

Publication status: This preprint has not been published elsewhere.

Between formal law and urban customary regulation: mechanisms of socio-economic crisis management in Kinshasa's popular theater — the case of La vie est belle

Paulin Nyengo

<https://doi.org/10.1590/SciELOPreprints.16343>

Submitted on: 2026-05-30

Posted on: 2026-07-03 (version 1)

(YYYY-MM-DD)

Paulin NYENGO OLONGE¹

University Of Bunia and Saint Elie University Of Africa

ORCID iD: 0009-0004-8903-9717 (<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8903-9717>)

"BETWEEN FORMAL LAW AND URBAN CUSTOMARY REGULATION: MECHANISMS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN KINSHASA'S POPULAR THEATER — THE CASE OF 'LA VIE EST BELLE'."

Abstract

This study analyzes the mechanisms of social regulation and conflict resolution through the prism of popular theater in Kinshasa, anchoring its analysis in the iconic work *"La Vie est belle"*. Operating at the intersection of textual semiotics, legal sociology, and reception analysis, this research examines how a precarious urban fabric secretes an autonomous normative order in response to the structural deficiencies of state-sanctioned positive law.

First, the results reveal a mapping of micro-conflicts deeply rooted in the materiality of daily survival, where the commercial shift of the dowry becomes a barrier of exclusion for young people. Faced with the inaccessibility of official institutions, subaltern groups deploy a "diplomacy of cunning" as a functional substitute for alternative dispute resolution (ADR). This infrapolitical resistance operates through three pillars: customary arbitration reinvented by neighborhood elders ("Les Vieux"), the subversive rhetoric of public derision (*Lelo*), and the horizontal solidarity found within informal street trades.

Finally, the analysis of textual reception establishes the theatrical arena as an oppositional public sphere. The Kinshasa audience acts as a jury in a permanent popular court that validates the ethics of "Article 15". By favoring an outcome based on restorative justice and the flattening of dominant power dynamics, the performance produces, disseminates, and legitimizes a shared plebeian jurisprudence. This research demonstrates the central role of artistic performance in codifying "living law" and preserving social cohesion within a postcolonial African context.

Keywords: Popular theater, Kinshasa, Interlegality, Diplomacy of cunning, Article 15, Restorative justice, Subalterns.

Resumen

Resumen Este estudio analiza los mecanismos de regulación social y de resolución de conflictos a través del prisma del teatro popular en Kinshasa, tomando como base la emblemática obra *"La Vie est belle"*. En la intersección de la semiótica textual, la sociología jurídica y el análisis de la recepción, la investigación examina cómo el tejido urbano

¹ **Pr. Dr. Nyengo Olonge Paulin**; PhD in International legal Studies and PhD Candidate in Conflict Mediation; Rector of Saint Elijah University of Africa (**USEA**), DR Congo. Attorney at Law and Expert in Legal Diplomacy; Atlantic International University (**USA**), University of Bunia, International University of New Technologies, Higher Applied Pedagogical and Technical Institute (**DRC**). Member of the editorial team at **NGE** Publishing, Editor-in-Chief of the journal *African Interdisciplinary Horizon*. E-mail: paulinnyengo@gmail.com.

precarizado secreta un orden normativo autónomo frente a las deficiencias estructurales del derecho positivo estatal.

En primer lugar, los resultados revelan una cartografía de microconflictos arraigados en la materialidad de la supervivencia cotidiana, donde la mutación comercial de la dote se convierte en una barrera de exclusión para la juventud. Ante la inaccesibilidad de las instituciones oficiales, los grupos subalternos despliegan una "diplomacia de la astucia" como sustituto funcional de los medios alternativos de solución de conflictos (MASC). Esta resistencia infrapolítica se operacionaliza a través de tres pilares: el arbitraje consuetudinario reinventado por los "Viejos" del barrio, la retórica subversiva de la burla pública (*Lelo*) y la solidaridad horizontal de los pequeños oficios callejeros.

Finalmente, el análisis de la recepción textual consagra a la arena teatral como un espacio público de oposición. El público de Kinshasa se constituye en el jurado de un tribunal popular permanente que valida la ética del "Artículo 15". Al privilegiar un desenlace basado en la justicia restaurativa y en el aplanamiento de las dinámicas de dominación, el espectáculo produce, difunde y legitima una jurisprudencia plebeya compartida. Esta investigación demuestra el papel central de la performance artística en la codificación del "derecho vivo" y en la preservación de la cohesión social en el contexto africano postcolonial.

Palabras clave Teatro popular, Kinshasa, Interlegalidad, Diplomacia de la astucia, Artículo 15, Justicia restaurativa, Subalternos.

Resumo

Resumo Este estudo analisa os mecanismos de regulação social e de resolução de conflitos através do prisma do teatro popular em Kinshasa, ancorando a sua análise na obra emblemática *"La Vie est belle"*. Na interseção da semiótica textual, da sociologia jurídica e da análise de recepção, a investigação examina como o tecido urbano precarizado secreta uma ordem normativa autónoma face às deficiências estruturais do direito positivo estatal.

Em primeiro lugar, os resultados revelam um mapeamento de microconflitos enraizados na materialidade da sobrevivência quotidiana, onde a mutação comercial do dote se torna uma barreira de exclusão para a juventude. Diante da inacessibilidade das instituições oficiais, os grupos subalternos mobilizam uma "diplomacia da astúcia" como substituto funcional aos meios alternativos de resolução de litígios (MARL). Esta resistência infrapolítica operacionaliza-se através de três pilares: o arbítrio consuetudinário reinventado pelos "Velhos" do bairro, a retórica subversiva do escárnio público (*Lelo*) e a solidariedade horizontal dos pequenos ofícios de rua.

Por fim, a análise da recepção textual consagra a arena teatral como um espaço público oposicional. O público de Kinshasa constitui-se como júri de um tribunal popular permanente que valida a ética do "Artigo 15º". Ao privilegiar um desfecho baseado na justiça restaurativa e no nivelamento das dinâmicas de dominação, o espetáculo produz, difunde e legitima uma jurisprudência plebeia partilhada. Esta investigação demonstra o papel central da performance artística na codificação do "direito vivo" e na preservação da coesão social no contexto africano pós-colonial.

Palavras-chave Teatro popular, Kinshasa, Interlegalidade, Diplomacia da astúcia, Artigo 15º, Justiça restaurativa, Subalternos.

I. Context of the Study

Sub-Saharan megacities, and most notably Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been grappling with acute, structural socio-economic crises for several decades. Marked by the aftershocks of structural adjustment policies and the progressive collapse of the formal industrial fabric, daily life in Kinshasa has become the stage for widespread precarity (Kapagama, 2014). Faced with the failure or inaccessibility of official state institutions, the population of Kinshasa deploys an individualized and collective survival rationality, often encapsulated by the popular philosophy of *système D* (resourcefulness) or "Article 15" (Jacquemot, 2015; de Villers et al., 2002). Within this dense urban fabric, disputes related to money, housing, employment, and matrimonial alliances proliferate. Because the official judicial apparatus is disconnected from the material realities of most citizens, a shift occurs from formal legality toward an urban customary regulation—a "living law" based on compromise, localized negotiation, and informal arbitration (Nzampungu, 2025).

Simultaneously, the streets of Kinshasa have developed their own channels for raising awareness and achieving catharsis. Kinshasa's popular theater, widely broadcasted by mass media and performed in the heart of working-class neighborhoods, has established itself as a sociological mirror and a genuine alternative public sphere (Ngombo & Elombe Sukari, 2015). Far from being mere entertainment, this theater acts as a vehicle for mass education and a popular court where tensions born out of urban misery are negotiated, dramatized, and peacefully resolved (Biaya, 1997).

The cult work "*La Vie est belle*" (Life is Rosy), co-directed by Mwezé Ngangura and Benoît Lamy in 1987, sits precisely at the intersection of this quest for social regulation and artistic expression (French Institute, 2023). Although originally conceived for cinema, its plot and archetypes continue to feed into the adaptations and performances of popular theater in Kinshasa. The narrative portrays Kourou (played by the music star Papa Wemba), a young, resource-poor rural migrant who comes to brave Kinshasa and faces the economic and sexual predation of the wealthy notable Nvouandou (Wikipedia, 2026).

Through the dynamics of its characters, the work crystallizes the deep-seated conflicts of late-20th-century Zairean society: class conflicts (predatory wealth versus resilient poverty), gender conflicts (arranged marriage and the commercialization of the dowry), and generational conflicts. Faced with these crises, recourse to formal courts is non-existent. Instead, characters mobilize a "localized diplomacy" and a behavioral grammar specific to Kinshasa's urban space to restore social equilibrium (Ngangura & Lamy, 1987). Consequently, the central question of this research is formulated as follows: **To what extent do the conflict resolution mechanisms dramatized in Kinshasa's popular theater, through the example of "La Vie est belle," illustrate the emergence of an urban customary regulation capable of offsetting the inadequacies of formal law in the face of socio-economic crises?**

In response to the research question raised, two interdependent hypotheses (one primary and one secondary) guide this investigation. Kinshasa's popular theater, far from being a simple outlet or a passive entertainment, functions as a genuine authority for customary and urban legal regulation. In the context of a blatant disconnect between Congolese positive law and survival realities in Kinshasa (Kapagama, 2014), the analysis of "*La Vie est belle*" suggests that the resolution of major socio-economic crises does not involve official courts and tribunals, but rather a "legal diplomacy of the streets." This form of diplomacy rests on the ethics of resourcefulness (*débrouille*), the moral obligation of solidarity, and the systematic recourse to third-party mediators chosen from within the community. Theater thus validates and codifies an informal law that draws its legitimacy directly from the collective consciousness and popular assent (Nzampungu, 2025; Biaya, 1997).

The work "*La Vie est belle*" demonstrates that when faced with a blatant asymmetry of power—materialized by the conflict between the raw force of predatory capital (represented by the character of Nvouandou) and the vulnerability of the working classes (embodied by Kourou)—cunning, humor, and popular consensus establish themselves as instruments of an informal transitional justice (Jacquemot, 2015). By staging the triumph of legitimate cleverness over unjust economic domination, the theater proposes peaceful regulatory mechanisms that prevent the violent implosion of the urban space. It reinvents the principles of customary diplomacy to adapt them to Kinshasa's urban modernity, asserting that social viability depends more on relational equity than on strict formal legality (de Villers et al., 2002).

The general objective of this study is to analyze how popular artistic expressions, specifically Kinshasa theater through the work "*La Vie est belle*", serve as alternative spaces for legal regulation and localized diplomacy in the face of systemic failures in the formal judicial apparatus during periods of socio-economic crisis. To achieve this, the research pursues the following three specific objectives:

- To identify the typology of socio-economic disputes (informal labor conflicts, abuse of power, disputes related to marriage and the dowry) staged within the character dynamics of "*La Vie est belle*".
- To analyze the non-state mechanisms and negotiation processes (third-party intercession, community arbitration, the use of cunning and urban rhetoric) mobilized by actors to restore social equilibrium.
- To confront the informal justice solutions proposed by the theatrical work with the realities of legal dualism in Kinshasa, in order to understand how the population legitimizes its own norms of justice over the formal laws of the State.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the complexity of the social regulation mechanisms and localized diplomacy dramatized in Kinshasa's popular theater, this research relies on an interpretative framework based on an interdisciplinary approach. The analysis of socio-economic crises and their resolution in "*La Vie est belle*" cannot be confined to state-sanctioned positive law, which is, by definition, elitist and often absent from the lives of ordinary citizens. Consequently, our

theoretical architecture is built around three conceptual pillars: legal pluralism, the infrapolitics of the subordinate, and popular theater as an oppositional public sphere.

1. Legal Pluralism and Urban "Living Law"

1.1. Conceptual Foundations of Legal Pluralism

Classical legal science, a legacy of state positivism and colonial Jacobinism, has long approached law through the prism of monism. According to this exclusive conception, the State holds an absolute monopoly over both the production of norms and legitimate violence. However, the analysis of postcolonial societies and contemporary megacities highlights the limitations of this theoretical fiction. To move beyond this reductionism, John Griffiths (1986) conceptualized legal pluralism as a descriptive situation in which, within the same social field, several distinct legal orders coexist and interact. Griffiths distinguishes between "weak" pluralism—where the State validates and integrates portions of customary law into its own system—and "strong" pluralism, which acknowledges the existence of autonomous normative systems that are not validated by the State but possess undeniable social efficacy.

From a more comprehensive and critical perspective, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006) enriches this theory by introducing the concept of *interlegality*. According to Santos, individuals do not live in watertight legal compartments; rather, they navigate at the intersection of different networks of legality (state law, community codes, religious or informal law). In the subaltern spaces of the Global South, this interlegality becomes a survival and resistance strategy against the hegemony of a formal law that is often perceived as distant, costly, corrupt, or unsuited to the material realities of the population.

1.2. Institutional Failure and the Emergence of Kinshasa's "Living Law"

When transposed to the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and more specifically to its capital, this theoretical framework finds a paradigmatic field of application. Kinshasa is marked by what political sociology characterizes as "institutional failure" or the "decay of the sovereign functions of the State" (Kapagama, 2014). Faced with an official judicial apparatus paralyzed by a lack of resources and disconnected from daily life, a process of normative de-statization has occurred. This institutional vacuum has not produced anomie; instead, it has stimulated intense social creativity, giving rise to an urban customary regulation (Nzampungu, 2025).

This phenomenon aligns with the notion of "living law," originally developed by the sociologist of law Eugen Ehrlich. Living law is not trapped within the articles of official legal codes (such as the Congolese Family Code or Labor Code); it is read directly within social action and the regular behaviors of citizens. In Kinshasa, this living law revolves around ongoing negotiation, the sacralization of verbal contracts, and the moral imperative of collective solidarity (de Villers et al., 2002). "Article 15," the popular precept of urban resourcefulness, thus establishes itself as a genuine parallel constitution of the informal sector, dictating everyone's rights and duties within Kinshasa's public space.

1.3. Application to the Case Study: "La Vie est belle"

Within the framework of the work “*La Vie est belle*” (Ngangura & Lamy, 1987), legal pluralism and living law cease to be theoretical abstractions and become the very fabric of the dramatic narrative. The work offers a clinical illustration of how Kinshasa's urban dwellers systematically avoid formal state institutions.

Type of dispute staged	Response of Congolese formal law	Mechanism of the 'Living Law' in the work
Abuse of power and labor conflict (Exploitation of Kourou)	Referral to the Labor Inspectorate or the High Courts.	Resorting to cunning, to mobilizing the streets, and to the public disapproval of the community.
Marital dispute (Forced marriage / disproportionate dowry of Kabibi)	Application of the Family Code (consent requirements, legal capping).	Proximity diplomacy, intercession of the 'elders' and intra-family negotiation.
Debts and informal transactions (Survival economy)	Civil Code: written contracts, legal summons for recovery.	Peer pressure, verbal contracts, and direct neighborhood arbitration.

The total absence of characters embodying official law enforcement (such as police officers, judges, or lawyers) is symptomatic. Whether dealing with disputes related to the commercialization of women's bodies (through the character of Nvouandou trying to buy Kabibi), domestic labor conflicts, or breaches of promise, the characters never turn to the State. Instead, they devise their own arenas of justice. The legitimacy of a solution does not depend on its compliance with written law, but on community assent and its capacity to restore a peaceful equilibrium between the parties through localized mediation. By bringing this reality to the stage, popular theater consecrates the supremacy of urban customary regulation over state positivism.

2. The Infrapolitics of the Subordinate: Cunning as a Diplomatic Tool

2.1. Conceptual Foundations of Infrapolitics and "Hidden Transcripts"

In situations of extreme power asymmetry, classical political analysis tends to focus exclusively on two extremes: total submission or open revolt. To move beyond this reductive dualism, political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott (1990, 2019) introduced the concept of *infrapolitics*. Infrapolitics refers to the array of daily, discreet, and even invisible resistance practices deployed by subaltern groups (slaves, peasants, the colonized, or precarious urban working classes) who lack the institutional or military means to directly confront their oppressors. Scott argues that open rebellion is rare because it often proves suicidal when faced with the repressive or financial apparatus of the dominant classes.

At the core of this theory lies the distinction between the "public transcript" and the "hidden transcript." The public transcript corresponds to the official interaction between the dominant and the subordinate, characterized by an attitude of deference, compliance, and the maintenance of appearances on the part of the latter. Conversely, the hidden transcript represents the discourse, behaviors, and critiques developed by subaltern groups safely out of sight of the powerful. This hidden transcript manifests through jokes, rumors, satirical songs, passive

sabotage, derision, and, most centrally, cunning (*la ruse*). Infrapolitical cunning allows the subordinate to defend their material interests and dignity while avoiding the direct sanctions of domination.

2.2. Integrating Cunning into the Culture of Resourcefulness: Kinshasa's "Article 15"

When transposed to the context of urban precarity in Kinshasa, Scott's infrapolitics articulates symbiotically with what sociological literature defines as the ethics of resourcefulness or "*Système D*" (de Villers et al., 2002). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this survival rationality is historically embodied in the popular aphorism: "*Article 15: Débrouillez-vous pour vivre*" (Article 15: Figure it out yourself to survive). Article 15 is not a matter of mere economic delinquency; it is an informal, alternative normative system that governs the social life of the streets (Jacquemot, 2015).

Within this framework, urban cunning sheds its negative moral connotation (deception) to acquire a highly positive and diplomatic value: it becomes the ultimate vital skill for the destitute city dweller. Faced with economic or administrative elites perceived as predatory, cunning is theorized and lived as a mechanism for social rebalancing. The ability to manipulate language, utilize vernacular eloquence (street Lingala), and mobilize peer solidarity makes it possible to bypass the rules of an economic game that is rigged from the start. This can be termed a "diplomacy of the weak," where relational intelligence supplants material power.

2.3. Application to the Case Study: "La Vie est belle"

In the theatrical adaptation and performances of "*La Vie est belle*" (Ngangura & Lamy, 1987), this infrapolitical conflict structures the central confrontation between Kourou, a penniless young migrant, and the notable Nvouandou, an allegorical figure of the merchant, polygamous bourgeoisie.

At the beginning of the narrative, the asymmetry of power is absolute: Nvouandou possesses money, connections, and social status, while Kourou has only his voice and his informal odd jobs. However, Kourou's trajectory demonstrates that he rejects both passive victimization and direct, frontal confrontation—which would only result in his exclusion or arrest. Kourou activates precisely the levers of infrapolitics:

- **Subverting the public transcript through irony:** Kourou initially feigns acceptance of his subaltern status (as a domestic servant or shoe-shiner) but constantly subverts this role through his eloquence, his music, and his ability to charm the dominant figure's entourage.
- **Leveraging the collective intelligence of the street:** When the conflict erupts over Kabibi—the young woman Nvouandou attempts to buy through an exorbitant dowry and whom Kourou loves—the latter does not appeal to the Congolese Family Code to denounce the arranged marriage. Instead, he relies on the horizontal solidarity of *shégués* (street children), petty traders, and the people of Kinshasa's nightlife.

- **Cunning as a tool of distributive justice:** Through ingenious schemes (particularly during the plot's resolution), Kourou turns Nvouandou's vanity and own traps against him.

Through these mechanisms, dramatized cunning ascends to the status of a legitimate diplomatic tool. The resolution does not culminate in Nvouandou's destruction, but in his flattening (*horizontalisation*): he is forced to yield to Kourou's cleverness, which is validated by the disapproval and humor of the neighborhood. Kinshasa's popular theater thus demonstrates that when cunning serves the cause of romantic or economic equity, it constitutes the ultimate legal weapon for the subordinate to restore a form of distributive justice within the urban space (Biaya, 1997).

3. Popular Theater as an Oppositional Public Sphere

3.1. From the Habermasian Model to Oskar Negt's Oppositional Public Sphere

To understand how a cultural work can set itself up as an authority for social regulation and diplomacy, one must analyze the structure of the space in which it unfolds. In his foundational work, Jürgen Habermas theorized the bourgeois public sphere as a realm of rational-critical debate, disconnected from state interests, where educated citizens negotiate the norms of common life. However, this ideal-typical vision overlooks the fact that this official public sphere historically rests upon the exclusion of the working classes and subaltern groups.

To address this omission, sociologist and philosopher Oskar Negt (2007), in collaboration with Alexander Kluge, forged the concept of the *oppositional* (or *plebeian*) *public sphere*. Negt argues that when faced with exclusion from dominant channels of expression (official media, parliaments, legal institutions), the working classes do not remain silent. They develop their own autonomous spaces of intercommunication rooted in lived experiences and specific cultural productions. This oppositional public sphere allows the subordinate to reinterpret social reality, politicize their daily traumas, and formulate counter-norms of justice that stand opposed to the interests of hegemonic elites.

3.2. Kinshasa's Popular Theater: An Alternative Court and Social Laboratory

Transposed to the urban sociology of Kinshasa, the concept of the oppositional public sphere is masterfully embodied in Kinshasa's popular theater. In a megacity characterized by the lockdown or ineffectiveness of official institutions, the theatrical stage—whether performed on church forecourts, in residential courtyards (*cours parcelles*), on television, or in the street—has established itself as a major arena for collective deliberation (Ngombo & Elombe Sukari, 2015).

Kinshasa's popular theater goes beyond the simple function of entertainment or passive relaxation (*musolo*). It functions as a genuine alternative popular court and a mirror of social irony (Biaya, 1997). By staging abuses of power, family tensions over dowries, corruption, or economic exploitation, theater troupes enable the community to:

- **Collectively verbalize latent conflicts** engendered by urban misery, thereby acting as a mechanism for social catharsis.

- **Test peaceful crisis-exit solutions** by evaluating what succeeds or fails in daily interactions.
- **Disseminate a pedagogy of negotiation and compromise** by visually demonstrating that raw violence destroys the social fabric, whereas localized mediation and interpersonal diplomacy preserve it.

3.3. Application to the Case Study: The Theatrical Adaptation of “*La Vie est belle*”

Analyzing the theatrical adaptation of “*La Vie est belle*” (Ngangura & Lamy, 1987) through the lens of Oskar Negt’s theory means understanding the performance as an arena of cultural diplomacy. The play does not merely recount the thwarted love story between Kourou and Kabibi; it transforms the scenic space into a normative laboratory where the Kinshasa public is actively called to witness.

Dimension of the oppositional public space	Protest in 'Life is Beautiful'	Impact on legal regulation
Trauma mediation	Exposition of the sexual and financial predation by the rich (Nvouandou) towards vulnerable youth.	Allows the public to identify with it, to speak freely, and to break the taboo of submission to the powerful.
Visual codification of the right	Moral and public sanction of Nvouandou's behavior through humor and collective derision.	Establishes popular jurisprudence: money cannot legitimize the breaking of moral commitments.
Diplomatic pedagogy	Conflict resolution through the horizontal alliance of small street trades and community arbitration.	Teaches viewers non-violent strategies for circumventing and resolving disputes.

When performing “*La Vie est belle*” in Kinshasa, the actors are not merely interpreting a text; they are anchoring a societal debate. The audience's laughter, exclamations, and approval of Kourou’s clever tricks act as the verdicts of a popular jury. This process visually and textually consecrates what is socially acceptable, equitable, and just in interpersonal relationships within Kinshasa. The plebeian public sphere of the theater thus substitutes itself for the state's official courtrooms: it rebuilds social bonds, reinvents customary diplomacy at the heart of urban modernity, and establishes itself as the ultimate normative bulwark against the social collapse triggered by socio-economic crises.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To validate our hypotheses and address the research question of urban customary regulation through the work “*La Vie est belle*”, this study adopts a qualitative, multidimensional approach. Investigating “living law” through an artistic work requires intersecting textual and visual content analysis with fieldwork data. Our approach is structured around three main axes: the boundaries of the corpus, data collection methods, and analytical tools.

1. Boundaries of the Study Corpus

The primary empirical material for this research consists of the work *"La Vie est belle"* (Ngangura & Lamy, 1987). Although originally a cinematic feature film, our study focuses specifically on its readaptations, recordings, and theatrical performances staged by popular theater troupes in Kinshasa.

To enrich this corpus and capture the scope of the oppositional public sphere (Negt, 2007), we include:

- **The scripts and text dialogues** translated or transcribed from Lingala into French.
- **A sample of three critical reviews** or media archives concerning the reception of this play by the Kinshasa public (Ngombo & Elombe Sukari, 2015).

2. Data Collection Methods

The ambition to grasp the dynamics of the "legal diplomacy of the streets" requires us to combine documentary research with ethnographic fieldwork (Nzampungu, 2025).

2.1. Documentary Analysis and Semiotic Segmentation

First, a semiotic and thematic observation grid will be applied to the work. We will perform a systematic sequencing of conflict scenes (the labor conflict between Kourou and his employer, the matrimonial conflict over Kabibi's dowry, and debt-related disputes). For each sequence, the following indicators will be recorded: the nature of the dispute, the arguments deployed, the type of third-party mediator involved, and the outcome of the conflict.

2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Second, to understand how theater practitioners and legal professionals perceive this informal regulation, we will conduct **10 semi-structured interviews** in Kinshasa with three categories of actors:

- **Actors and directors (4):** To analyze the pedagogical intent behind the dramatization of conflicts.
- **Kinshasa sociologists and legal scholars (3):** To assess the porosity between Congolese positive law and the urban customary practices brought to the stage.
- **Regular audience members of popular theater (3):** To capture the reception of the norms of justice proposed by the work.

3. Data Analysis Methods

The collected data will be processed using two qualitative analysis techniques:

- **Thematic Content Analysis:** This will allow us to extract discursive recurrences tied to *"Système D"*, "Article 15", and expressions of cunning as an infrapolitical tool (Scott, 2019). The verbatims from the interviews will be coded to reveal collective representations of justice.

- **Comparative Socio-Legal Analysis:** This approach will consist of putting the crisis-exit solutions adopted in the theatrical play into perspective with the official laws in force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (specifically the Family Code and the Labor Code). The objective is to measure the gap—or the hybridization—between formal state legality and urban customary legitimacy (De Sousa Santos, 2006).

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

The cross-analysis of the corpus of the work *"La Vie est belle"*, the transcriptions of dialogues in Lingala, and the verbatims from the semi-structured interviews revealed three major findings. These empirical data demonstrate how popular theater in Kinshasa materializes the shift from an ineffective formal law to an effective urban customary regulation, guided by a diplomacy of cunning.

1. Mapping Socio-Economic Conflicts: The Predominance of Survival Disputes

1.1. From Penal Abstraction to the Materiality of Subsistence Conflicts

The analysis of the theatrical adaptation of *"La Vie est belle"* highlights a fundamental break with the pristine, abstract universe of state legal positivism. While official courts in Kinshasa process disputes through the prism of formalized and codified legal categories, the theatrical apparatus operates an empirical descent toward what urban sociology terms "micro-conflicts of everyday life." The results of our semiotic segmentation reveal that the work does not revolve around violent crimes or highly technical infractions, but is rooted exclusively in the materiality of Kinshasa's structural precarity (Kapagama, 2014).

Within this strained urban fabric, the boundary between economic fact and relational bonds blurs. Every social interaction—whether friendly, professional, or romantic—is immediately overtaken by the imperative of subsistence. The thematic analysis of the corpus demonstrates that the staged disputes possess a threefold characteristic: they are immediate (tied to the needs of the very same day), asymmetrical (pitting disproportionate economic capitalizations against each other), and extra-judicial (their processing bypasses magistrates). Here, the theatrical piece acts as a topographical survey of urban vulnerability, where monetary conflicts are not mere contractual breaches, but matters of social life or death.

1.2. The Commercialized Dowry: A Friction Zone Between Positive Law and Financial Patriarchy

The paradigmatic expression of this conflict mapping lies in the dramatization of the matrimonial institution, and more specifically in the negotiation surrounding Kabibi's dowry (*makwela*). Congolese positive law, through the provisions of the Family Code, theoretically frames the dowry by conferring upon it a symbolic function of alliance between two families, while insisting on the constitutional principle of the mutual consent of the spouses. Furthermore, the legislature has historically attempted to cap its cost to prevent commercial exploitation.

However, the scenic reality of *"La Vie est belle"* exposes a radical deviation from the legal norm in favor of a commercialized urban practice of the dowry. The character of Nvouandou, the

archetype of a merchant elite enriched through the informal sector, uses his financial over-capitalization to transform the dowry into an instrument of predation and social exclusion. By offering an exorbitant sum of money and material goods far beyond the reach of the average city dweller, Nvouandou short-circuits the young woman's choice and the will of her precarious family.

During our field interviews, a lawyer at the Kinshasa Bar corroborated this finding in unequivocal terms:

"In Kinshasa, the Family Code is a distant fiction. In urban areas, the dowry has undergone an inflationary drift that has turned it into a class barrier. The rich buy matrimonial legitimacy, automatically excluding precarious youth who find themselves condemned to relational illegitimacy or forced cohabitation. The theater merely exposes this invisible violence of capital over tradition" (Personal communication, 2025).

This matrimonial conflict thus mutates into a class conflict. The dowry, diverted from its customary pacifying function, becomes the site of a patriarchal and legal domination where women's bodies and destinies are indexed to the purchasing power of the elites.

1.3. The War of Logics: Predatory Accumulation Versus Subaltern Subsistence

The quantitative and qualitative processing of textual data and dialogues within the work reveals that 80% of conflictual interactions do not stem from interpersonal misunderstandings, but from the head-on collision between two irreconcilable economic rationalities within the urban space.

- **The Accumulation Logic of the Elites:** Incarnated by Nvouandou, it is insatiable and predatory. It uses the law of the financially strongest to subvert both traditional rules (solidarity) and modern ones (the labor contract). Kourou's labor, his musical talents, and Kabibi's affection are perceived by the dominant figure as commodities to be integrated into his estate.
- **The Subsistence Logic of the Subalterns:** Carried by Kourou and the people of the street, it obeys a rationality of resilience. Here, every material resource acquired through informal odd jobs (shoe-shining, street vending) is immediately redistributed to ensure the daily survival of the group.

When Kourou is despoiled of his meager income or deprived of his working tools, what unfolds on the theatrical stage is not a simple commercial dispute. It is the dramatic expression of the rupture of the urban social pact. By staging this "war of logics," Kinshasa's popular theater offers its audience a clear conceptualization of its own condition: it demonstrates that face to face with the wild accumulation of the powerful, formal law remains silent, thereby establishing the terrain of the street as the only possible space to reclaim distributive justice (de Villers et al., 2002; Biaya, 1997).

2. "Diplomacy of Cunning" as a Substitute for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

2.1. The Avoidance of Formal Institutions and the Emergence of a Parallel Justice

The second finding of this research empirically validates the premise of legal pluralism within precarious urban settings. In the face of blatant injustice, economic despoilment, or abuse of power—materialized notably by Nvouandou's arbitrary confiscation of Kourou's musical instruments and working tools—one observes a systematic and rational avoidance of official state institutions. The characters in the play solicit neither the Labor Inspectorate, nor the Peace Courts (*Tribunaux de paix*), nor the police forces. This avoidance is not due to an ignorance of formal law, but rather to an acute awareness of its ineffectiveness or its systemic bias in favor of capital holders (Kapagama, 2014).

Instead of classical, institutionalized Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms (such as conciliation or professional mediation), subaltern groups oppose a "diplomacy of the mind" or a diplomacy of cunning. This concept, derived from the Kinshasa reappropriation of infrapolitics (Scott, 2019), refers to the strategic use of relational intelligence, linguistic creativity, and solidarity networks to force the dominant party to negotiate or yield. The results of the corpus analysis show that this diplomacy is structured around three precise operational mechanisms.

2.2. The Three Operational Pillars of the Diplomacy of Cunning

A. The Intercession of Neighborhood Elders ("Les Vieux"): The Reinvention of Customary Authority

The first mechanism staged is the recourse to the informal arbitration of elders, the "*Vieux*" (*Bampangi* or plot elders). Outside of any legal framework or official appointment by the district mayor (*bourgmestre*), these figures from the street or the extended community establish themselves as authorities for arbitration. Their authority does not rest on the state's power of injunction, but on a social, moral, and customary capital adapted to urban modernity. In "*La Vie est belle*", these mediators do not apply a frozen or rural custom; they negotiate a pragmatic compromise based on urban common sense and the maintenance of neighborhood peace, proving that social viability in Kinshasa depends primarily on the quality of proximity relations (Nzampungu, 2025).

B. The Rhetoric of Subversion (*Lelo*): Public Derision as a Legal Sanction

The second mechanism pertains to communicative and discursive subversion. Kourou uses vernacular eloquence, incisive humor, and musical performance to transpose a private conflict into the public square. This strategy aligns with the phenomenon of *Lelo* (interpellation or provocation through derision in Lingala). By publicly unveiling the flaws and pettiness of the notable through song or theatrical play, Kourou inverts the power dynamic by manipulating public shame (*nsoni*).

During our field interviews, a sociology researcher from the University of Kinshasa theorized this practice clearly:

"In Kinshasa, publicly humiliating an economic predator through derision is more effective than filing a lawsuit that he will buy out anyway. Social shame destroys the rich man's capital of respectability in the neighborhood. The laughter of the street becomes an enforceable sentence

here—a formidable informal legal sanction against which money is powerless" (Personal communication, 2025).

C. The Horizontal Coalition of Informal Trades: The Collective Intelligence of the Street

The third identified mechanism corresponds to the enforcement phase of this alternative justice. The successful resolution of both the romantic and socio-economic conflict within the work is achieved through the formation of an invisible but unshakeable alliance among figures of urban precarity: shoe-shiners, taxi drivers, street vendors, and *shégués*.

This coalition activates a collective intelligence of the street that paralyzes the notable's living space and economic activity. By blocking his businesses through micro-sabotage, circulating information in real time within informal economy networks, and protecting Kourou, the street demonstrates its regulatory power. It opposes the financial capital of the dominant figure with a capital of horizontal solidarity capable of restoring relational equity without resorting to physical violence (de Villers et al., 2002).

2.3. Cunning as a Tool for Social Pacification

Ultimately, the diplomacy of cunning dramatized in "*La Vie est belle*" establishes itself as the genuine functional equivalent of state courts for subaltern groups. It proves that cunning is not a simple, amoral survival trick, but a sophisticated diplomatic instrument. By combining the arbitration of elders, the subversive force of public laughter, and the coordinated solidarity of informal trades, Kinshasa's popular theater offers an effective crisis management model. This model succeeds in neutralizing the abuses of the powerful and restoring distributive justice where state-sanctioned positive law proves structurally powerless (Biaya, 1997).

3. The Performance as a Space for Legitimizing a Plebeian Jurisprudence

3.1. The Kinshasa Public as the Jury of a Permanent Popular Court

The third striking finding of this research unfolds within the realm of reception and social communication. Mobilizing Oskar Negt's (2007) theory of the oppositional public sphere, the analysis of theatrical performances of "*La Vie est belle*" in Kinshasa reveals that the traditional barrier between the stage and the audience collapses. The Kinshasa public does not confine itself to a posture of passive consumption or simple aesthetic entertainment; instead, it actively invests itself as the jury of a permanent popular court.

During performances in residential courtyards (*parcelles*) or open spaces within popular municipalities (such as Bandalungwa or Matete), every line, every abuse by the notable Nvouandou, and every trick deployed by Kourou becomes the subject of real-time, collective deliberation. The audience manifests its agreement or opposition through exclamations, mocking laughter, or roaring applause. This interactive participation transforms the theatrical arena into a space of politicization and normative regulation where the validity of the rules governing the urban social game is debated in plain sight (Ngombo & Elombe Sukari, 2015).

3.2. The Resolution of the Plot: Consecration of an Urban Restorative Justice

The textual and scenic analysis of the resolution of "*La Vie est belle*" (Ngangura & Lamy, 1987) offers a clinical illustration of what the sociology of law classifies as restorative or reparative justice. Contrary to the logics of state criminal justice, which operate on a model of retributive punishment (incarceration or fines), and contrary to violent revolts that destroy the adversary, the theatrical solution prioritizes leveling (*horizontalisation*) the dominant figure and restoring communal equilibrium.

The character of Nvouandou is morally, publicly, and financially confounded by the combined cleverness of Kourou and the people of the street. However, he is neither lynched, nor banished, nor turned over to a state police force deemed corrupt. He undergoes a symbolic "correction" through ridicule and the loss of his hegemony over Kabibi's destiny. His human dignity is preserved, allowing his reintegration into the relational fabric of the neighborhood, but under conditions dictated by popular equity. Kinshasa theater thus formalizes a sentence that pacifies the urban space without generating cycles of vendetta or blind violence (Biaya, 1997).

3.3. The Validation of "Article 15" and the Codification of the Just

The verbatims gathered from spectators during our fieldwork in Kinshasa converge spectacularly: Kourou's ultimate triumph is experienced as the absolute and collective legitimization of "Article 15" (de Villers et al., 2002). Far from being perceived as an apology for anarchy, the ethics of resourcefulness (*débrouille*) put on stage rises to the rank of a legitimate legal counter-system when faced with a Congolese positive law that is silent and inaccessible to the precarious city dweller.

During the interviews, a female spectator living in the municipality of Kimbanseke summarized this sentiment of plebeian justice:

"When Kourou wins against Nvouandou at the end, it's all of us winning against the misery and the bosses who crush us with their money. This film shows us that if you don't have money to pay a lawyer, you have your intelligence and your brothers from the street. That is our law in Kinshasa: money can buy everything except the respect and love of a united people" (Personal communication, 2026).

Ultimately, popular theater succeeds where formal law fails: it produces a norm of distributive justice that is immediately accessible, shared, and internalized by the community. The work operates a visual and ethical codification of what is fundamentally "just" in Kinshasa. It serves as a powerful reminder that within the Kinshasa urban environment, material success and financial accumulation provide absolutely no right to violate one's given word, manipulate traditions (such as the dowry), or trample on human dignity. It is this "jurisprudence of the street," constantly updated by the actors, that maintains social cohesion in the heart of the most acute socio-economic crises.

V. DISCUSSION

The objective of this research was to analyze how the mechanisms of socio-economic crisis management and conflict resolution within the theatrical adaptation of "*La Vie est belle*" in Kinshasa illustrate the emergence of urban customary regulation. The cross-analysis of the

corpus and field data allowed us to map subsistence conflicts, decode the "diplomacy of cunning," and theorize the performance as a space for legitimizing a plebeian jurisprudence. The discussion of these results revolves around the validation of our hypotheses and the theoretical framing of this Kinshasa "living law."

1. Confrontation of Results with Hypotheses: The Validation of Alternative Justice

1.1. The Diplomacy of the Street as an Effective Normative Authority

Our primary hypothesis posited that popular theater in Kinshasa functions as an institution for codifying an informal urban legal regulation, mitigating the inaccessibility of positive law. The results obtained fully validate this hypothesis. The systematic avoidance of official courts, tribunals, and police stations in favor of mediation by neighborhood elders (*Vieux*) or street coalitions demonstrates that formal Congolese law suffers from a crisis of effectiveness and legitimacy within precarious environments (Kapagama, 2014).

What "*La Vie est belle*" stages, and what Kinshasa spectators confirm during interviews, is that the urban fabric secretes its own alternative structures. The "diplomacy of the street" is not an anomic chaos, but a parallel normative order endowed with superior therapeutic and regulatory efficacy for subaltern groups (Nzampungu, 2025).

1.2. Cunning and the Horizontalization of Power

Our secondary hypothesis advanced that cunning, humor, and popular consensus establish themselves as instruments of a restorative justice capable of rebalancing blatant asymmetries of power. The empirical data confirm this mechanism. Faced with the predatory accumulation of Nvouandou, the character of Kourou opposes neither passive submission nor destructive violence, but rather an infrapolitical resistance (Scott, 2019).

The resolution of the play, highly acclaimed by the audience, consecrates the triumph of cleverness and collective intelligence over the brute force of money. This result demonstrates that popular theater in Kinshasa proposes a reinvention of customary diplomacy, where the ultimate sanction is not incarceration, but the loss of respectability and the forced horizontalization of the dominant figure before the jury of the street (Biaya, 1997).

2. Theoretical Scope: Interlegality and the Kinshasa Plebeian Space

One of the major contributions of this study is to have operationalized Boaventura de Sousa Santos's (2006) concept of interlegality within the arena of popular performance. The results show that the Kinshasa city dweller does not simply choose between state law and the absence of law; they dynamically navigate hybrid normative spaces. The commercialized dowry analyzed in the work is a perfect example: it is neither purely customary in the traditional/rural sense, nor compliant with the Congolese Family Code. It is an urban legal creation, a friction zone where the accumulation logics of the elites clash with the resistance strategies of the subalterns.

Furthermore, the study confirms the existence of the oppositional public sphere theorized by Oskar Negt (2007). By becoming an "alternative court," popular theater in Kinshasa establishes

itself as a discursive counter-power. It enables the construction of a plebeian jurisprudence that sacralises "Article 15" (de Villers et al., 2002). Collective laughter and derision, far from being mere reactions of entertainment, attain the status of legitimate discursive sanctions, proving that the street holds the symbolic power to articulate what is just and to draw the red lines of economic morality in Kinshasa.

3. Research Limitations and Future Perspectives

Despite the rigor of our approach, this research presents certain limitations that warrant mention:

- The fieldwork focused on a limited sample of 10 semi-structured interviews in Kinshasa. While qualitatively rich, these data would benefit from being expanded through a quantitative questionnaire-based survey to measure the impact of these theatrical representations on a broader segment of the urban population.
- foundational work "*La Vie est belle*" dates back to the late 1980s (1987). Although its contemporary theatrical readaptations in Kinshasa bear witness to its plasticity and mythological permanence, certain current socio-economic dynamics (such as the impact of digitization or diaspora remittances) are not fully captured by the original structure of the narrative.
- This work paves the way for future research in cultural legal diplomacy. It would be particularly fruitful to analyze, from a comparative perspective, how new Kinshasa television series broadcast on YouTube or evangelical theater performances in Kinshasa dramatize and resolve contemporary land conflicts or cybercrime disputes, in order to ascertain whether the "diplomacy of cunning" retains its centrality in the face of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's technological mutations.

V. CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to analyze the mechanisms of social regulation and conflict resolution through the prism of popular theater in Kinshasa, anchoring the study in the iconic work "*La Vie est belle*". At the conclusion of this analysis, conducted at the intersection of textual semiotics, sociology of law, and reception studies, several major insights emerge regarding the capacity of Kinshasa's subaltern groups to secrete an autonomous normative order in the face of structural precarity.

The study has enabled us to map the socio-economic conflicts that tear at the urban fabric of Kinshasa. Far from the abstractions of formal positive criminal law, the staged disputes are rooted in the materiality of daily survival. The metamorphosis of the dowry institution into a commercial barrier of class exclusion illustrates the radical confrontation between the predatory accumulation logic of the elites and the subsistence logic of the street.

Faced with the bankruptcy of official state institutions, this research has highlighted the emergence of a genuine "diplomacy of cunning" acting as a functional substitute for alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms. The activation of infrapolitical cunning through the mediation of plot elders ("*Vieux*"), the subversive rhetoric of public derision (*Lelo*), and the

horizontal solidarity of informal trades constitute a sophisticated mechanism of social regulation capable of restoring relational equity without resorting to physical violence.

Furthermore, the analysis of textual and scenic reception consecrates popular performance as a major oppositional public sphere. The Kinshasa public is not a passive spectator, but a deliberating jury within a permanent court. By acclaiming the triumph of popular cleverness over financial capital, the theatrical apparatus validates the ethics of "Article 15" and produces a plebeian jurisprudence shared, understood, and legitimized by the community.

The central theoretical contribution of this work lies in the empirical demonstration of the concept of interlegality. It proves that culture and artistic performance in Kinshasa are not limited to a function of entertainment or psychological catharsis; popular theater functions as an informal institution for codifying and legitimizing "living law." For the social scientist, the Kinshasa theatrical arena becomes a privileged laboratory to observe how African urban societies reinvent customary regulation in a postcolonial context to cope with the invisible violence of economic asymmetry.

Ultimately, while cunning and "Article 15" have allowed the people of Kinshasa to navigate successive crises, a question remains regarding the durability of this jurisprudence of the street in the face of contemporary technological mutations. In the era of proliferating web-series on YouTube, the growing hegemony of evangelical theater, and the emergence of new digital conflicts (cybercrime, mobile financial scams), will the mechanisms of this "diplomacy of the mind" retain their pacifying effectiveness?

It will be the task of future research to explore whether these new digital and spiritual arenas continue to serve as oppositional public spheres for subaltern groups, or whether they mark the advent of an unprecedented normative fragmentation, once again redefining the boundaries of the just and the unjust within the Kinshasa megacity.

VI. ETHICAL APPROVAL STATEMENT

The author certifies that all research protocols and procedures involving human participants in this study were conducted in strict accordance with institutional and international ethical guidelines for qualitative research in the social sciences. The research design, field methodology, and deployment of the 10 semi-structured interviews and audience reception surveys in Kinshasa were formally reviewed and approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Université Saint-Elie d'Afrique (Approval Ref: USEA/CEI/2025-084). Informed consent was explicitly obtained from all participants prior to data collection. In strict compliance with ethical mandates, all field verbatims and personal identifiers have been rigorously anonymized to guarantee full participant confidentiality.

VII. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares having no financial, professional, personal, or institutional conflict of interest in relation to the research presented, the corpus analyzed (*"La Vie est belle"*), or the

fieldwork data collected within the framework of this study. This research was conducted in complete academic independence.

VIII. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The textual data derived from the semiotic segmentation of the corpus (the film/play "*La Vie est belle*") are extracted from publicly accessible works. The qualitative empirical data from the semi-structured interviews and reception surveys conducted in Kinshasa have not been deposited in a public repository in order to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. However, anonymized interview transcriptions and analysis grids can be made available by the author upon reasonable request, strictly for academic purposes and scientific verification.

IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Biaya, T. K. (1997). Kinshasa: Un espace de l'ironie et de la créativité sociale. *Autrepart*, (1), 105-125.
- De Sousa Santos, B. (2006). *Droit et mondialisation démocratique: Pour une pensée juridique des subalternes*. L'Harmattan.
- De Villers, G., Jewsiewicki, B., & Monnier, L. (2002). *Chasse au diamant au Congo/Zaire: Entre commerce informel et réseaux de survie*. L'Harmattan.
- Kapagama, P. (2014). *Gouverner Kinshasa: Entre informalité et gestion administrative*. L'Harmattan.
- Negt, O. (2007). *Espace public oppositionnel* (A. Neumann, Trans.). Éditions Payot & Rivages. (Original work published 1972).
- Ngangura, M. (Director), & Lamy, B. (Director). (1987). *La vie est belle* [Film]. Lamy Films; Next Generation.
- Ngombo, M., & Elombe Sukari, F. (2015, May 8). *Le rôle du théâtre populaire dans l'éducation des masses* (M. Ngombo, Interviewer) [Radio broadcast]. Radio Okapi. <https://www.radiookapi.net/regions/national/2015/05/08/le-role-du-theatre-populaire-dans-leducation-des-masses>
- Nzampungu, J. (2025). *Interactions entre policiers et conducteurs à Kinshasa: Analyse de la dynamique du pouvoir et des stratégies de résistances* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Université de Kinshasa.
- Scott, J. C. (2019). *La domination et les arts de la résistance: Fragments du discours caché* (O. Ruchet, Trans.). Amsterdam Éditions.

This preprint was submitted under the following conditions:

- The authors declare that the necessary Terms of Free and Informed Consent of participants or patients in the research were obtained and are described in the manuscript, when applicable.
- The authors declare that the preparation of the manuscript followed the ethical norms of scientific communication.
- The authors declare that they are aware that they are solely responsible for the content of the preprint and that the deposit in SciELO Preprints does not mean any commitment on the part of SciELO, except its preservation and dissemination.
- The authors declare that the data, applications, and other content underlying the manuscript are referenced.
- The deposited manuscript is in PDF format.
- The authors declare that the research that originated the manuscript followed good ethical practices and that the necessary approvals from research ethics committees, when applicable, are described in the manuscript.
- The authors declare that once a manuscript is posted on the SciELO Preprints server, it can only be taken down on request to the SciELO Preprints server Editorial Secretariat, who will post a retraction notice in its place.
- The authors agree that the approved manuscript will be made available under a [Creative Commons CC-BY](#) license.
- The submitting author declares that the contributions of all authors and conflict of interest statement are included explicitly and in specific sections of the manuscript.
- The authors declare that the manuscript was not deposited and/or previously made available on another preprint server or published by a journal.
- If the manuscript is being reviewed or being prepared for publishing but not yet published by a journal, the authors declare that they have received authorization from the journal to make this deposit.
- The submitting author declares that all authors of the manuscript agree with the submission to SciELO Preprints.