 1980s, the argument would go, Tanzanians lived in a socialist ujamaa life-world where Marxian notions of use value and production within the nation for the nation reigned supreme. All this was lost with the sudden advent of neoliberalism and its associated capitalist practices and ideologies of the market, free trade, wage labour and so on. The new structural inequalities and immoralities inherent in capitalist relations have manifested themselves in many ways, including through the rapid proliferation of the occult in the privatized transport sector. Thus Tanzanians’ recent musings about diabolic forces in the transport sector could be seen as providing an oblique metaphysical critique of capitalist relations of production, consumption and wage labour and the inherent exploitation and immoralities therein. More broadly, one could argue that Tanzanians’ ideas about devils and the occult provide an indigenously-inflected critique of the diabolical workings of capitalism, modernity, neoliberalism and/or globalization.

Such arguments and explanations, in varied forms, have become the anthropological orthodoxy in many quarters, even if the Marxian framework in which they were originally expressed has faded into the analytic background. Analyses begin with a simple and anthropologically appealing proposition, the idea that modernity, neoliberalism or globalization does bad things to good people. Because this popular notion fits neatly with our anthropological sensibilities, and because there is plenty of empirical evidence to support it, it often provides the taken-for-granted and hence untheorized foundation upon which such analyses are erected. The analytic strategy then becomes one of producing ethnographic evidence to support this point. The question for readers is not what
the answer will be – we already know that – but rather how authors will muster their ethnographic data and cleverly craft their argument to get there. Such analyses then conclude by restating their starting point, that good people have been hard done by bad things. Such tautology is often greeted by academic applause, not so much because these analyses tell us anything new, but because they reconfirm both what we thought we already knew and would like to believe about the world, as well as the broader anthropological sensibilities that underpin such knowledge claims.

In this article I want to suggest that in recent years such explanations have come to form a deep-seated and seductive anthropological analytic. This analytic springs from and is animated by broader critical politics and ethics within the discipline, which in part accounts for its intuitive plausibility, seductiveness and persuasiveness. However, while this analytic has proved productive, the explanations it invites often hinge more on theoretical expectation than empirical demonstration. This, ironically, may disable the very politics and ethics anthropologists seek to engage, insofar as it renders redundant the particular real-world inequalities and forms of exploitation they ostensibly seek to understand. By exploring Tanzanian buses and the devils reputed to inhabit them, the article raises a series of queries into how anthropologists theorize social change, the relation between past and present, and between moral and material economies. What I will argue is that to move beyond this particular analytic, to re-engage anthropology’s critical politics and ethics in productive ways, anthropologists need to pay sustained attention to historical processes, more specifically temporal continuities. This requires we reconfigure some long-standing theoretical frameworks, lexicons and explanations. My overall aim is not to propose the answer in the form of some new analytic, which must in any case be multiple and emerge in dialogue with specific sociohistorically-situated encounters. Instead I will provide what seem to me to be some key conceptual signposts to orientate such emerging projects in more promising directions.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYTICS AND EXPLANATION

In recent years, a particular set of analytic strategies, lexicons and theoretical positions – some of them new, others old – has coalesced to form an identifiable, deep-seated anthropological analytic. While this analytic springs from and works in the interests of long-standing disciplinary sensibilities, in its specifics it posits a unique framework and set of relations that are considered adequate explanation. These specifics can be traced to the 1960s.

Taussig’s work on the devil and commodity fetishism sprang from and contributed to broader Marxian debates taking place from the 1960s through the 1980s within and beyond anthropology. So, too, did many other important anthropological writings of the day that similarly explained indigenous ideas about the devil, witchcraft and spirit possession as providing indigenously-inflected critiques of colonialism and/or capitalism’s invasiveness and inherent immoralities (Nash, 1993 [1979]; Ong, 1987; Stoller, 1984; Szeminski and Ansion, 1982).

While Taussig’s and kindred arguments have been thoroughly criticized on methodological, empirical and theoretical grounds, the suggestion that varied devil iconographies, witchcraft, spirits, zombies and other spectrality can be read as locally-inflected critiques of capitalism, modernity, neoliberalism and globalization has remained popular (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993, 2002; Limón, 1994: 179; Masquelier, 2002;
Sanders, 2001a; Scheper-Hughes, 1996). Anthropologists thus continue to maintain that spirit possession provides ‘an embodied critique of colonial, national, or global hegemonies’ (Boddy, 1994: 419); that African witchcraft and Asian spirit cults ‘express people’s worries about globalization’s threatening encroachment on intimate spheres of life’ (Geschiere, 1998: 813, n5); that Ghanian Christian images of the devil ‘diabolize negative aspects of the capitalist world economy’ (Meyer, 1995: 250); that witchcraft in East Java is ‘an expression of the tensions and contradictions of globalization and social transformation’ (Campbell and Conner, 2000: 88); that Peruvian sorcery is about ‘the evils of modernization’ (Santos-Granero, 2004: 299); that Kenyan stories of spirits make ‘the implicit vampirism of capitalist accumulation and consumption horrifically literal’ (Smith, 2004: 274). The ongoing commitment to such explanations requires some reflection on the broader disciplinary context in which they have been deemed adequate.

Anthropology has long occupied a discursive and practical space defined by West–Other relations, a space that enables both a critical politics and critical ethics vis-à-vis the world in which we live (Moore, 1999: 6). Anthropologists have frequently rendered the West–Other dyad, and the critical politics and ethics it enables, in terms of specific disciplinary sensibilities, rendering the familiar unfamiliar and the unfamiliar familiar. While these sensibilities have remained remarkably stable through the years, the anthropological strategies, projects of theorizing and analytic lexicons deployed in their name have not.3

One strategy anthropologists have used to render the unfamiliar familiar is to render Others’ beliefs and practices sensible. Anthropologists have long argued, for instance, that occult beliefs and practices cannot be taken as evidence of some méntalité primitif, but rather are rational and meaningful when contextualized (e.g. Evans-Pritchard, 1937). Such sense-making projects challenge popular Euro-American notions of rationality, and within the academe, the feverish attempts found in certain strains of analytic philosophy to specify and separate the rational from the irrational, truth from mere ‘belief.’

A closely related anthropological strategy has been to situate the West and the rest within the same temporal and epistemological frame. This is one reason contemporary anthropologists have insisted that the reputedly ‘traditional’ was in fact ‘modern’ all along, even if previous generations of scholars failed to realize it. From this perspective, occult beliefs are not traditional relics, but are active, flexible and deeply engaged with the contemporary moment (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Geschiere, 1997; Shaw, 2002; Whitehead and Wright, 2004). To say as much is to question the teleological assumptions that underpin a host of social science theories, those that hinge on the idea that ‘modernity destroys tradition’ (Giddens, 1994: 91), or that modernity leads to secularization (Voyé, 1999). If we are all modern, all of the same world and socio-historical moment, then the distance between Us and Other collapses. Exotics are exotics no more.

Anthropologists, of late, have further sought to render Others familiar by engaging in broader debates in the social sciences about the locus of historical change. Just as we are all part of our modern world, equally we are all implicated in that world’s reproduction and transformation. No longer can we correctly suppose – nor could we ever – that modern, global structural inevitabilities simply overrun and determine non-western life.
worlds. Such ‘despondency theories’, as Sahlins (1999: 401) sardonically dubs them, provide little theoretical purchase over the complexities of our world. Recent anthropologists have thus sought to highlight Others’ creative potentialities, reminding us of Marx’s dictum that individuals make their own history as they are made by it.

If people can act in the world, reproducing and transforming it, they are often said to do so by challenging, resisting and critiquing it. Anthropologists have thus foregrounded resistance and critique in many forms, from large-scale revolts and revolutions to their everyday and more spectral manifestations. Anthropological explanations here suggest that occult forces and discourses can be seen as offering a sustained critique of the genesis or intensification of capitalism, modernity, neoliberalism and globalization, specifically, of the novel inequalities and exploitations these things engender. Through the occult, the argument goes, Others in faraway places expose unsettling truths about our contemporary world and its woeful workings (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999, 2000, 2002; Masquelier, 2002; Sanders and West, 2003; Scheper-Hughes, 2000).

While broad disciplinary sensibilities have compelled anthropologists to render pedestrian, in varied ways, the things Others believe and do, they have equally led many to unsettle western ways-of-knowing and ways-of-being in the world; to dwell on the fact, using a range of strategies, ‘that we are one of the Others’ (Sahlins, 1993: 12). Thus, some have attempted to level the epistemological playing field – to engage in symmetrical warfare, we might say – by rendering the West and western ways of knowing non-modern (Latour, 1993), or the seemingly natural cultural (Sahlins, 1976). In a similar vein, others have shown up things like ‘capitalism’, ‘the market’ and ‘development’ for the political, social and cultural creations they are (Carrier, 1997; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Ferguson, 1994; Parry and Bloch, 1989; Sanders, 2001a).

The genius of Taussig’s argument – and the reason similar arguments appear and appeal in varied forms today – is that it proffered a particular analytic within which to address all these concerns simultaneously, concerns about rationalities and epistemologies; structure and agency; valorizing Others; and critiquing western structural forms and knowledges. Yet while solving some problems, this analytic and the explanations it invited created others, and these continue to vex anthropological writings today.

First, the explanations may be simply ‘too good to be true’ (DaMatta, 1986: 61). Wouldn’t it be nice, after all, if anthropology’s Others recognized and criticized, always and forever, their own conditions of subordination and exploitation in a highly immoral capitalist/modern/neoliberal/global economy? Within this analytic, they must, and always do. Thus as anthropologists give voice to Others, Others appear to voice in concert the very things anthropologists tell themselves about the world and its workings. Among other things, this raises the thorny issue of the locus of production of such tales, and to what extent this analytic could ever adequately accommodate the real-world’s messiness.

Another difficulty arises from attempts to specify the precise relation between past and present. For this analytic glosses the relationship between past and present as a definitive shift between certain ‘pasts’ and ‘posts’, ‘then’ and ‘now’ binaries, from use to exchange value, pre-capitalist to capitalist economic formations, moral to immoral systems and life-worlds. In this vision, the notion of rupture proves pivotal, and bears an exceptionally heavy analytic load, as the past is seen as categorically different to the present (see also Englund and Leach, 2000). The rupture itself is commonly mustered.
to ‘explain’ myriad features of our contemporary world (e.g. Appadurai, 1996). To be sure, some recent scholars have emphatically rejected the stark binaries and disjunctures this analytic invites, arguing that there is no definitive sociohistorical break between past and present (Comaroff, 1994: 303; Masquelier, 2002: 837; Piot, 1999: 22). Yet it has not proved easy to escape notions of rupture altogether, in part due to the moral evaluations that frame the analytic.4

In this analytic the past and present are not simply rendered different. They are differently valued. The past is good; the present, problematic. Social change is thus cast as movement from a morally tenable and desirable past, to a morally dubious and highly problematic present. This is as true of recent writings as it was of previous ones, even if recent renditions are sometimes more subtle. The difficulty is that the particular framing of ‘good past’ and ‘bad present’ that the analytic invites, however subtle its renditions, disallows a priori the theoretical and ethnographic possibility of contradictions and complications in both the past and the present, including any possible rift between thought and action, principle and practice, whether ‘then’ or ‘now.’ In other words, the analytic has homogenizing effects on both the past and the present. It renders each as moral and conceptual wholes, and suggests that the relation and rupture between them is what ‘explains’.

Sustained attention to historical processes, I suggest, allows us to consider these theoretical difficulties from another angle and to capture more adequately those ever-elusive ‘social facts’ we wish to comprehend. For present purposes this means detailing a Tanzanian ‘then’ and a ‘now’, and the changing nature of the transportation sector and its devils.

(RE)VISIONS OF TANZANIAN SOCIALISM

In 1961 Tanzania, then Tanganyika, gained independence from Britain. Within a few years Julius Nyerere, Tanzania’s first president, had set the nascent nation on a unique path of African Socialism, or Ujamaa.5

Ujamaa’s guiding socialist principles were explicitly formulated in 1967 in the now famous Arusha Declaration (Nyerere, 1968b).6 These principles were multiple and multifaceted, and included freedom, nationalism and independence; unity, co-operation and peace; equality, egalitarianism and non-exploitation; self-reliance, dignity and responsible leadership. The Declaration weaves these and other principles into a coherent and compelling conceptual tapestry, providing a particular vision of what a socialist Tanzania would look like. The lengthy section on self-reliance, for instance, identifies the dangers of an over-reliance upon foreign aid and investment, arguing that this can only lead to Tanzania’s further dependence on and exploitation by foreign capitalists and, concomitantly, to the undermining of both her dignity and newly-acquired freedom.

The concern that interdependence can lead to exploitation similarly underpinned ujamaa’s vision within the nation. Thus the Arusha Declaration considered at length commonplace inequalities, forms of corruption and exploitation between rulers and ruled. To undermine such possibilities, the Declaration imposed a strict Leadership Code. This code disallowed government and party leaders from associating with capitalist or feudal practices, holding shares in companies, holding directorships in private enterprises, receiving more than one salary, or owning rental homes.
The Declaration also considered possible conflicts, exploitations and inequalities between urban and rural citizens. This was highly significant, for Tanzania was – and still is – a nation of farmers. The Declaration noted that previous attempts to develop the nation put far too much emphasis on industries and urban centres, when the backbone of Tanzania’s economy was indisputably its agricultural base. The problem here is that foreign loans disproportionately benefit Tanzania’s industrial and urban centres, while villagers are left to repay those loans through the nation’s only (at the time) viable export, agricultural products (Nyerere, 1968b: 242).

In rural areas *ujamaa* meant ‘co-operation in its widest sense – in living, in working and in distribution, and with an acceptance of the absolute equality of all men and women’ (Nyerere, 1968b: 348). Any wealth produced would not be individually owned but belong to all who had produced it. *Ujamaa* villages would provide other benefits, too, they would allow for better state provision of collective services such as hospitals, clean water and schools; lead to the creation of modern and more productive agriculture; and foster communal, socialist forms of cooperation.

Plainly, *ujamaa* shared many of the socialist sensibilities that underpinned political economy, world system and dependency theories of the day. It positioned itself as opposed to capitalism, which it cast as being driven by greed and profit, inequality and conflict, and prone to exploit the poor and powerless, both within and between nations. As such the *ujamaa* vision was underpinned by a specific model of the individual, society, the global system and their interrelations. This was a model permeated by power, wherein exploitation and inequalities were ever-present possibilities both within and between nations, between ruler and ruled, urbanites and villagers, westerners and Tanzanians. Interdependence, if not properly managed, could all too easily become dependence, domination and exploitation. *Ujamaa* thus proposes a particular vision of the world, a world that is characterized by a limited good, zero-sum game economy. Local rulers and urbanites gain only at the immediate expense of ordinary citizens and villagers; and the West’s gain was Tanzania’s loss. *Ujamaa*’s principle task was the responsible management of such relations.

Hardly surprising, really, that many Tanzanians and western intellectuals were positively enchanted by Nyerere’s *ujamaa* vision. The Arusha Declaration, Coulson tells us, proved ‘wildly popular all over the country. Everywhere Nyerere was the hero’ (1982: 183). Throughout his life, both within Tanzania and internationally, Nyerere was recognized as a visionary, a man of great integrity with a profound commitment to the welfare of all Tanzanians. This admiration was reaffirmed on Nyerere’s death in 1999, decades after he stepped down from office, when politicians of every stripe and thousands of ordinary Tanzanians showed up, under no obligation, for viewings as Nyerere’s coffin toured the nation (Pratt, 2000). Scores of songs were composed in his honour, praising Nyerere and his commitment to *ujamaa*’s guiding principles, peace, unity, equality, independence and solidarity (Askew, 2006).

While few would disagree over the moral content of Nyerere’s vision, the same cannot be said for the success of its implementation or outcome. For *ujamaa* failed, or at least it failed to achieve what it had set out to do, to transform Tanzania into a modern self-reliant socialist nation. In practice *ujamaa* came to resemble the Chinese socialist model whereby administrative powers were highly concentrated in the central government and delegated to local level authorities in diminishing amounts. This meant that – rhetoric
of peasant participation notwithstanding – ‘development’ was increasingly orchestrated and imposed from above. The state’s not-so-invisible hand increasingly steered the economy, and Tanzania saw the rapid nationalization of major portions of the commercial, financial and industrial sectors. Borders with neighbouring countries were closed; severe import restrictions on foreign goods and currencies were imposed.

While the immediate post-Arusha Declaration period saw some improvements within Tanzania, particularly in the provision of social services and health care (Havnevik, 1993: 44), from the late 1970s events conspired to unravel ujamaa and all Tanzanians’ lives. Across the nation, ‘virtually all basic household goods including clothing, soap, edible oils, sugar, salt, batteries, kerosene, corrugated iron sheets, soft drinks, beer and cigarettes were scarce or non existent’ (Sharpley in Temu and Due, 2000: 685). The state monopoly over such commodities, far from eliminating capitalism and corruption, ‘simply increased opportunities for bribery, rent seeking, and clientelism’ (Tripp, 1997: 177). By ujamaa’s later years, the transportation infrastructure was collapsing, and virtually none of the promises made in the Arusha Declaration had materialized.

More unsettling still, literally and figuratively speaking, was the massive attempt to relocate millions of villagers into designated ujamaa villages. ‘Villagization’, as it was known, became Nyerere’s and the government’s single most important ujamaa policy (Pratt, 1976: 254). While for many years Nyerere stressed that the establishment of ujamaa villages must be voluntary, the voluntary eventually gave way to the compulsory. This culminated in Operation Villagization in the mid-1970s, during which time around 5 million people – about 50 per cent of the rural population – were forcibly moved into ujamaa villages.9 ‘Far from achieving . . . populist legitimacy, the villagization campaign created only an alienated, skeptical, demoralized, and uncooperative peasantry for which Tanzania would pay a huge price, both financially and politically’ (Scott, 1998: 237; also Coulson, 1982: 246ff.; Ponte, 2002: 46ff.).10 The irritable recollections of one of my village-dwelling Ihanzu interlocutors, a man in his 70s, can reasonably stand in for those of many Tanzanians:

During ujamaa we had nothing. Nothing! Even for money you couldn’t get cooking oil or kerosene; some of us had to wear banana leaves because there were no clothes [available] . . . I used to live in [the village of] Dindima; [but] it was closed down. We were forced to move to Matongo [village] on the other side of the mountain. Our homes, our cattle, our plots, our lives. Everything [was moved]. Those were awful times.

There are a few noteworthy points. The first is that ujamaa paints a specific vision of the world. This is a world of limited good in which one person’s or nation’s gain is another’s loss. Because Tanzania existed within a larger world system, and because she was a weaker partner in that system, interdependence meant dependence. ‘Self-reliance’ was thus seen as a means by which to avoid such dependence, and with it, exploitation and being ground into further poverty. Ujamaa also recognized that Tanzanians were themselves situated in specific power relations – rulers and ruled, urban and rural – that likewise implied a finite, zero sum economy. Wealth generation, in whatever form, only comes at someone else’s expense.
The second point is that Tanzanians hold mixed views on *ujamaa*, and these are best captured by distinguishing between *ujamaa* discourses and practices. For while Tanzanians were, and in many respects still are, enamoured with Nyerere the ideologue – with his noble *ujamaa* vision of a unified, independent, equal, peaceful and self-reliant Tanzania – most positively loath the real-world policies and practices that *ujamaa* somehow managed to engender (Tripp, 1997: 191; Pratt, 2000). As we shall see, similar things can be said about Tanzanians’ more recent experiences with neoliberalism.

**NEOLIBERALISM(S) IN TANZANIA**

By the mid-1980s, faced with Tanzania’s increasing economic downward spiral, Nyerere stepped down and Ali Hassan Mwinyi became the Republic’s second president (see Tripp, 1997: ch. 4). This signalled the advent of a new official paradigm, a specific vision and set of practices that was meant to put Tanzania, at long last, back on the golden road to development. This was neoliberalism.

Mwinyi’s government adopted wholesale the IMF’s structural adjustment programme and the rhetoric that surrounded it. Emblematic of this is the 1991 Zanzibar Declaration, as it has come to be known, which boldly challenged the Arusha Declaration and led to a number of ‘amendments’ to it; amendments that, truth be told, radically challenged the Arusha Declaration’s original vision. Among other things the Zanzibar Declaration undermined the Leadership Code by allowing party leaders and civil servants to own shares in companies, rent property and to engage in business for private gain – all (legal) impossibilities under the Arusha Declaration.

Tanzania’s neoliberal project was given further impetus when Benjamin Mkapa was elected the Republic’s third president in the country’s first multiparty elections in 1995, and again in 2000. Like Mwinyi before him, President Mkapa and his government enthusiastically supported Tanzania’s neoliberal turn. In 2005, President Jakaya Kikwete was elected, and through him the neoliberal revolution lives on. ‘Good governance’, ‘anti-corruption’, ‘poverty reduction’, ‘unleashing market forces’, ‘deregulation’ and ‘privatization’ all remain common refrains and underpin Tanzania’s turn-of-the millennium development declaration, the aptly titled *Tanzania Development Vision 2025*.

This comprehensive vision – Tanzania’s first since the Arusha Declaration – aimed to make explicit the philosophical foundations upon which the country’s present and future trajectory should rest. So what is the *Vision*’s vision? An optimistic one, to be sure. Thanks largely to free market reforms and forces, Tanzanian society in 2025 will be:

a substantially developed one with a high quality livelihood. Abject poverty will be a thing of the past . . . The economy will have been transformed from a low productivity agricultural economy to a semi-industrialized one led by modernized and highly productive agricultural activities which are effectively integrated and buttressed by supportive industrial and service activities . . . Tanzania of 2025 should be a nation imbued with five main attributes, high quality livelihood; peace, stability and unity; good governance; a well educated and learning society; and a competitive economy capable of producing sustainable growth and shared benefits. (*The Tanzania Development Vision 2025*, 1999: 1–2)
This future society, the *Vision* makes clear, will not materialize by accident. Rather, the effective ownership of the development agenda coupled with the spirit of self-reliance, at all societal levels, are major driving forces for the realization of this Vision. Tanzanians should learn to appreciate and honour hard work, creativity, professionalism and entrepreneurship and strive to develop a culture of saving and investment. (*The Tanzania Development Vision 2025* 1999: 17)

Unlike the *ujamaa* vision, in which the collective citizenry takes precedence, the development onus here sits squarely with the individual. Neoliberal rhetoric notwithstanding, it is interesting to note that the new *Vision* is not wholly dissimilar from Nyerere’s earlier *ujamaa* vision. Both, for instance, suggest that ‘hard work’ is required of its citizens. Both attack corruption, laying out specific Leadership Codes or ‘good governance’ policies that aim to eradicate it. Moreover, both suggest that their respective visions must be built on a stable and peaceful nation with high quality, universal health care and education. Finally, both would agree that their struggle is ‘aimed at moving the people of Tanzania (and the people of Africa as a whole) from a state of poverty to a state of prosperity’ (Nyerere, 1968a: 235). It is unremarkable, then, that most Tanzanians find the neoliberal vision compelling, and would be delighted if it were to come true. Who, after all, wouldn't want to see an end to poverty and a more prosperous society for everyone?

For many however, probably most, Tanzania’s neoliberal programme has simply failed to make good on its promises.12 Downsizing state bureaucracies in the name of efficiency and rationalization has meant massive layoffs and high unemployment. This has driven many citizens into the informal sector, or into farming, to survive (Lugalla, 1995, 1997: 440; Mbilinyi, 1990; Tripp, 1997: 22). As the informal sector swells, it has become extremely difficult or simply impossible to turn a profit. Nor have reforms made farming much easier, Tanzania’s farmers are today ‘growing more crops, risking more in marketing them, spending more in cultivating them, and earning less for their sale’ (Ponte, 1998: 339). For a great many Tanzanians, these are times of austerity not prosperity – which is why locals today speak of Tanzania as *Bongoland* ‘bongo’ being Swahili for ‘brain’, hence, Bongoland, the place you need to tax your brain just to get by. Thus even if many Tanzanians would like to buy the neoliberal dream, most remain unconvinced, based on first-hand experiences, that ‘deregulating’, ‘privatizing’, ‘unleashing market forces’ and ‘hard work’ provide a straightforward means to attain it. Neoliberalism then, like *ujamaa* before it, might best be described as Janus-faced, composed of both compelling discourses and dismal practices.

Some Tanzanians, I hasten to add, have benefited from recent changes. A small minority has managed to accumulate sometimes staggering amounts of wealth, seemingly overnight. This newly acquired wealth – designer clothes, fancy four-by-fours, enormous homes – is highly visible, and has had two effects. First, it has forced many Tanzanians to see themselves as impoverished, at least relative to those who have incalculably more. Second, it publicly hints that ‘the free market’ can, in fact, deliver what it promises, that in some cases it can move people swiftly from poverty to prosperity. The problem, for most, is knowing how – understanding, that is, the nature of the relationship between means and ends, actions and outcomes. What
does it really take to succeed? How does the market work, and how does one work it?

Tanzania’s neoliberal turn has played out in curious ways with the nation’s long-standing socialist concerns. The term ‘self-reliance’ (kujitegemea), for instance, continues to be deployed by the state to exhilarate and motivate. However, there has been an identifiable conceptual shift in its usage. It is the ‘self’ in ‘self-reliance’ that is at issue, for these days this rarely gestures towards any collectivity but instead conjures the individual self. The term kujitegemea today thus evokes less a vision of a collective Tanzanian self against the outside world, than it does a vision of a collection of individual selves who must rely on no one. This new rhetorical form hinges on a model of homo economicus, or better, homo a-socialis, that Reaganomics and Thatcherite credos would have enthusiastically endorsed. The message? There is no society, only individuals looking out for themselves. To be ‘self-reliant’ in Tanzania today is to rely on one’s own wisdom, wiles and wit, and not to depend on the government for assistance (see also Askew, 2002: 282).

This recent reconceptualization of the relations between the individual, society and the global system has had consequences. Not least, it has rendered invisible the manifold power relations in which various forms of exploitation and inequality are embedded. Additionally, where ujamaa suggested that interdependence equals dependence in a finite, zero-sum economy, the new vision posits a world of infinite good and unlimited possibilities in which interdependence equals freedom. Personal gain thus comes at no one’s expense, a ‘win-win’ scenario, as it were. Once ‘enabled’, so the reasoning goes, anyone and everyone can succeed and become rich through hard work.

It is these two models – the ujamaa and the neoliberal – of wealth production and their practical entailments that we must bear firmly in mind when considering Tanzania’s now-privatized transportation sector and its recent infestation with spectral forces.

**PRIVATIZING TRANSPORT**

As Tanzania’s formal sector has dwindled since the 1980s, a majority of Tanzanians have of necessity turned to the informal sector to secure their livelihood. The private transportation sector plays a doubly important role here, it both provides new business opportunities for private businesspersons within the growing informal economy, and forms the foundation upon which this burgeoning economy crucially depends.13

In the 1980s, the Tanzanian government allowed private transport to plug the rapidly expanding gaps in the beleaguered public transport sector. Consequently, between 7,500 and 10,000 privately-owned buses known as daladala today swarm the streets of Dar es Salaam;14 and over 90 per cent of Dar es Salaam’s residents now rely on the daladala to secure their livelihoods in the informal economy (Kombe et al., 2003: 57, 82, 85).

Anyone familiar with privatized transport elsewhere in Africa – the Egyptian otobis, Kenyan matatu, Ugandan kamunye, South African and Batswana kombis, Ghanaian tro-tro, Nigerian danfos – will find striking similarities with Dar’s daladala.15 Fast-moving, smoke-billowing, high-decibel daladala have become, in the space of a few decades, a ubiquitous feature of Dar es Salaam’s urban landscape (see Rizzo, 2002).16

Most daladala in Dar es Salaam are reconditioned, second-hand vehicles, imported from Japan or the Middle East. They come in two sizes, medium and mini. Medium-sized buses comprise around a third of the fleet and include the Japanese-made DCM,
Isuzu Journey and Toyota Coaster. These seat between 33 and 36 people, and routinely carry more. Minibuses, on the other hand, are the most common form of private transport in Dar today, the Japanese-made Toyota Hiace dominating the market. Minibuses are designed to hold 15 to 16 passengers and often carry up to 20. People sometimes refer to minibuses as *vipanya* – ‘small rats’ – given their agility and ability to negotiate through crowds, markets and across difficult sections of roads and narrow pathways.

But whatever size and whatever state of (dis)repair, *daladala* are big business. A medium-sized bus, second-hand, costs between US$10,000 and US$15,000 while a new one costs at least twice that amount. The small, more popular minibus sports a lower price tag of around US$7,000–9,000 for second-hand vehicles, and about twice that new. But in a country where the average daily income is less than a dollar, raising such amounts of money is not easy. From discussions with bus owners in Dar, most own just one vehicle and it is clear that by far the majority finance their buses personally, often from other business ventures. What is more, most consider themselves only part-time players in the transport sector being also engaged in a range of other jobs – many of them professional – at the same time.17 Owning a *daladala* is one amongst many strategies some (wealthy) urban residents use to get by in Tanzania’s new market milieu.

Bus owners rarely operate their own buses, but instead hire two or three people to do so, a driver, a conductor and, for the mid-sized buses, a second conductor. Nearly all drivers and conductors are male, range in age from their early 20s to their mid-40s, and have little or no formal education or professional training beyond primary school. They work hard. And working conditions are, bus operators complain, abysmal, many work 15 to 18 hours per day, often starting as early as 5 a.m., and sometimes receive no pay for their efforts. Not unrelated to this is the fact that the vast majority of bus operators – 82.9% according to one study (Rizzo, 2002: 146) – are employed without either contract or fixed wages. Instead, bus operators must remit a fixed amount to bus owners each day.18 After this, and after paying for petrol, punctures and food, the remaining spoils are divided unevenly between the driver and conductor(s). On a good day, a driver might thus pocket a nearly respectable TSh10,000 (around US$7.50), whereas on bad days, after expenses and paying the owner his remittance, he may be left with nothing. Conductors generally receive a few thousand shillings per day but, like drivers, can equally work a long day and receive nothing.

These exploitative working conditions ensure at least two things. The first is a certain degree of conflict between bus owners and operators. Bus operators’ demands that they be issued contracts and paid regular wages often go unheeded because, as one bus owner pointedly put it, ‘there are countless others willing to do the job if they won’t’. In today’s dire economic state, where scores of would-be bus operators mill about larger bus stands waiting for just such an opportunity, this is woefully true. Secondly, current *daladala* labour relations arrangements virtually guarantee that transport services remain standard and highly unsafe. To make ends meet, *daladala* operators are compelled to work long hours, to overload their vehicles and to drive recklessly at high speeds. They are working against time, and are in competition with all other *daladala* for business. The more passengers they collect and the faster they go, the more they stand to profit. These facts, combined with lack of vehicle maintenance and poor road conditions, make *daladala* accidents and fatalities commonplace (Assum, 1998: 3, 5; Rizzo, 2002; Rwebangira et al., 1999).
Thus, the deregulation and privatization of Tanzania’s public transport sector has provided the preconditions for new relations of exploitation between bus owners and operators, and has made Dar es Salaam a far more dangerous place to live. Tanzanians, of course, are not silly, and many lay the blame for such things squarely on neoliberalism’s doorstep (Maunder and Pearce, 2000: 5; Rwebangira et al., 1999: 10). Their collective grumblings surface elsewhere, too, as in their discussions about devils.

**DAR ES SALAAM’S DEVILS**

Dar es Salaam’s 3 million-strong population comprises, as with any city, a very varied lot. While many were born in the city, their families having lived there for generations, others are more recent arrivals from other parts of Tanzania, the region and beyond. Some immigrants, though not all, maintain links with the rural areas from which they come. Some residents of Dar are, by most any measure, wealthy; the overwhelming majority are not. Scores of languages are spoken, most of them Bantu, though Swahili remains the lingua franca.19

Side-by-side with the manifest diversity come certain shared understandings of the world. One such understanding is that the occult – what people call *mazingara* or *ushirikina* – is a foundational, moving force in the world. There are several key occult terms and concepts that share wide social currency in Dar es Salaam today. First there are Islamic spirits. These are often said to originate in the coastal Swahili areas in, around and beyond Dar es Salaam, or in the Middle East. The terms themselves derive from Arabic, and include *majini* (spirits), *madimani* (demons) and *mashetani* (devils). Christians and others often use the latter term in the singular, *shetani*, to speak of the devil or Satan. One also hears of *mizimu*, which might be translated as shades, ancestral spirits, souls or ghosts. These are commonly considered African as opposed to Islamic spiritual forces. Finally, other terms and concepts like *uchawi*, *ulozi* and *mazingaumbo* are commonplace, and variously glossed in English as witchcraft, sorcery, magic, cheating and illusion.

Dar es Salaam residents discuss these and other invisible beings and forces publicly, in everyday settings, on the street, in bars, restaurants and so on. They command such interest, in fact, that since the first years of this century, there have been several Dar es Salaam-based newspapers that traffic widely in matters of religion and the occult. Not surprisingly, given the amount of time people spend commuting in and around the city, *daladala* journeys themselves prove to be popular venues for arguing over such things, particularly as they concern transport. (It was, in fact, only after being sandwiched repeatedly into the middle of such heated, mobile discussions that I decided to direct specific anthropological attention to buses.) In this ongoing, everyday in-and-around-town talk, there is a good deal of confusion, conceptual slippage and often heated disagreement over occult forces, the relations between them and their powers. With such a diverse population, it could scarcely be otherwise. Many Christians, for instance, insist that the devil (*shetani*) sits at the pinnacle of a spiritual hierarchy of evil, and that all the others can be fitted under him. Other Christians and most non-Christians I have spoken with deny this, claiming that the devil is only one amongst many hidden forces, some of which – like ancestral spirits (*mizimu*) or Islamic spirits (*majini*) – are not necessarily problematic at all. Even so, while women and men routinely query the nature of and the precise relations between various occult beings, all would agree that *ushirikina* or...
mazingara – what we have called ‘the occult’ – is an inevitability of our contemporary world. Sure as the sun rises in the east, the occult forms the banal backdrop against which everyday life unfolds.

Many bus owners in Dar es Salaam are today rumoured to gain and maintain their wealth by deploying occult forces. These stories are widespread – I have read them in newspapers, too – and are usually generic in form, implicating no particular bus owner and, thus, potentially all of them. Indeed, I have yet to meet a Dar resident who claims never to have heard such stories. The stories usually tell of bus owners who purchase and enter into agreements with one or more occult force to enrich themselves, and to protect themselves (and sometimes bus operators) against spiritual attack. Diviners (waganga), Islamic sheiks (mashehe) or both are said to peddle such spiritual forces. Typically, the purchased devils lay down certain rules (masharti) that must be observed, rules that are said to be highly specific and dependent on individual spirits’ whims.

While the many devil-stories I have collected vary endlessly in their specifics, the nature of spirits’ rules makes it possible to identify two basic genres, each of which broaches in a distinct manner the issues of value, morality and wealth production.\(^20\)

The first devil-story genre suggests that spirits’ rules are innocuous, and that following them can generate wealth virtually hassle-free. There are few moral quandaries here and anyone with the money can purchase and deploy spiritual forces. I have heard countless comments and stories where spirits require, say, that buses leave the stand at specific times; that they circle the stand three times before collecting passengers; or that drivers kick the rear bumper every circuit around the city. Though potentially annoying to bus owners and operators, such idiosyncratic spiritual demands ultimately harm no one, and promise to enrich bus owners for doing very little. For the bus owner who ensures that such rules are correctly observed, spirits will be placated, his bus business will boom, he will become rich.

While this first genre of devil-story suggests that spirits’ rules can be harmless, thus allowing bus owners to get rich without damaging others, the second genre proffers a more sinister position, that spirits only produce wealth by taking a life. A Dar es Salaam-born man in his 50s provides an example from the early 1990s, one he claims was widely-discussed at the time.

One man started a taxi business; he did very well. He soon had several taxis, drivers and a thriving business. People said his cars had spirits (majini), and that each year the car-spirit demanded blood: one person’s life. Without this, his business would fail. For a long time no one saw any of his cars hit or kill anyone. But one day [someone did]. He was jailed. He was rich, so he bribed the police. They set him free . . . Later he must have broken the spirits’ rules, because his money slipped away, [and] his cars all broke down. Last time I saw him he was in tattered clothes wandering the streets on foot.

The moral of the story? No one gets something for nothing. Wealth does not spring from thin air, but comes circuitously from elsewhere. In this case, the spirits’ rules require a life in return for wealth. Stories come with many twists, and vary in their specifics depending on who tells them.
In Dar es Salaam in 2001, I met a middle-aged woman whose extended family and kin I knew well from previous work in central, rural Tanzania. She was herself born in the villages, but left in the early 1980s. In discussions about the business climate in Tanzania today, she told me something she had come to realize some years earlier, you can’t get something for nothing. All businesses have certain spiritual rules to them, she said, and personal gains come only at a cost. She provided many examples she had heard about in and beyond Dar, including one about public transportation.

A man in Dar es Salaam once had a minibus. He was rich. He, the cars and his drivers were all medicinally protected. A spirit *(jini)* is what controls the bus, and there’s more than one spirit working. These spirits had rules, each year the bus had to crash and kill everyone, except two. The reason is so there would be lots of blood [for the spirits]. The first time his bus crashed it was full of Muslims, pagans and [Born-Again] Christians. There was a witch-bowl in the bus, underneath it, that was meant to collect passengers’ blood. But when the bus crashed – because of the saved Christians onboard – only a little blood entered the bowl and only the head spirit, the Devil *(shatani)*, got to drink. His helpers didn’t get any . . . When another one of the man’s buses crashed, without any saved people on board, blood filled the entire pot and the spirits were overjoyed. They all drank.

A patent subtext here is that this woman has been ‘saved’ – in the hope, she told me, that Jesus would sort out her rather tumultuous business and personal life. Indeed plenty of Tanzanian born-agains I know trade in such stories. It is however less the specifics and more the broader notions to which such stories lend credence that concern us, namely, popular notions of value, morality and the production of wealth. This second genre of devil-story, in whatever form, suggests that wealth cannot be generated from nothing. One person’s gain is another’s loss. Morally speaking, this is deeply troublesome. While this particular woman is clear that all business works this way, not all, or even most, would agree. More common is that people remain ambivalent, undecided and entertain both positions at once to explain different cases.

While much more could be said, for present purposes we need simply note that Dar’s devil discourses are of two genres, and that each posits a particular relation between actions and outcomes, between spiritual rules, morality and wealth production. The first implies that some spirits’ rules are innocuous, that one can buy and observe them to generate wealth without harming others. The second genre, on the contrary, implies that spirits’ rules ipso facto demand direct predation; personal wealth comes only by taking a life. Thus, each devil-story genre is characterized by a distinctive and opposing position about bus owners and successful business today, wealth production either requires a life, or it does not. And people hold one – or both – of these positions.

**ANALYTICS, EXPLANATION AND EVERYDAY WORLDS**

As we have seen, residents of Dar es Salaam are well aware that deregulating and privatizing the transport sector has spurred intense competition, and that this, in turn, has had dire consequences for all residents of Dar es Salaam. People regularly express their misgivings in plain Swahili, not just about the transport sector, but also about Tanzania’s recent neoliberal turn in general. Moreover, these misgivings commonly emerge in
popular rumours about bus-devils and occult practices. On these grounds, it might seem reasonable to mobilize our popular anthropological analytic to ‘explain’ such occult matters, to argue that Dar’s devil discourses serve up a damning critique of neoliberalism, and long for better, bygone days. I wish, for the moment, to suspend this common analytic move in order to consider once again our anthropological analytic, the explanations it invites and its relation to the world-out-there.

The first issue concerns the historical relation between ‘then’ and ‘now,’ a relation that sits central to the analytic, and for reasons discussed earlier places a heavy explanatory burden on a notion of ‘rupture’. There is little doubt that the Tanzanian transition from socialism to post-socialism over the course of a few decades has been stark – an undeniable rupture of sorts. One of the most marked differences between the two periods concerns official models of value, morality and wealth production. With the *ujamaa* vision, the world was presented as a finite one of interdependence, a zero sum game economy wherein one person’s or nation’s gain was another’s loss. Wealth production thus required direct predation and was for this reason morally problematic. The neoliberal vision, on the other hand, posits an infinite world of goods in which anyone and everyone can benefit. We only need to try. Within this metaphysics, each person’s gain is independent of all others’ gains and losses. Individuals need harm no one to get rich.

Coinciding with these manifest differences between past and present come some significant continuities, too; continuities that the analytic in question relegates to second explanatory fiddle, or to sit silently on the sidelines. One of these is the lamentable fact that neither *ujamaa* nor neoliberalism has managed to improve the lot of most Tanzanians. If *ujamaa* was a practical failure, grinding people into further poverty, neoliberalism has not managed to dig them out. Not even close. This perpetual poverty points to a disjuncture of another sort, not so much between past and present, then and now, but between ideologies and practices across the temporal divide. Both *ujamaa* and neoliberalism promised riches for all, and provided recipes for how to get there. Yet in practice both have failed.

So what about bus-devils? What sorts of explanations can be provided for their recent appearance? As we have seen, the bus-devil stories commonly told in Dar es Salaam today are of two genres, and provide two competing visions of value, morality and wealth production. The point I would like to make is that these mirror precisely *ujamaa* and neoliberal ideologies. One devil discourse tells of wealth production at others’ expense, be they drivers, conductors, passengers or pedestrians. The underlying notion is identical to the one that underpins the *ujamaa* socialist ethos, both posit a finite universe, an economy of limited good. What I gain, my neighbour loses. The other genre of devil-story, on the other hand, mirrors neoliberal ideologies, and tells of wealth created from thin air. Buses only need have their bumper kicked, or be driven round the stand before departing, and their owners get rich. One only need know the rules and abide by them to succeed. This is a world of unlimited goods and goodies, where everyone can get rich – at no one else’s expense – if only they try. This mirroring effect between devil discourses and national get-rich schemes is hardly accidental, I think, but exists because devil discourses provide imaginative moral frameworks for meditating on the relation between individuals and society, the origins of value, morality and the production of wealth in the world, past, present and future. Through them, Dar residents raise a series of
questions about what type of world we inhabit; how, exactly, one gets rich in that world; what is at stake; and the (im)morality of these processes. Can people get rich through hard work alone, as neoliberalism promises? Or does wealth production imply interdependence and hence demand direct predation, as the ujamaa vision implied? Perhaps most importantly, why do neither of these get-rich visions appear to work in practice, at least for the vast majority of Tanzanians?

Bus-devil discourses thus speak less to some supposed divide between past and present, then and now, than they do to the rift between ideologies and practices through time. As we have seen, Tanzanians share neither a monolithic hatred of neoliberalism, nor a totalizing love for the socialism that preceded it. What they do share is a strong dislike of being told one thing – if you do X you will get rich – while being served up something else (poverty). This, I submit, is precisely why bus-devils have proved so good to think with, they mull over two failed strategies of wealth production, the different moralities and sets of relations each entails; they ask how one really gets rich in the world, past, present or future, and what is at stake in the process. Bus-devils therefore cannot reasonably be explained as a straightforward, all-encompassing critique or rejection of the new and now, and a coveting of the old, as our anthropological analytic might entice us to argue.

This raises certain issues surrounding our anthropological analytic. The first is the lexicons it often employs – an issue that likewise pertains to a much broader range of anthropological projects today. The problem inheres in the expansive and expanding ‘post’ lexicons, which unavoidably posit a particular telos and temporal sequencings and, with that, specific ruptures between ‘before’ and ‘after’, ‘then’ and ‘now’, ‘past’ and ‘present.’ The postmodern, post-Fordist, postcolonial and post-socialist all spring to mind. Each in its own way points to a specific transformative moment or rupture, and ostensibly provides theoretical purchase by contrasting the two distinctive temporal frames.21 One challenge for anthropology, and indeed for the social sciences more generally, is to develop alternative analytic languages that do not embody such pre-theoretical commitments. Note, this is not a naïve call for more ‘objective’ or ‘neutral’ languages with which to theorize. It is rather to suggest a more thorough incorporation of terms and concepts that are guided by a different set of pre-theoretical commitments about the relations between past and present, ones that direct our analytic attention to notions of continuities as much as discontinuities. To put it differently, we must remain mindful of the pre-theoretical proclivities that inhere in our current conceptual languages, and ask a complementary but often sidelined or silenced set of questions about non-ruptures and historical continuities, and how these things might be enticed analytically centre stage.

Another key issue concerns the analytic’s conceptual space within which our interlocutors are given life. As it stands, the analytic makes it extremely difficult to render those we encounter in the world – whoever and wherever they are – as anything other than ultra-conscious malcontents, resisters, subalterns or ‘neophyte proletarians’ in an older Taussig terminology; people who recognize unmistakably, through the ideological smokescreen, their own conditions of subordination and who rise up, in so many ways, in protest against them. In the everyday world, however, wherever we find malcontents, resisters, subalterns and the like we also find the contented, those who do not resist. Crucially, as emerges in daladala devil discussions, these are often one and the same.
person (see also Gable, 2006). The danger, then, is that our current anthropological analytic tempts us to compress such everyday messiness into an ill-fitting theoretical straightjacket in the name of ‘anthropological critique’. For this reason new analytics need to carve out conceptual spaces wherein our interlocutors can both loath and love the new, the novel, the neoliberal if they so choose. Individuals must be allowed to be contradictory, conflicted, ambivalent and at times utterly uncertain – in a word, human. Which brings us to our final point.

One reason, perhaps the main reason, the anthropological analytic in question has remained so popular is for its underlying moral and political sensibilities. It has provided anthropologists with, among other things, a particularly nifty platform from which to critique capitalism, modernity, neoliberalism and globalization. These are worthwhile concerns and projects, and they square neatly with anthropologists’ long-standing commitments to the peoples with whom we work, ‘action anthropology’, as Sol Tax once called it, or in present-day parlance, militant (Schepers-Hughes, 1995) or anarchist anthropology (Graeber, 2002; also Smith, 1999). It is important to be clear, then, that to render the analytic problematic is not to dismiss the broader moral and political sensibilities that guide it. Anthropologists cannot afford to give up on identifying, disaggregating and critiquing the very real hegemonies, power relations and structural inequalities that disadvantage some and advantage others. Nor is it to suggest some quixotic quest, pace Roy D’Andrade (1995), for an objective theoretical framework utterly devoid of politics and ethics. Theorizing, politics and ethics are complexly and inextricably linked, and anthropologists for the most part know this. The question, then, is not how to sideline or deny these concerns, but rather which theoretical positions, lexicons and analytics allow us best to capture and underscore them.

Tanzanians’ discussions about bus-devils patently reflect on and even critique the world of which they form a part. But they do not critique it in the ways our current analytic would lead us to believe, they do not critique an immoral present vis-à-vis a moral past; they do not tell monolithic tales about the ills of neoliberalism and the virtues of socialism. Instead, these stories speak most directly to, and offer a critique of, the failures of both ujamaa and neoliberalism to make good on their promises. In this way devil discourses point to Tanzanians’ ongoing annoyance with promises and practices that are utterly out of synch. To say as much is no apology for the world’s ills and oppressions, nor is it to be complicit in their reproduction. Quite the contrary, such explanations allow us better to recognize and unpack the very ills and oppressions the analytic ostensibly seeks, but ultimately fails, to engage. Gaining meaningful theoretical purchase over such real world phenomena requires, above all, beginning and ending with the world rather than with anthropology’s own metaphysics of explanation.

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Notes
1 Rutherford (1999) explores this emerging analytic in another context.
2 See the August issue of the journal Social Analysis 1986 for several useful critiques of Taussig’s book. See also Edelman (1994).
3 Thus while contemporary and past anthropologists might generally agree on broad disciplinary sensibilities, they would disagree over what theoretical purchase the notion of, say, ‘function’ or ‘hybridity’ provides, and what it can or cannot plausibly ‘explain’.
4 For a brilliant exception to this common tendency, see Geschiere, (1997).
5 On Nyerere’s political thought and how it translated into policy see Pratt (1976: 63ff.). For more general perspectives on ujamaa see Hyden (1980) and Shivji (1995).
6 Naturally, the Arusha Declaration did not spring from thin air. It was built on solid philosophical and political foundations that President Nyerere had carefully worked out prior to the Declaration (see Nyerere, 1967a), and that he continued to develop and modify after it (Nyerere, 1968a: 251ff., 1973). While the Arusha Declaration is often portrayed as a turning point and/or providing a break with the past, which is not entirely untrue, it is important to recognize the significant continuities in official thinking on ‘development’ between the colonial and postcolonial periods, and between the pre- and post-Declaration era (Scott, 1998; Jennings, 2003).
7 It also differed from other forms of socialism, in that Nyerere was unwilling to accept ‘doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man’ (Nyerere, 1967b: 170). Leninism, Marxism and Maoism were all deemed unsuitable guiding beacons, and ujamaa differed in important ways from these doctrines. First, Nyerere insisted that ujamaa was not about class struggle or, in the main, controlling the means of production but was rather ‘an attitude of mind’ (Nyerere, 1967b). Second, he insisted that African Socialism has solid roots in ‘the traditional African family’ (Nyerere, 1967b). This meant that unlike the Great Leaps Forward and Purges of the Past that characterized other socialisms, ujamaa’s ‘non-Marxist socialism’ (Tripp 1997: 62) proffered a particular vision of the relationship between the past, present and future that was premised on a ‘rhetoric of return’, as Askew (2006: 18) calls it – the idea that certain ‘African traditions’ had a crucial role to play in mediating past, present and future social, political and cultural realities.
8 Even indefatigably optimistic, revolutionary socialists have acknowledged that, in Tanzania and across Africa, ‘the project of socialism has thus far proven to be a failure’ (Saul, 2003: 190).
9 Due to shifts in official terminology the statistics are confusing. What were initially called ‘ujamaa villages’ were later divided into different degrees of ‘ujamaa-ness’. Distinctions were drawn between three types of village ‘planned villages’ or ‘development villages’ (vijiji vya maendeleo); ujamaa-candidate villages (in which at least 10 per cent of cultivated land was in community village farms); and proper ujamaa villages – what turned out to be a small minority of villages – in which most agriculture was carried out on a communal basis.
11 For detailed accounts of this transition period and beyond, see Campbell and Stein (1992), Tripp (1997: ch. 4), Kiondo (1992), Stein (1992), and Ndulu (Ndulu and Mwega, 1994).

12 The Africa Development Bank has recently noted as much ‘Although both the IMF and World Bank insist that major gains were achieved in many African countries [due to structural adjustment], the recent refocusing of their operation suggests that while valuable lessons were learned, actual performance, especially in respect to growth and poverty reduction, was disappointing’ (Africa Development Bank, 2000: 15). Even enthusiastic supporters of neoliberal reform have been forced to recognize that ‘[t]he major failure of reform, as it has developed to date, lies in the apparent lack of tangible benefits for many of the poorest sections of Tanzanian society’ (Temu and Due, 2000: 710).

13 Each bus or daladala employs a driver, conductor and sometimes a porter. Conservative estimates of 7500 daladalas thus suggest a work force of around 18,000–20,000 employees. This number increases dramatically when one adds to this the vast numbers of car importers, spare part suppliers, mechanics, car washers and the like who similarly keep the sector going.

14 Official figures suggest that between 1991 and 1999 privately registered buses (daladala) in Dar es Salaam alone went from 600 to over 3000, while unofficial figures more than double official ones.


16 The research for this article was carried out in the summers of 1999, 2001 and 2003, and forms part of a broader ongoing research project that considers how occult forms are variously implicated in economic, legal and political institutions in contemporary Tanzania. For the larger project I have worked with and interviewed around 100 Tanzanians since 1999, and from those encounters have recorded several hundred stories about specific occult incidents and activities (see Sanders, 2001a; 2001b; 2003a; 2003b). A subset of these provides the empirical base of this article.

17 Other studies have turned up similar findings, where many bus owners had other, primary occupations including ‘a medical officer, a university lecturer, a politician, a civil servant, a retailer and a farmer’ (Kombe et al., 2003: 23).

18 Standard remittance payments are around TSh20,000 for minibuses and TSh35,000 for the medium-sized daladala.

19 Scholarship on Dar es Salaam is today vast and growing. For some recent ethnographically-informed writings on various facets of the new market economy that underpins contemporary life, see Tripp (1997) and Moyer (2004); and Rizzo’s (2002) excellent piece on the liberalized transport sector.

20 A wide range of people tell devil-stories – young and old; male and female; religious and not; rich and poor – and I have found no simple relationship between these two genres and the socially situated actors who narrate them.

21 Some postcolonial scholars try to have it both ways, insisting that postcoloniality ‘sidesteps the language of beginnings and ends’ (Prakash, 1996: 188); or that ‘the post in postcolonialism is not . . . to be understood as a clearly dividing temporal post, but rather as an indication of continuity’ (Abrahamsen, 2003: 195). It is unclear
what theoretical purchase the post here provides, where the term’s opposite is claimed as its central meaning.

22 I am indebted to one of the journal’s anonymous reviewers for making me sharpen my argument here. See Gable (2002, 2006) and Ferguson (2006: 155–75) who also speak to this issue in different ways.

23 This is not to suggest that all anthropological theorists should become ‘barefoot anthropologists’ (Scheper-Hughes, 1995). The point rather is that anthropological theorizing, in addition to being about knowledge production, is also about self-reflection on the grounds and contexts of that production, including the material, epistemological and ethical ambitions and constraints (see Moore and Sanders, 2006).

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*The Tanzania Development Vision 2025* (1999) Produced by the President’s Office, Planning Commission, Dar es Salaam


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