



SUMMER 2017

A PUBLICATION OF THE MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS
AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN ASSOCIATION WITH CITYSCAPES MAGAZINE

THE CORRIDOR



**HOW THE EAST AFRICAN CORRIDOR
SPANNING THE INDIAN OCEAN FROM
SOMALIA TO SOUTH AFRICA IS BEING
RADICALLY RE-SHAPED**

EDITED BY: TAU TAVENGWA & LÉONIE NEWHOUSE





“

**OUR GOAL WITH
'THINKING ALONG THE
CORRIDOR' IS TO THEORIZE
GENERALLY ABOUT THE
URBAN IN EAST AFRICA,
BUT ALSO TO PROVOKE
THE SORT OF LATERAL OR
OBLIQUE COMPARISON
ADVOCATED BY JENNY
ROBINSON—COMPARISONS
BETWEEN THE SPECIFIC
CITIES, BUT ALSO BETWEEN
HINTERLANDS, TOWNS
AND URBAN CENTERS
LOCATED IN THIS CORRIDOR
SHAPED BY A RISING
INDIAN OCEAN ECONOMY**

LÉONIE S. NEWHOUSE & ABDOUMALIQ SIMONE

”





AN INTRODUCTION

Inhabiting the corridor: surging resource economies and urban life in East Africa

LÉONIE S. NEWHOUSE & ABDOUMALIQ SIMONE



T

he East African corridor that spans the Indian Ocean from Somalia to South Africa is in the process

of being radically re-shaped. The area has become one of the world's new epicentres for investment in resource extraction, corporate agriculture and infrastructure development. Yet as this infusion of material and financial investment is reshaping economies, its effects are much broader. They extend to residents' cultural imaginaries, everyday meanings and the organization of social life along this coastal region. Images of a near future of smooth and easy transport from port to city inspire some actors' attempts to grab hold of the reigns of urban restructuring, to steer it to their advantage. While others look to revitalize memories of long-standing trade relations with Asia in order to emphasize and historically root the potential

of the region as a substantial node in the enhancement of the Indian Ocean as an economic powerhouse.

In this series of essays, we probe the on-going transformations in the East African corridor, paying particular attention how these are mediated in and through social life. We do so by considering ideas of circulations and crossings—between hinterlands and urban centres, as well as within a rising Indian Ocean economy.

The Indian Ocean littoral has been the object of increasing volumes of inward investment, occurring across different temporalities and scales. It is not yet clear, though, how the distinct nations making up the corridor, fraught with the difficult colonial inheritances and post-colonial conflicts, might consolidate these investments for broader social and economic gains. One of the challenges is the speed of these

intersecting changes—in land use and ownership, in the mechanisms of infrastructural investment, and in the physical remaking of cities. Moreover, the reformatting of policy and legal frameworks taking place in the region's primary urban centres—Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa and Maputo—has allowed financial flows to be directed into transforming large tracts of existing urban built environments, ready for appropriation. Taken together, these processes are spurring new forms of internecine conflict, urban inequality and population displacement.

Yet these new, high-end suburbs and satellite cities are also often oriented to a variety of elsewhere. They look outward toward new resource frontiers open to consolidation, or toward burgeoning markets ready for capture—as the next generation of Africans leapfrog into the future. As such, these investments signal



not only a re-making of the city, but of the relations that connect urban life to its material, social and imaginary hinterlands.

How do such rapid transformations intersect with enduring problems of underdevelopment, shrinking volumes of arable land, a highly mobile population composed of both speculative sojourners and political refugees, high rates of unemployment and reliance upon makeshift economies? As the Indian Ocean region becomes an epicenter of new formations of investment that draw it further within Asian financial, technical and cultural circuits, how will specific national and local interests act to direct these flows? What are the critical institutions and mechanisms leveraging these transformations, and what cultural contestations underlie them? What kinds of cosmopolitan imaginaries—in terms of anticipatory cultural, aesthetic and bodily practices—do they elicit?

Corridors produce certain alignments which may mean disconnection as often they do connection

As a plurality of fault lines and alliances emerge in the efforts to shape the control of resources, how do the region's cities recompose social and economic arrangements? As the region's cities are increasingly imagined as the nexus for substantially expanded transnational interchanges, what kinds of social complexities are likely to ensue? Are there new modes of urban development that do not simply mirror standardized formats inherited from elsewhere, but rather emerge from long-honed practices of inhabitation on the part of the region's urban majority?

As these questions make clear, corridors are not simply economic fabrications. They are conduits of force. As they reach between hubs—of generation and exchange, of sea and shore, of city and hinterland—corridors organize economies, politics and social life around particular directional priorities. In this way, corridors produce certain alignments, which may mean disconnection as often as it does connection. Corridors are also strange non-places, meant for passage, for movement-through rather than inhabitation. In our call to think about what it means to inhabit the corridor, then, we want to consider how they channel city life in relation to materialities and imaginaries of connection, but also how they are themselves transformed and directed (or diverted) through people's discrete and multiple acts habitation. Contrary to an image of unimpeded connection, then, the corridor is economically, politically and socially productive precisely because of such accretions of habits of circulation, of stopping to catch one's breath, or racing to get a leg up.

The channelling effects of corridors are not merely evident in the physical transformations of the built environment. They are also reflected in the ways that people attune themselves to the new or anticipated opportunities that go along with these transformations, the ways that people's attention is drawn into the grand narratives of development and how they attempt to inhabit these imagined spaces and make them their own. From the substantial writings about affect in recent years, we know how such collective affective atmospheres propel alliances that exert force—things leap over, circumvent, leak through, spread out, ramify beyond household, nation, kin, citizenship and class. But if we are to avoid turning this focus on affect into some kind of protean vitalism, it is important to keep in mind the way that people, in their multiplicity of interests, capacities, and commitments instantiate themselves in structuring manoeuvres, the way they extend themselves as available to be inserted into structures and plans not of their own making as a way of proffering



a certain claim, or of maximizing the scope and efficacy of actions and events. Inhabiting the corridor, then, means holding on to histories that might otherwise be jettisoned, or attempting to concretize openings and gains as the ground on which these have been built slips away with the next tide of investment, policy innovation, formalization or strategic abandonment.

In this diverse collection of essays, our goal is to explore what it means to inhabit the corridor. We consider the myriad ways that people connect to, move through and inhabit these spaces-in-transformation. Grounded in various urban and urbanizing nodes along the East African corridor, we respond, in our own ways and in combination, to a set of concerns that intersect with an East African turn toward Asia. While much is new in these oceanic connections, we must also attend to continuities—the long-honed repertoires of urban living and patterns of urbanization—as well as to the ways in which the *longue-durée* of maritime interrelation and crossing along the Indian Ocean littoral resurfaces in contemporary practices around property, in notions of development or in the aesthetics of prosperity. Collectively, we look simultaneously at dearly held legacies as well as emergent modalities of the urban. The essays can be grouped into three loose themes, but read together they build on and cross cut each other to offer an impression of urban life along the corridor.

In a corridor long characterized by histories of trans-local relations, a number of questions arise:

What are the impacts of a seeming acceleration and deepening of interrelations among East Africa, the Middle East and Asia?

What are the social implications of increasing levels of inward financial investment?

How are the frictions and fluidities of transport corridors made to matter as people, goods and ideas get caught up in various forms of intermediation?

What kinds of values are generated—how, and by whom—in the production of rapid turn-around-times, pauses, bottlenecks and other forms of in/efficiencies?

How do new imaginations of regional coherence along the East African coast relate to the specificities of internecine cooperation and conflict on the ground, and the emergence of new scales of contestation or collaboration?

How are imaginaries of the city made use of as urban inhabitants re-shape their material surroundings?

In what ways are the acts of collecting and arranging the material requisites for dwelling embroiled in, or disarticulated from broader social and political struggles?

How do urban inhabitants weigh the imperative toward visibility and display, which make them legible to others against desires for a degree of opacity and obfuscation that may extend their room to manoeuvre?

If infrastructure is a material inscription onto the surfaces of things, if it is a technology of constituting particular domains, narratives, conduits, articulations—something that both constitutes and wounds—how does infrastructure operate to bring into existence new forms of “regional consciousness,” including senses of home and elsewhere, senses of interrelatedness among seemingly disparate places and times?

How does infrastructure attempt to “catch up” to existent and emerging “itinerant” or “popular” circuits of movement and exchange; how does it facilitate or ward off the capacities of circulation and emplacement?

How do the multiple forces exerted by circuits of movement, new forms of regionalization, deep histories of trans-oceanic commerce, political contestation, resurgent and waning nationalism and extended urbanization create new territories of operation for social life in a process of continuous decomposition and recomposition?

What kinds of modes of conveyance, media, aesthetic performances and mappings are deployed to organize senses of the region, as well as ideas and viewpoints about what courses of action are possible, profitable, and valuable?

How do inhabitants acquire a working knowledge about where to go, how to create and mobilize assets, forge itineraries of circulation, put together legitimate claims on places and resources?

As cities are wedged in the interstices between land and sea, how are changing configurations on the disposition of land and the navigational framework of the sea reworking urban socialities?

How do new modalities of extraction, occupancy and displacement conjoin with the growth cities and urban ways of life?







URBAN EXPANSION LEADS TO FRICTION AMONG REGIONS IN ETHIOPIA

Citizens have pushed back against the Ethiopian government's urban turn in its national development priorities

JESSE MCCLELLAND

The urban revolution unfolding across much of Africa is a critical issue in Ethiopia. This country's double-digit economic growth in recent years has largely been driven by new investments from China, India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the Ethiopian diaspora. As a result, routes and rhythms in the movement of Ethiopia's people, animals, knowledge, money, food, water, energy and resources of almost every other kind are in flux. The Ethiopian government has undertaken an historic urban turn in national development priorities to as it seeks to channel, focus and rescale these flows. A new model of integrated planning rethinks certain cities at the regional scale, and envisions urban expansion areas as key fits between social and material infrastructures of the future. While federalist governance in Ethiopia seeks to channel urbanization, a new politics-based urbanization is itself constraining and reconditioning the bounds of federalist governance.

In this essay, I connect the emergence of integrated planning with the question of citizenship along Ethiopia's dynamic urban/regional interfaces. Planning practices along these internal borderlands reveal the paradox of "integration" in a rapidly urbanizing and transforming society. Urbanization during these boom years has enabled the Ethiopian government to think grandly about its cities and to experiment with the rescaling of urgent planning imperatives. Nowhere are the frictions around these transformations more clear than the expansion area

of Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa, in the surrounding Oromia region.

Urban growth in Ethiopia today is shaped as much by the logic of ethnic federalism as the complexity of global economic change. The previous regime, the Derg, sought to minimize ethnic and religious difference in a punitive socialist system that advanced a rural bias in development. Militias from the Tigray, Amhara, Southern and Oromia regions toppled the Derg in 1991 to form a ruling coalition called the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). In principle, the EPRDF's system of ethnic federalism counters legacies of political marginalization by granting each of Ethiopia's regions co-equal sovereignty and even the right to secede, as happened with Eritrea. In practice, however, few of Ethiopia's 80 ethnic groups are meaningfully incorporated in regions or parties. Little daylight separates the EPRDF from the Ethiopian state, and the formation of alternative parties has been systematically denied.

Ethnic federalism has profoundly reshaped Ethiopia's political territories in two stages. First, whereas the Derg had recognized 13 regions, the EPRDF initially recognized nine regions, known as "nations". Six of them were named in recognition of particular ethnic groups: Tigray, Amhara, Afar, Harari, Somali and Oromia. One region, Benishangul-Gumuz, was named for a combination of a place name and an ethnic group. Two regions were deemed too diverse to have a defining ethnic character; a place name was chosen for the Gambela

region, and the language of the new constitution was the basis for naming the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR).

A second stage of territorialisation came in 2005, when Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa were recognized as autonomous charter cities. Both cities were large population centres and nodes in national transport networks, and each had a diverse makeup that did not comport with the imagined uniformity of any national region. Addis Ababa thus was carved out from the Oromia region, though completely surrounded by it. Dire Dawa was carved out from between the Oromia and Somali regions. There is some speculation today that Awassa and Bahir Dar—the rapidly growing, diverse regional capitals of the SNNPR and the Amhara Region, respectively—may also become charter cities.

Here, best practices in regional planning for urban expansion would seem appropriate, as they often aim at the provision of streamlined infrastructures, efficient service delivery, green growth or other such public goods. Regional planning reconceives a city as part of an expanded metropolitan system, catalysed by a combination of cheap land, limited infrastructure and smaller human settlements lying outside the city. According to this view, the short-run burdens of development within a city's expansion area would be offset by the long-run benefits of a common metropolitan region of harmonized urban functions. Regional planners and city managers work together to erode the spatial, economic and political limits to what they see as a city's inexorable growth.

But the common assumptions of regional planning circulating globally do not assume ethnic federalism as a ground truth. In 2012, the Addis Ababa municipality adopted the long view of the regional planner and inaugurated the *Addis Ababa and the Surrounding Oromia Special Zone Integrated Development Plan Project Office*. After all, Addis Ababa's population of nearly four-million residents are projected by the United Nations to double by 2040, seemingly making its regional planning an imperative.

Unlike previous master plans, which tended to focus on Addis Ababa's internal parts, the office would rethink the city as part of a "special zone" encompassing five nearby, smaller cities in Oromia region roughly 30-40km beyond Addis Ababa's city limits. Each of these outlying cities was meant to specialize in sectoral and functional tasks for an integrated metropolitan area. While residents living within the "special zone" see both challenge and opportunity in Addis Ababa's rapid growth, the consultations between Addis Ababa and its surrounding municipalities were not reciprocal or very participatory. Rather, local stakeholders in these consultations have usually been appointed officials or, in some cases, influential business people.

The dynamic corridor stretching from Addis Ababa some 20km to the city of Bishoftu in Oromia has been understood by some as either an economic opportunity, and by others as a looming threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Oromia. To many Oromos, this corridor's foreign-owned factories, expressways, and other signs of Addis Ababa's expansion are reminders of their marginalization since the late-nineteenth century. At that time, Abyssinian aristocrats marched from Addis Ababa into Oromia and other lowland kingdoms, annexed their land, and forced them into the framework of modern Ethiopia. Other urban expansions may also encroach on Oromia, such as the city of Awassa crossing into the region from the south, or the city of Harar crossing into the region from the northeast.

Recent years have seen the dramatic emergence of social movements contesting ethnic federalism and the logic of regional planning. In April of 2014, university students in the city of Ambo, Oromia, held an unsanctioned protest against cronyism, inequitable development and the denial of Oromo sovereignty. Police broke up the protest and opened fire, killing several students. Dozens of others were detained and disappeared, and martial law and media blackouts were imposed. The incident prompted national and international outrage.

During the boom years, Ethiopia's government has thought grandly about its cities and experimented with the rescaling of urgent planning imperatives

In 2015 and 2016, urban protests followed across much of Oromia, and then spread to the Amhara and Harari regions, and even to Addis Ababa. The protests opened pathways of multi-ethnic solidarity against the framework of ethnic federalism, rather than through it.

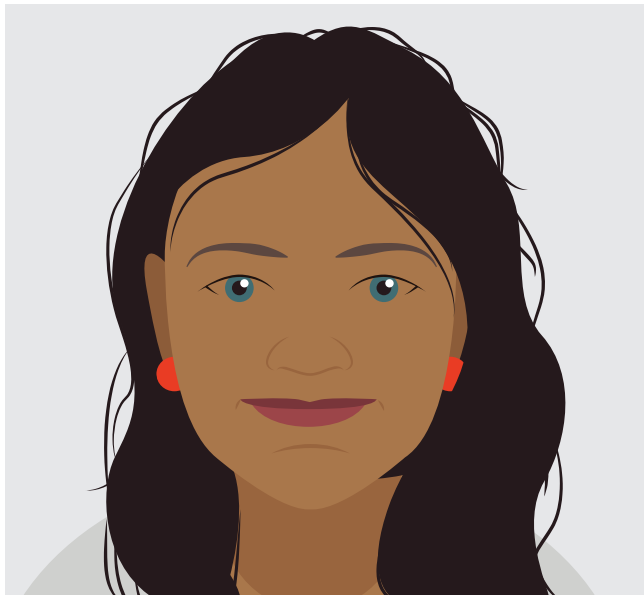
In January 2016, the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO) acceded to popular pressure and announced the suspension of the integrated planning office's strategy. This has generally been construed as the single most serious political threat to EPRDF in its 25 years of rule. The EPRDF subsequently promised a national process of political reform, underscoring a clear urban turn in Ethiopia's complex regional politics. But the growth of this movement has come with sacrifice. Militant action, including riots, barricades and attacks on police stations, have been met with brutal force. Security agents have killed at least 400 people and tortured many others. Among the thousands

of Ethiopians detained, many have been sent to so-called rehabilitation camps. By early 2017, the EPRDF announced the release of many prisoners. But the path to reform is unclear. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn called a state of emergency in October 2016 and Parliament has extended it further to July 2017.

With their integrated plan shelved, these are heady times for Ethiopia's growing professional cadre of planners. While the majority of them eschew party politics, they are often proud of their turn towards integrated planning. It suggests their increasing technical capabilities and independence from foreign advisors. They have made bold and historic achievements in planning Addis Ababa, many of which have been especially popular with the city's growing middle class. With some credence, planners claim that their efforts have been misunderstood or knowingly misrepresented for political gain. But while they have hope for the city's dynamic future possibilities and growth, some acknowledge that the protests have caused them to feel ambivalent. In an expression of discomfit, one senior planner said, "we are not building a nation, we are building ethnic regions."

Under other political circumstances, integrated planning could be a chance to build collaborations across regions, cities and towns. After all, everyday life in Ethiopia is not just characterized by ethnic divisions, but also by many hopeful and open-ended situations of mutuality and interdependence. Shared languages, multi-ethnic family networks and relative harmony between religious groups are just some of the bonds that link Ethiopia's people, both within and across regions.

Ethiopia's frontiers for the negotiation of space, power and identity lie in rural and urban places. But increasingly, these frontiers run along the official interfaces of cities and regions. Within the new circuits and megastructures of connectivity in East Africa, then, the prospects of urban expansion in Ethiopia are marked by friction, as well as flows.



LAMU, A BATTLEGROUND OF MEMORY AND ASPIRATION

Historical legacies of exploitation and sovereignty feed activist narratives in the port city of Lamu

NIDHI MAHAJAN

In 2010-11, coastal Kenya saw the rising popularity of the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), a secessionist organization established in 1999. Despite its shifting legal status since a 2008 ban, support for the group was highly visible prior to the 2012 elections, with angry graffiti proclaiming “MRC The Coast is Not Kenya” covering walls in Mombasa and Lamu. While media and the state labelled it as an “illegal organized criminal group,” “gang,” and even “militia,” the MRC insist that it should rather be understood as a social movement. In 2012, I met Omar Bambam, the Mombasa Island chairman and national treasurer of the MRC. He defined MRC as a “revolutionary group representing all coastal people, seeking freedom for the coast by any means necessary”. He nonetheless emphasized that MRC were opposed to violence. The courts, he said, were the group’s main battleground where they presented historical and legal arguments for secession.

The MRC evoked the history of the Ten-Mile Strip of the coast and its incorporation into the state of Kenya to make its claims. The narrow strip of the coast stretching from Lamu to Vanga had remained under the nominal sovereignty of the Sultan of Zanzibar, even as the rest of British East Africa became Kenya Colony in 1920. This distinction was important, not only as the status of the coast was being debated at independence, but also beyond. Questioning the legal validity of the Kenyan state in 2010, the MRC denounced the agreements of 1963 and 1895, through which the strip became part of Kenya, and argued instead

that the coast was a separate country, based on the Zanzibar Protectorate agreement of 1890 whereby the coastal strip was only leased to the British by the Sultan of Zanzibar. Further, the MRC considered the October 1963 agreement as valid only for 50 years, after which the coast was to become autonomous. The MRC based these claims on a particular reading of historical documents, as well as by citing “missing documents”.

With the planned construction of a deep water port, kenyan government visions see Lamu becoming “the Dubai of Africa”

Scholars such as Justin Willis and George Gona have viewed the MRC’s retellings of history as a challenge to the state. They highlight how the MRC’s vision is fractured—couched for some in terms of autochthony, and for others as a vision of an independent, multi-ethnic coastal nation that derives its legitimacy from the sovereignty of the Sultan of Zanzibar. In many ways, the MRC draws on previous coastal nationalist movements, but as historian Jeremy Prestholdt has argued, it is novel in that it is more inclusive of diverse coastal groups.

While the MRC can be situated within the history of coastal nationalist movements, it is also different in that it acts as an umbrella under which multiple claims converge in the present. The MRC and its sympathizers are making claims about three inter-related points: land and autochthony, the history of autonomous city-states on the coast, and an imaginary tied to the history of trade and social relations across the Indian Ocean. These multiple claims ultimately point to a historical imaginary in which the coast is imagined as a space shaped by the Indian Ocean, and therefore distinct from “upcountry,” and the Kenyan nation. An MRC supporter in Lamu made some of these claims clear to me.

Mohamed Omar was a member of the MRC in Lamu. A local landowner, in 2012 he declared his support for MRC through his participation in an organization called the Hidabu Self-Help Group. This group was trying to “return” Hidabu Hill, a plot of land in Lamu, to “indigenous people” and halt its settlement by people from “upcountry.” The argument he made were based on a discourse of autochthony. Hidabu Hill, claimed Omar, was one of the original settlements in the Lamu area, and as such Bajunis from the archipelago rather than Kikuyus from the interior should enjoy entitlements. Bajuni claims to this land were legitimized based on a notion of autochthony.

Autochthony discourses are often used to make “authentic” claims to resources. In Lamu, as elsewhere on the Swahili coast, the resurgence of autochthony can be situated within the recent



MARKETPLACE

Vendors sell vegetables inside the Maputo Central Market in the Mozambican capital. The country is recovering through decades of war and is experiencing a construction boom.
PHOTO/GIANLUIGI GUERCIA







development of an extractive economy along the coast that threatens to exacerbate deep-rooted issues of insecure land tenure. The discourse of autochthony has fused with another historical imaginary, one that looks to an Indian Ocean past and the history of city-states on the coast of East Africa to argue for independence.

After a tour of Hidabu, Omar showed me a poster he had made. It bore the title: “Kenya’s Independence Opened the Door to the Coast’s Maladies.” Below the title was a poem that argued for secession, as well as images of two coins, one with “Mombasa” inscribed on it, the other with the mark of the Imperial British East Africa Company. The Mombasa coin was as evidence of the history of the autonomous city-state, while the other coin was supposed to represent the distinct history of the coast as a Protectorate under colonial rule. By writing the poem and including the images, Omar sought to delegitimize the nation-state, and seek an alternate vision of belonging grounded in the history of the region’s autonomous coastal city-states.

While some Lamu residents have focused on the past, the government of Kenya has been looking to the future. The Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) began advertising the Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport (LAPSETT) corridor project in 2012. The government envisions that Lamu will one day become the Indian Ocean terminus for a rail-land bridge, claiming that Lamu will become the “Dubai of Africa”. While the government of Kenya markets this future for Lamu, its residents complain of economic marginalization, crumbling infrastructure, increased land grabbing and insecurity. The LAPSETT project, they believe, will simply exacerbate these problems.

The local civil-society organization Save Lamu emerged at the forefront of these protests. In 2012, Save Lamu applied to the courts for an injunction on the port, citing constitutional violations. The court case was rooted in deep-seated conflicts over land and coastal autonomy.

“Firstly, the sentiments are almost like the MRC. Secondly, the sentiments are about land,” explained Maalim Baadi, Save Lamu’s former chairman. He told me that the “indigenous” tribes of Lamu were all squatters, not owning title deeds to their lands. Although not a member of the MRC, Baadi echoed some of the MRC’s ideas, arguing that issues of land ownership for “indigenous” peoples must be resolved. Baadi also echoed broader tropes in arguments made in Lamu against the port, such as decreased job opportunities for *wapwani* or coastal folk, with an influx of “migrants” from upcountry. He also argued that nepotism had allowed for Kikuyus to receive title deeds in the area as opposed to other inhabitants of Lamu.

While embroiled in current politics, Baadi’s sentiments about present inequalities and tensions are entangled in ideas about autochthony and the past. By invoking the MRC, Baadi placed current tensions between state and civil society within a historical imaginary that questions the legitimacy of the state. Individuals such as Baadi and groups such as the MRC react to present transformations in coastal Kenya by invoking a different imaginary of belonging, not only engaging with discourses of autochthony, but by viewing the coast as a place shaped by its own particular history of trade and social relations across the Indian Ocean.

The MRC is harnessing historical narratives to imagine a different future for the coast than that envisaged by the Kenyan state. The MRC not only reimagines the coast as being shaped by its Indian Ocean past, but also claims to represent its diverse present-day population, which includes Mijikendas, Bajunis, Swahilis, South Asians and Arabs—in effect also defining what anthropologist Engseng Ho has called “local cosmopolitans” as “natives” of the coast. In doing so, the MRC is reframing discourses of nativism from the 1960s, imagining belonging within a more inclusive framework. This has given their arguments broad appeal. The diverse groups represented in the MRC are held together by a common ideology that includes

a shared understanding of the history of colonial, imperial and now national power. “The coast has been suffering since independence,” Bambam told me. He viewed this “suffering” within a historical continuum that encompassed periods of Omani and British imperialism, and included the present Kenyan state within this history of “exploitation”.

When the MRC looks to an Indian Ocean past, it does so by defining itself as representing a population born of this past. Its discontent with the Kenyan state is framed within a history of autonomous city-states, and Omani, and British imperialism. The MRC imagines political and social belonging along different lines, circumscribed not by the Kenyan state, but by the memory of this past—and imagining of a different future for the coast.

While the government markets this future for Lamu, its residents complain of economic marginalization, crumbling infrastructure and land grabbing

The MRC is viewed as a threat by the Kenyan state. While coastal nationalists at the end of the colonial era argued their case through political parties, the MRC has an amorphous legal standing. Following the attacks at Garissa University College in April 2015, the Kenyan government labelled the MRC as a terrorist organization, in effect delegitimizing the MRC as a political actor.

Yet, much has changed since in the past two years. Mohamed Omar no longer lives in Lamu. The contested land in Hidabu Hill was acquired by the Kenyan government. Omar is no longer engaged in activism. Support for the MRC has also been in decline in Lamu, although they remain active in other parts of the coast.

A landmark Court of Appeal ruling in July 2016, which overturned the 2008 ban on the group, has been the source of an existential crisis. Now that the MRC is a legal entity, should it become a political party? What would it mean for a secessionist group to participate in national elections?

Residents of Lamu continue to struggle against the large development project that will potentially transform the coastline. The government and Amu Power, a private firm, are proposing a coal power plant in Kwasasi, on the mainland. This land has historically been farmed by communities from Pate, an island in the archipelago. Rumours of the project have led to land speculation, with buyers from across the country investing in property in the hopes of eventually being compensated. Save Lamu continues to protest both LAPSETT and the Kwasasi energy project. The power plant has been a particular source of conflict and division. Many approve of the project as they envisage receiving compensation for their land, but some worry about the environmental hazards of the coal-burning facility. Lamu is a port city in which ideas of the nation, belonging and the role of civil society remain contested, and the past is being harnessed to make claims to rights in the present.



PRECARIOUS CIRCULATIONS OF ASPIRATIONS IN JUBA

Until the recent flair-up in violence, Juba was a city of great possibility for migrants from all over East Africa

LÉONIE S. NEWHOUSE

In 2015, South Sudan was among the top ten migrant hosting countries in Africa, according to official United Nations data, regardless of whether measured by absolute number or as a percentage of the population. In the same year, South Sudan was also involved in a bloody and bitter internal conflict, one that continues to this day. Despite the obvious dangers, migrants were drawn to the country by the promise of a new oil-rich capital that required building from scratch, of favourable exchange rates, and of a captive and open market, where anything brought in would turn a profit. The new Angola, some said.

But, as I have written elsewhere, by any standard, Juba, the capital of South Sudan, is a difficult place to do business. It is hot, dangerous and far from the commercial hubs of Africa's Indian Ocean littoral. In a literal sense, the inland corridor that begins in the port of Mombasa ends here, along with the tarmac. Paved roads are limited, and the airport is small; bringing goods in presents many logistical challenges. The endemic malaria strains are particularly debilitating, and the few medical facilities are under-resourced. The population is poor, and the regulatory regime opaque, personalized and constantly shifting. The military and police act with impunity in the knowledge that courts are slow and, more often than not, complicit; while the population is well armed, and disposed to vigilantism. All supporting infrastructure—water, electricity, sewage, telecommunications, waste disposal, basic security—must be self-provided, making the

cost of operating a business here extremely high.

Between car accidents, illness, road ambushes and periodic bouts of xenophobic violence, it is easy to lose one's life in Juba, particularly as a foreigner.

Why, then, in 2015, were there still so many migrants there, despite the risks? I suggest that to answer this question requires thinking regionally, to consider the various hinterlands that come together to produce Juba. Although located on the margins of East Africa, Juba draws in labour, finance, food and construction materials from surprisingly extensive conduits: from Burundi in the south, Cairo in the north, Nigeria in the west, and Asmara,

debates about both the nature of "region" and "urban".

In particular, I wonder what, if anything, is gained by thinking the urban without an outside? If it is necessary to read urbanization as the spatial logic of advanced capitalism into all manner of social and physical landscapes, as is suggested by Neil Brenner, then is it possible to conceive of Eastleigh, Kampala and even Dubai—places from which surpluses of time, energy and aspiration, alongside capital, bodies and labour, are drawn out and reworked to produce the volatile stochasticity of South Sudan's dusty backwater economy—as hinterlands of Juba? If this is the case, where exactly does this leave us?

How does this help us to understand the social, imaginative and material processes that have made Juba? My interest here is what these precarious migration circuits I describe tell us more broadly about the im/possibility of work and desires for autonomy within the region?

Let me begin with Martin, a middle-aged father of four. Originally from Kampala, he faced a life of just making ends meet as a storekeeper. After rent, school fees and medical expenses he wasn't able to save any money. Recognizing that he was unable to progress economically in Uganda, Martin started to think about options. South Sudan presented itself as a viable option, a place where he arrived expecting "to get something good". Juba wasn't Martin's initial choice of destination, but its location relative to Uganda—he described it as being in the "neighbourhood"—and the ease of arranging entry made it appealing.

Between car accidents, illness, road ambushes and periodic bouts of xenophobic violence, it is easy to lose one's life in Juba, particularly as a foreigner

Hargeisa and, if we believe the rumours, the piratical waters of the gulf of Aden in the east. To give flesh to these disparate hinterlands, I trace migrant trajectories backwards to consider the channels and conduits that direct and energize such precarious circuits. My broader interest is to consider these examples alongside academic



At the time Martin made his decision to migrate, tales of Juba's possibilities circulated in the cities of East Africa like rumours of El Dorado. Still, when he arrived in 2009, Martin had a difficult go of it, remaining without stable income for nearly a year. Eventually, he was able to save up enough money to buy a Chinese motorcycle. From what he earned using it as a taxi, he was then able to set up a small outdoor food stall that sells chicken and chips. Now, he spends his mornings cutting up chicken that his wife and a couple of other partners will later cook at the restaurant. His afternoons are spent driving his motorcycle taxi to earn a bit more and even out his income. What he likes about this arrangement, he explains, is that he is the one who sets the condition of his labour, who decides how and when he will work. While he admits that there are some difficulties doing in business in Juba, he has indeed found something good.

Martin's experiences are exemplary of many migrants to Juba from East Africa –they are primarily from Kenya and Uganda, but also Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. Many of the migrants I

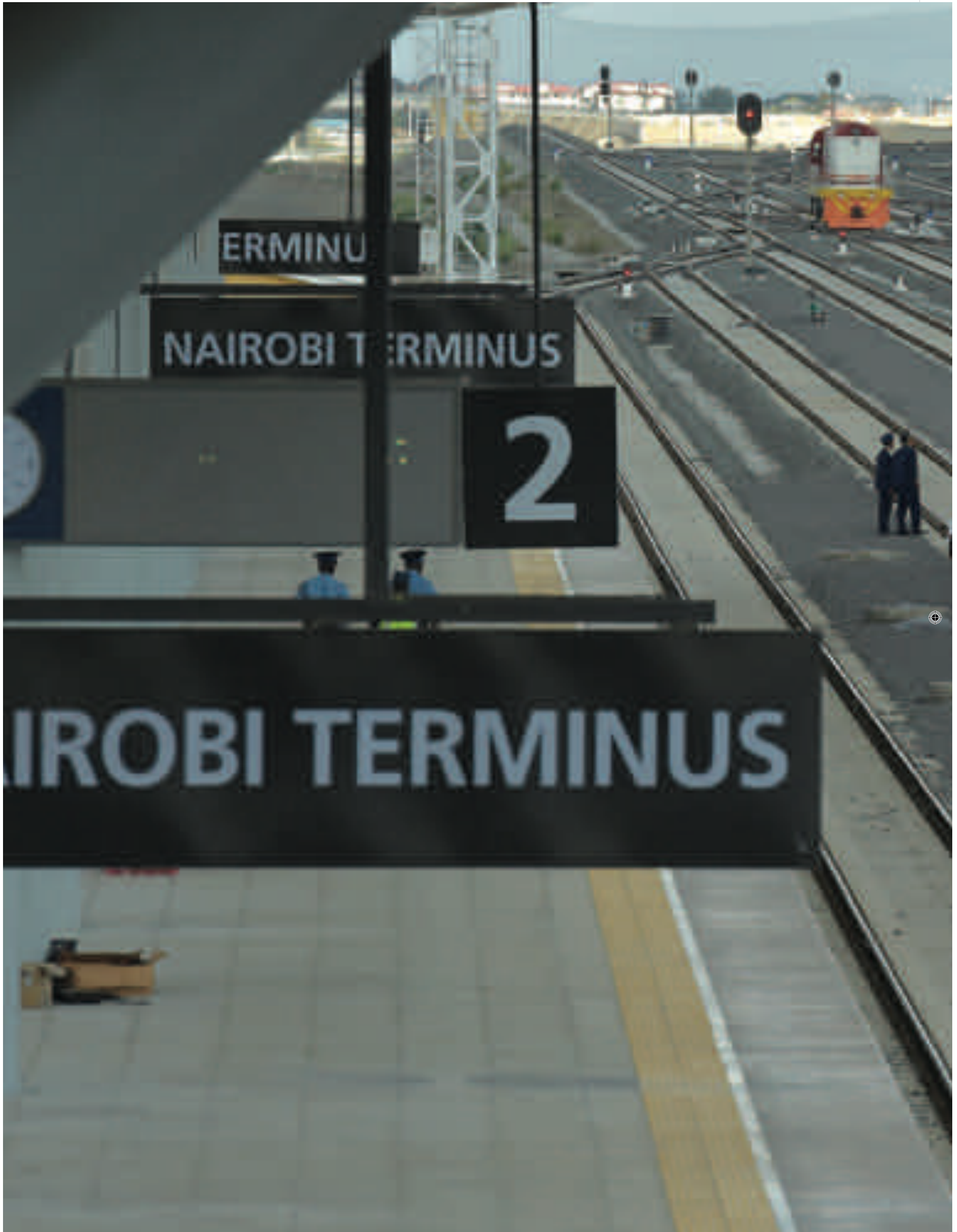
spoke with said that South Sudan was an easier environment in which to start a business, either because the capital needs for an informal business were not high, or because there was not as much competition as in their home countries. Most were repatriating their earnings, using them to subsidize social reproduction in their places of origin, but with an eye towards earning enough in the long run to be able to make starting a business at home a viable prospect.

As they earned a living in Juba, their circulations home and back again, their capture and reverting of material gains to their places of origin can be seen as the beginning of a lay process of weaving South Sudan, or at least Juba, into the economic life of the region. Risky as it was, the profits made in Juba were recirculated into the trappings and distinctions of class status—post-secondary school fees for children, for example, or land purchases and home building projects.

But there were other types of circulations that drew in resources from much further afield. These condensed in the trajectories of those whose interests in Juba

were economic, but not only so. The Darfuri electronics dealers, Eritrean hoteliers or Somalis bringing in the construction materials (rebar and cement, petrol and iron sheeting) used to build this city from scratch all have distinct trajectories. What is particularly remarkable about this group of migrants is that many of them choose Juba despite having other options. While they might otherwise qualify for refugee protection, they nevertheless rejected that designation in order to pursue fuller and more autonomous lives in a risk-filled city at the margins of East Africa. And these migrants drew on other, broader networks and knowledge economies in making the decision to migrate, to invest, and, indeed, to build Juba.

Take Yemane, for example. Yemane used to run a business importing car batteries from Dubai to Asmara, but a few years ago was called by a relative who told him that there were good business opportunities in Juba. For the moment, he was running an internet café just up the road from the university. His shop offered not only net access, but also printing and word processing by the page or the minute.





NEW CONNECTIONS

The new Standard Gauge Railway running between Nairobi and Mombasa arrives at Nairobi Station. The service became operational in May 2017. The Chinese built connection runs over 472 Kilometers. Photo: SIMON MAINA/AFP/GETTY





Business was not so brisk, but he was holding out in Juba for the meantime, laying the foundations for bigger plans.

Once things returned to peace, Yemane told me, he was planning to partner with his brother who was based in Birmingham to start up the first recycling facility in the country. There was a lot of money to be made in such a venture, he assured me. He'd already scoped out the costs of the required machinery. Now was a time to wait for the money from his brother, and for the political situation to stabilize a bit. Then he would be ready, when peace came. When I asked whether Yemane thought to do business in Dubai again, or try for Europe like his brother, he responded dismissively saying that to live in Europe is to be spoon fed, treated like a child.

He dismissed the idea of depending on social benefits in Europe, insisting "We are human beings!" Comfort, along with dignity and a sense of purpose were important to Yemane. "I want to be—what you call it?—hardworking." He spoke of owning a business, not simply being a salary earner. Yemane's perspectives on life in Europe were informed by information from his brother in England, and also his wife, who now lived in Sweden with their children. Yemane, like many others I spoke with, expressed distaste for the idea of living as a dependent on the welfare state, for the constraints of life imposed on refugees both in the region's camps and outside it. A return to his former Dubai trading venture was similarly ruled out: the time for that had passed. There were now too many people plying that route.

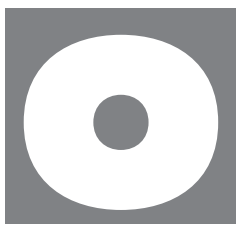
Yemane was not alone. By 2015, Somali and Eritrean migrants made up a significant presence in the economic life of Juba, dominating the provision of building materials, petroleum, dry goods, alcohol and hospitality. In interviews, many rejected the circumscribed lives that would be available to them as refugees, whether in the north-eastern African region or further afield. Most were able to draw on transnational family networks

to jump-start their businesses in Juba, be it fronting high rents for a shop, building hotels, subsidizing the first purchase of goods in Dubai, Istanbul or Shenzhen, or investing in nascent industrial ventures such as water and soda bottling facilities, recycling plants and heavy machinery.

There are clearly similarities in the trajectories that brought Martin and Yemane to Juba—both took a hard look at the broader economic and political conditions at home, and saw little scope for expanding their field of operations. Both considered other destinations before choosing Juba, which they hoped would become the new Angola, a place to stumble into a quick fortune. But more importantly, perhaps, was the concept of agency: setting one's own course, arranging one's life and working according to one's own priorities. Within the region, it was Juba, more than any other place that offered this sense of possibility, at least for a time.

By 2015, the allure was fading—but, by then, Juba had been irreversibly transformed. Multi-storey hotels with rooftop cafes and glass-clad shopping malls fill the city skyline, alongside the skeletons of half-built buildings. As the risks of operating in Juba have grown, only the most invested migrants remain—those who have committed too much to Juba, and can't walk away. But fewer and fewer people now arrive to make a life in this get-rich city. To imagine Juba now, from the streets of Nairobi, is to think of evacuation flights rather than all the money that might be made there. The gold rush is over.





ne of the most interesting aspects of recent Tanzanian history is the way foreign investment has helped to

reconfigure an unusually centralized single-party state. In the 1990s, liberalization offered many opportunities for private self-enrichment previously denied to politicians under first president Julius Nyerere's strict socialist Leadership Code. By the mid 2000s, however, it was also evident that self-enrichment was necessary for political survival. Under the centrifugal pressure of multi-party democracy, a form of competitive rent-seeking emerged whereby elite politicians sought to skim flows of foreign aid and investment through factionalized networks while maintaining a façade of democratic accountability.

Race has played a complex role in this calculus, particularly around Tanzania's energy sector. Despite an officially race-blind egalitarianism, the dominant Party of the Revolution (CCM) tacitly persecuted Asian nationals in the 1970s and 80s. A series of scandals in the 2000s stoked the popular sense that CCM was, ironically, now colluding with wealthy Asian businessmen in exchange for financial support. In response, CCM politicians often tried to displace this racialised frustration with corruption onto an anti-western critique of "foreigners" and of western-style reform in general. For their part, western companies and their development partners, who are struggling to retain their influence, are in many respects no less exploitative, but often displace this uncomfortable fact by leaning on the language of good governance, a language that

RACE AND ELECTRICITY IN POST-SOCIALIST TANZANIA

Tanzania's energy sector has been a source profit and power for the country's oligarchs

MICHAEL DEGANI

ironically harkens back to the political vocabulary of socialist rectitude.

In what follows I sketch these ironies as they have played out in Tanzania's partially privatized energy sector. Tanzania has enjoyed over a decade of high GDP growth, but as many critics have observed this has not translated into a golden age of "Africa rising" or witnessed a substantial growth in the

The IPTL has been hailed by some as an instance of South-South collaboration, and denounced by others as unpatriotic corruption

middle class. A poignant symbol of this disconnect is Tanzania's electricity supply, which has become less reliable and more expensive as the country's economic and cultural importance has expanded. The roots of this impasse lie in 20 years of state capture of energy reform. Lucrative contracts with private power plants, often burning expensive diesel or heavy fuel oil, have crippled the fiscal solvency of the national power company, Tanesco, and prevented reinvestment in its physical and institutional structures.

Here I focus one aspect of this history: a 20-year deal with Independent Power Tanzania Limited (IPTL) and Pan African Power Solutions Tanzania Limited (PAP) for 100MW of diesel-generated electricity. Hailed by some as an instance of south-south collaboration, denounced by other as unpatriotic corruption, the project has been embraced as pragmatic development and resisted as neo-colonial exploitation. Whatever the precise truth, IPTL's and PAP's byzantine trajectories reveal the way that for over a century Tanzanian governance has remained a series of competitions and collaborations between Africans, Asians and Euro-Americans, all jockeying for position along the Swahili coast.

By the late 1990s, decades of mismanagement and under-provisioning had left Tanzania's hydroelectric power sector in disrepair. Amidst prolonged cycles of drought and broader plans for privatization, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) signed a short-term contract for emergency, diesel-fueled power with the relatively unknown company IPTL. This curiously morphed into a 20-year Private Production Agreement (PPA) for 100MW of diesel-generated electricity, thereby sidelining an on-going World Bank-sponsored project. Worryingly, the price at which IPTL would sell power to Tanesco was to be calculated after a determination of the plant's capital costs. The World Bank suspended the Songas contract in protest. Independent and opposition presses published a good deal of criticism on the expensive and redundant project.



The IPTL deal exemplified the ethno-racial dimensions of liberalization. By the late 1980s, donor pressure and a prolonged economic crisis moved the state to accept a host of structural adjustment reforms. Under Nyerere's successor, President Ali Hassan Mwinyi (1986-95), the state deregulated its currency and liberalized imports. This shifted the incentive structure for national elites. Instead of relying on access to the resources and prestige of government positions, aggressive *vigogo* (tree trunks) accrued rents on import-export trade, real estate and divestiture of parastatals. Well-developed trade networks meant that many otherwise marginalized Tanzanian-Asian businessmen were suddenly well positioned to join these oligarchic alliances.

Fitting this profile, IPTL was a joint venture between Mechmar Corporation of Malaysia and minority Tanzanian

shareholder VIP Engineering. VIP was composed of a group of Tanzanian-Asian businessmen represented by James Rugemalira, a former Bank of Tanzania employee and private sector representative of an "indigenous" (*wazawa*) entrepreneur association. Many ministerial elites supported the deal, including future president Jakaya Kikwete. This pro-IPTL crowd dismissed criticism as opposition to south-south cooperation and a conspiracy on the part of "foreign agents" (reads: World Bank).

One of IPTL's most vocal critics has been Brian Cooksey, a sociologist, consultant and occasional investigative journalist. In 1998 letter to the *African*, Cooksey was dubbed a racist with a "pathological hatred of south-south cooperation," and further described as possessing "derogatory tendencies towards African governments, leaders and its people". Writing in 2002,

Cooksey described how he had variously been referred to as a "dangerous underground advisor," "self-appointed energy expert," "tax-evader," "unlicensed gemstone dealer," and "a frequenter of a disreputable Dar es Salaam dance hall".

In some respects, Cooksey's whiteness served as rhetorical displacement of anti-Asian discourse that had put CCM on the back foot ideologically. It aligns indigenous businessmen—both Asian- and African-Tanzanian nationals—within a broader south-south ecumene by triangulating them against neo-colonial interference of the World Bank and its supposed lackeys, embodied here in the figure of the louche expat. Hence on one hand it ties together familiar socialist themes of strategic friendship, racial egalitarianism and anti-western self-reliance. But instead of invoking these deals in the name of the *wananchi* (citizens), the new victims in this rhetoric are Asian/African businessmen and "leaders." Western actors such as the World Bank, foreign press and donors responded by criticising IPTL in moralizing language that recalled Nyerere's righteousness.

If nothing else, these ironic inversions and transpositions invite us to rethink the way history is experienced along the East African coast. Instead of stark breaks separating moral socialism from amoral neoliberalism, or from western aid to eastern trade, regional history in what came to be Tanzania might be better seen as shifting configurations of three, enduring socio-political orientations. Because of its racial segregation, Dar es Salaam is sometimes called *mji wa rangi tatu* ("a city of three colours"), and we might extend this trichotomy to national politics at large. Firstly, there is the force and allure of western-style technocratic development, originally exemplified in white colonists. Secondly, there is entrepreneurial liberty and accumulative possibility exemplified in "coastal" merchants. Thirdly, there is the moral legitimacy of African indigeneity, exemplified in neo-customary, gerontocratic chiefs. In the independence period, the

new Tanzanian state inherited the colonial strategy of merging the first and third, while suppressing the second. That is, it combined moral authority (previously reserved for colonially-employed chiefs) with bureaucratic power (previously monopolized by white missionary schools and African clerks), and continued to circumscribe the power of coastal traders begun under colonialism. These categories soon hardened into the tacitly racialised logic of national citizenship, in which Asian and Arab traders became circum-Indian Ocean others who were not fully part of the polity.

In some sense the historical energy of the post-socialist era revolves around the way African legitimacy, western development and Asian entrepreneurial liberty all became kaleidoscopically reconfigured. The emboldened *vigogo* elite pursued their accumulative schemes under the rhetorical banner of a south-south developmentalism that, they claimed, could rival the west. Western donors, whose words carried far less weight in the face of alternative sources of funding and patronage, leaned on the language “good governance” as a kind of proxy moral legitimacy.

Indigenous African businessmen played both sides. Some, like James Rugemalira, railed against the patronizing managerialism of western donors, claiming the right of personal enrichment and posing as suppressed captains of industry in the making. Others in the opposition decried CCM, pointing to the dubious influence of Asian capital, and against it claimed the political legitimacy of privileging African nationals in business. These new combinations interacted with old associations to create shifting alliances.

IPTL entered into a near decade-long series of legal battles with Tanesco, beginning with the allegation that IPTL had inflated tenders and bribed ministers to push its contract through. Nevertheless, by 2005, it had come online and represented a significant transformation of the national grid. Thermal sources (natural gas and diesel) came to out-supply hydropower,

comprising over 50% of all power produced. Financially, Tanesco continued to operate at a loss, sometimes paying well over half its revenue for plant fuel and capacity charges.

In 2005 Standard Chartered Bank Hong Kong (SCB-HK) purchased IPTL’s distressed \$120-million debt. The same year, Tanesco opened up a second case against IPTL, accusing it of miscalculating capacity charges. Tanesco’s recurring payments to IPTL were put in a deed or escrow account until a judgment could be reached by the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes. As of 2013, the escrow had ballooned to over \$122-million. In 2014, Rugemalira illegally transferred IPTL’s shares to an unknown company called Pan African Power (PAP), over SCB-HK’s objections. Then, with the apparent collusion of members of the cabinet, parliament and Tanesco, the disputed escrow monies were transferred to PAP as well. It was later alleged in a parliamentary report that Rugemalira had donated much of that money to various CCM ministers and elites.

PAP is owned by Harbinder Singh Sethi. Born in 1958 in Iringa, a town in the southern highlands of Tanzania, Sethi moved to Kenya in 1980s during Tanzania’s socialist anti-Asian posturing. There he flourished as a financier connected to the politically powerful Moi family. His subsequent return to Tanzania was marked by two decades of gradual reincorporation of transnational Indian Ocean financial networks into the political apparatus. Moreover, as with the first round of controversy nearly 20 years ago, the Asian dynamics of the scandal were an uncomfortable and palpable subtext.

The Sikh temple in Dar es Salaam defended Singh in the press during PAP’s court battles.

For his part, Singh and IPTL promptly donated to various churches, police stations, schools and other charitable causes to signal nationalist bona fides. In another parallel, Rugemalira and IPTL (now IPTL-PAP) redirected anti-Asian sentiment to anti-foreigner sentiment. IPTL-PAP

issued a statement accusing the call for investigations into the escrow issue as a ploy to help a “foreign bank” collect a fraudulent debt at the expense of a heroic Tanzanian investor.

As of June of 2017, Singh and Rugemalira have been arrested and charged with “economic sabotage,” a socialist-style prosecution that bore the imprint of the 2015 presidential election. John Magufuli’s administration quickly adopted a nationalist posture and a series of bullish anti-corruption campaigns. These might be understood as symbolic reactions to the transnational rent-seeking of the Kikwete administration and the unpopularity it caused CCM. But whether Singh and Rugemalira will be convicted, and whether IPTL-PAP contract will be cancelled, remains to be seen.

In some ways the partial realignment of an East African government away from the west towards circum-Indian Ocean networks of economic power harkens back to the late nineteenth century, the last major historical era of a liberalized economy. During that period, Indian Ocean merchants, white colonizers, and autochthonous leaders all formed fluid alliances as they jockeyed for position within an unstable regional hegemony. Today, just as the partial privatization of Tanzania’s grid speaks to polycentric arrangements of capital and technology that transcend the consolidation of the nation-state, the oligarchies that profit from such arrangements echo earlier political formations. What perhaps has changed is the power of racialised discourses to fix, frame, and justify the winners and losers in this dispensation. Ultimately, though, the troubled state of Tanzania’s power grid can be painted in no single colour.



INFRA- STRUCTURES ON THE RUN

“An important starting point in thinking about the role of infrastructure in ‘inhabiting the corridor’ might be Marshall Berman’s ‘All that is Solid Melts into the Air’ and the contradictions enrolled in the creative destruction implicit in modernisation. It leaves us asking how we consider the dialectic of modernity across the second wave of urbanisation, of which the Indian Ocean is a crucial geographical-historical axis. Most pertinently what does being an East African mean in the context of rapid urban transformation, surging economies and new territorial formations. One way of teasing apart such new geographies is through a consideration of the paradoxes incised in the multiple infrastructures of this modernisation. Here we can see ‘infrastructures on the run’ as a generative process of creative destruction into varied forms of networked life. These dynamics simultaneously create connections and displacements, extractions and everyday material flows, movement and resistance.”

WORDS & PHOTO-ESSAY BY JON SILVER



Demands for water show infrastructure as key site for urban politics in Kibera, Nairobi (2015)





The mobile materialities of resistance during the Uganda election in Kabalagala, Kampala (2016)





The Indian Ocean economy is creating new logistical infrastructure at the port in Zanzibar City (2014)





Alternative water distribution system beyond the pipeline in Nairobi (2015)





Waste collection covers the market but not the housing in Namuwongo, Kampala (2016)





Large scale electrification provides one way to connect in Kibera, Nairobi, (2015)





In November 2014, I met Ekal and Echwa, a young Turkana couple carrying their small child along the tarmac that runs north through Isiolo, a town roughly 300km north of Nairobi. The road will, one day, reach Ethiopia. Ekal and Echwa lived in a settlement five kilometres northeast of Isiolo that was inhabited mostly by settled Turkana pastoralists and their livestock. They were returning home from the local hospital where they had taken their sick child. As we walked, Ekal pointed towards the mountains that rise up out of flat plains about 20km west of Isiolo. “All of that belly,” he said, referring to the curved shape made by one of the mountain faces, “will be skyscrapers.” The area he pointed to was the site for the Isiolo Resort City, which forms part of plans for the larger Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor. He had seen images of the unbuilt city on a calendar.

On a visit to the mountains a month earlier, I had found nothing to indicate the rudiments of a city. The area lacked even a fence to bound the site. Nevertheless, words and images about LAPSSET were commonplace in Isiolo. The media published renderings of unbuilt infrastructures appearing in the project plans, and local NGOs held seminars to “sensitize” communities. The PowerPoint presentations at these seminars also showed computer-generated renderings of the resort city, along with budgeted sums for the infrastructure and projections of future population figures. I too came across glossy calendars detailing the main features and route of the LAPSSET corridor

SPECULATIVE FUTURES ON KENYA'S “NEW FRONTIER”

Property speculation is not the preserve of elites, as events in a northern Kenyan town suggest

HANNAH ELLIOTT

being sold by a hawker outside Isiolo’s Catholic Mission. How does the circulation of such words and images about the future work on the present?

This essay draws on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Isiolo, a diverse town of about 60,000 people situated at the interface between fertile highlands in central Kenya and the desert lowlands of the north. Long neglected by colonial and post-independence government administrations, Isiolo has in recent years been reframed through the LAPSSET plans as a “new frontier” for economic growth. The project is framed around an oil pipeline and transport infrastructure will link oil fields in South Sudan with a new port at Lamu, spanning the vast territory of northern Kenya, which has long been excluded from national development. Isiolo features as a key node along the road and railway corridor. Once nicknamed *mwisho wa lami* (“the end of the tarmac”), Isiolo is expected to host various “value-adding” projects, including an international airport, modern abattoir and new city project in the “belly” of the mountains pointed out by Ekal. In recent years, scholars have paused on glossy images of Dubai-esque cities in Africa with streamlined infrastructures and reflected upon the agency of these images, which seem so far-removed from African realities. Many find that they are surprisingly seductive to ordinary people, even those likely to be excluded by the projects. In 2011, anthropologist Filip De Boeck wrote about interviews he conducted with farmers in Kinshasa facing eviction from an area designated for a large gated community, La Cité du Fleuve.

Ordinary people, his interviews revealed, share the same dream of what the future city will look like as the “big people” who will benefit from its realisation. “Yes, we will be the victims,” De Boeck generically quotes the farmers, “but still it will be beautiful.” De Boeck argues that for Kinshasa, a shared longing for a better city offers “a new space that escapes from the real order of things” – while the new city remains an out-of-reach dream for poor Congolese, its significance lies in its imaginative effects.

In Isiolo, LAPSSET also has imaginative effects. Ekal and Echwa told me that Isiolo Resort City would be “smart”. But although thus far largely elusive as material fact, the anticipation of LAPSSET is already having very material effects. Isiolo is expanding at its edges, including into its outskirts into places where people like Ekal and Echwa live. While it is true that LAPSSET’s imaginative effects are constituted by escapist dreams and fantasies, the project has also been met with a degree of suspicion and apprehension. These suspicions index the historically fraught relationship between locals and national government, as well as local ethnic tensions and political competition among Isiolo’s diverse cultural groups. This combination of affective responses to LAPSSET is generative of and regenerated through an “economy of anticipation” – a term anthropologist Jamie Cross uses to describe the processes through which anticipated special economic zones take shape in India. Isiolo’s economy of anticipation is primarily manifesting in the cutting and claiming of land around the town’s edges.



Among locals, the LAPSSET project is perceived by many as the latest in a series of plots by a coercive national government bent on appropriating land and resources from northerners. This relates, in part, to the positioning of the LAPSSET route and the clustering of projects around the town—areas which have historically been disputed with neighbouring Meru County, a larger constituency than Isiolo with greater political importance to the national government. In the context of the recent devolution of government in Kenya, the precise location of the LAPSSET infrastructures will determine which county government benefits from the projects, in terms of revenue, employment, contracts and opportunities for patronage and political reproduction. The new airport offers a good example: its terminal buildings and control towers are in Isiolo County while its runway extends into Meru.

There are also anxieties around attempts by the national government to “adjudicate” land in northern Kenya to “make ownership clearer” ahead of LAPSSET. Title to land in Isiolo remains legally insecure. It has tentatively been classified “community land” under the Community Land Bill, a draft piece of legislation still under debate in parliament. Isiolans note that land is in short supply in neighbouring Meru County, and worry that Isiolo, as one of the country’s last land frontiers, will be the starting point of a rush on northern land. The Isiolo County government has attempted to stall land adjudication attempts by the national government and hold out for the new bill. There are concerns that delays in the bill’s passing could offer a “window of opportunity” for the acquisition and privatization of land by “influential” people with connections to the national government.

Jamie Cross argues that planning as a “mode of anticipation” comes into productive tension with other kinds of anticipatory practice, “as diverse communities of people work towards futures that improve upon the present”. Rumours circulate in Isiolo that “big people” like Jimmy Kibaki, a son of Kenya’s former president Mwai Kibaki, and Martha Karua, a former

justice minister and long-standing parliamentarian for a central Kenyan constituency, acquired land around the site of the proposed resort city prior to the LAPSSET projects being announced. This anticipation propelled a rush on land by a diversity of ordinary citizens. While many land acquisitions are by middle-class investors from Isiolo and beyond, poor townspeople tend to be at the forefront of this process, cutting and claiming land at the town’s peripheries before the bigger people arrive.

Property speculation is not the preserve of elites. One day, in Isiolo’s town centre, I bumped into Guyo, a Borana man and father of four who lives in a neighbourhood in the north of the town and is employed on a casual basis as a watchman. “Don’t you want land here?” he asked, as he invited me to join him in a collective acquisition. He projected that within five years Isiolo would be a city and livestock compounds would be a thing of the past.

There are also anxieties around attempts by the national government to “adjudicate” land in northern Kenya to “make ownership clearer”

In his thirties, Guyo was a member of a registered youth group that was concerned with ‘development’ issues such as HIV/AIDS awareness, but was also active in the acquisition of land. The group had claimed a large piece of land northeast of Isiolo town, which they divided into plots. Guyo spoke about preserving his plot for his children, but added that he would consider selling it if prices, already soaring, rose any higher.

Guyo then mentioned said that he was part of another group that had acquired several large pieces of land in an area further out of the town. Notably, both groups were made up of fellow Borana. Members of other ethnic groups in Isiolo suspected that a Borana-dominated county government supported these land

deals and of privileging its Borana constituents living in the town. This suspicion has given rise to similar anticipatory practices among other ethnic groups. Regina, an elderly Turkana woman who lived in a disintegrating mud house in a village northeast of Isiolo, was one such participant. The village where she lived had initially been settled by poor Turkana and Samburu pastoralists, but was now quickly developing into a middle-class neighbourhood as well-off residents of Isiolo (and beyond) acquired plots and built stone houses.

Regina was at risk of losing the plot she lived on as a wealthy northern Kenyan had claimed the land; he maintained that it had been allocated to him long ago by the former Isiolo County Council. During a visit, Regina told me that she had acquired a new plot at the edge of the area to the northeast of Isiolo town, not far from where Ekal and Echwa live. Regina described how she, together with a large number of other Turkana from Isiolo, had rushed to cut land there, afraid that others would get there first. “Isiolo will be Nairobi,” she explained. “Borana want to make Isiolo theirs ...”

In February 2017, a national daily announced that Isiolo could lose its resort city owing to the recommendations of Kenya’s National Environment Management Authority, which pointed to the fact that the proposed site was a corridor for wildlife. The article did not reflect on any thwarted opportunities for development or employment should Isiolo lose the project, but noted that it would have “major ramifications” for thousands of speculators who had acquired land in the area. Some commentators have suggested that the making of speculative economies in land becomes part of the logic of wildly ambitious development projects in places like Kenya. Perhaps. Whether Isiolo’s city of the future manifests or not, it seems likely that this northern Kenyan town will continue expanding and being cut at its edges. As Kenyans seek out new investment opportunities, and as land in neighbouring central Kenya becomes increasingly scarce, it seems unlikely that Isiolo will lose its branding as the gateway to Kenya’s “new frontier” any time soon.





DECODING THE NARRATIVE OF HARGEISA'S MONUMENTS

The painful history of Hargeisa is inscribed in a series of monuments across Somaliland's capital city

YUSUF SERUNKUMA

Visitors to Hargeisa, the capital of the self-declared but internationally unrecognised Republic of Somaliland, will not miss the imposing monuments placed at strategic intervals on the road from the airport through the central business district to the presidential palace. Erected at key junctions and squares, they are unmissable. Zeinab Badawi, a Sudanese-British journalist with BBC, reported on their presence in 2011, in particular the Russian-made MiG fighter jet astride a monument in central Hargeisa. Badawi noted that the monument was a reminder “of the bitter battles the people here fought to break away from the rest of Somalia in 1991”. The monument has appeared on the cover of a number of books about Hargeisa, and often headlines websites on Somaliland. It is an articulate monument.

Students of public memorials have often busied themselves with the nature of history that monuments articulate. In addition to interest in authorship, they have also debated identities constructed, futures imagined and publics mobilised. Notions of authenticity and accuracy often form, albeit problematically, the undercurrents of these conversations. The monument thus becomes a site of contest and negotiation for different claims. Writing about monuments in Paris, art historian Sergiusz Michalski noted in 2008 that public monument “reflects the state’s ideological foundations”. As “sites of memory,” and as indicators of present and futures aspirations, monuments tell stories in the context of the historical-political

atmosphere of the time. Like all other repositories of history, monuments legitimate and silence particular claims, depending on the political context of the moment.

In a situation of recovery after violence, a quest for independence from Somalia-Mogadishu and a search for a definitive identity for the people of Somaliland, what are the monuments in Hargeisa—the capital city, and centre of cultural, political and economic activity—saying?

The cityscape of Hargeisa includes five large monuments. The best known is *Taalada Xoriyadda iyo Dal Jirka Dahsoon* (Statue of Liberty, or Country Not Yet Discovered), which features the MiG. The others are *Kaare*, a replica of a fighter tanker in Togdheer Area; the dove or peace monument; *Sanad Guuradii 23aad*, a monument to unity that portrays a hand holding the map of Somaliland; and the *Dhagaxtuurka* (literally, throwing stones). The latter is a tomb for the student protestors who were gunned down on 20 February 1982 for protesting the government of President Mohamed Siyad Barre for arresting volunteers in the Hargeisa Group, who were helping provide public services in “politically deprived” Hargeisa. (A sixth monument placed on the road from the airport that depicted an archer was replaced by an advertising hoarding for SOMTEL, a telecommunication company.)

These monuments were introduced to Hargeisa in the late 1990s at the behest of the city’s mayor, Cawo Elmi Abdullah. During Cawo’s term, he introduced various placemaking initiatives. For the first time, Hargeisa received security and traffic



lights, and fountains were built in several places across the city—the fountains have all since disappeared, and traffic lights are only now reappearing. Cawo's reforms were very popular, to the extent that callers to phone-in shows on radio and television sent greetings to him before their kin and friends. Some commentators have suggested that Cawo's popularity surpassed that of the president, Muhammad Egal (1993–2002), who reacted by jailing him for a month on trumped-up charges. Egal's successor, President Kahin Riyale (2002–10), simply dismissed Cawo from office.

Cawo's monuments endure and have gained increasing popularity over the years. Their popularity—especially their wide circulation and reproduction in other forms and media—signals their power to speak and mobilise audiences towards certain ideations. But what exactly do Cawo's monuments say? How do they manage to mobilise such wide and diverse audiences? Although intended to complement each other, in this essay I will focus on one: the Statue of Liberty. This monument, the most visible landmark in Hargeisa, illuminates ideations present in the other monuments.

The aircraft is an actual Russian MiG fighter jet. In 1988, Barre contracted South African mercenaries to bomb Hargeisa; Somali nationals in the air force had refused to undertake the attack on their countrymen. After the bombing raid the mercenaries abandoned three fighter jets at the airport. In 1998, relishing the stability and safety that had returned to Somaliland at the end of clannist fighting in 1996, Cawo had one of the jets moved to Freedom Square where it was installed atop a pyramid-shaped plinth.

Within a short period, the monument became the most representative and adored symbol of Hargeisan history and aspiration. The monuments ably mobilised a local public—besides its appearance in formal media, the monument appears in wall drawings and graffiti in different parts of the city. The monument is located in the city's main business centre. It is flanked by numerous

shops and is located near Hargeisa's main downtown market. The site also doubles as a car park during the main work hours. It is a popular place for *shaa iyo sheeko* (tea and talk) following afternoon prayers.

The base holding up the MiG is decorated with two prominent painted images. The tableaux paintings and accompanying captions explain particular moments in the 1988 civil war, during which an estimated 10,000 people died in two months. Women figure prominently in both paintings as protagonists. One painting shows a man and woman in clothes painted with colours of the Somaliland flag. The woman bears a rifle, while the man behind her is terribly injured; both his arms and legs are bleeding from their stumps. The scene includes a number of mutilated bodies. There are soldiers shooting at fleeing civilians. Two planes, which are marked with the flag of Somalia, bomb the city. "Bombs rained on us," reads a caption.

The other painting shows a woman with a child on her back. She bears the Somaliland national flag; adopted in 1996, it was originally the flag of the Somali National Movement (SNM), who fought against Barre. Behind the woman is an elderly man with only one amputated leg. At the bottom left of the painting is a man in civilian clothes attempting to take a gun away from a soldier wearing a red beret—Barre's most notorious military unit was called the *Hangash* (Red Berets). In the background are images of a mosque, tanks and several dead bodies. At right, the scene is being rolled up, revealing an idyllic village scene below, a metaphor of regeneration.

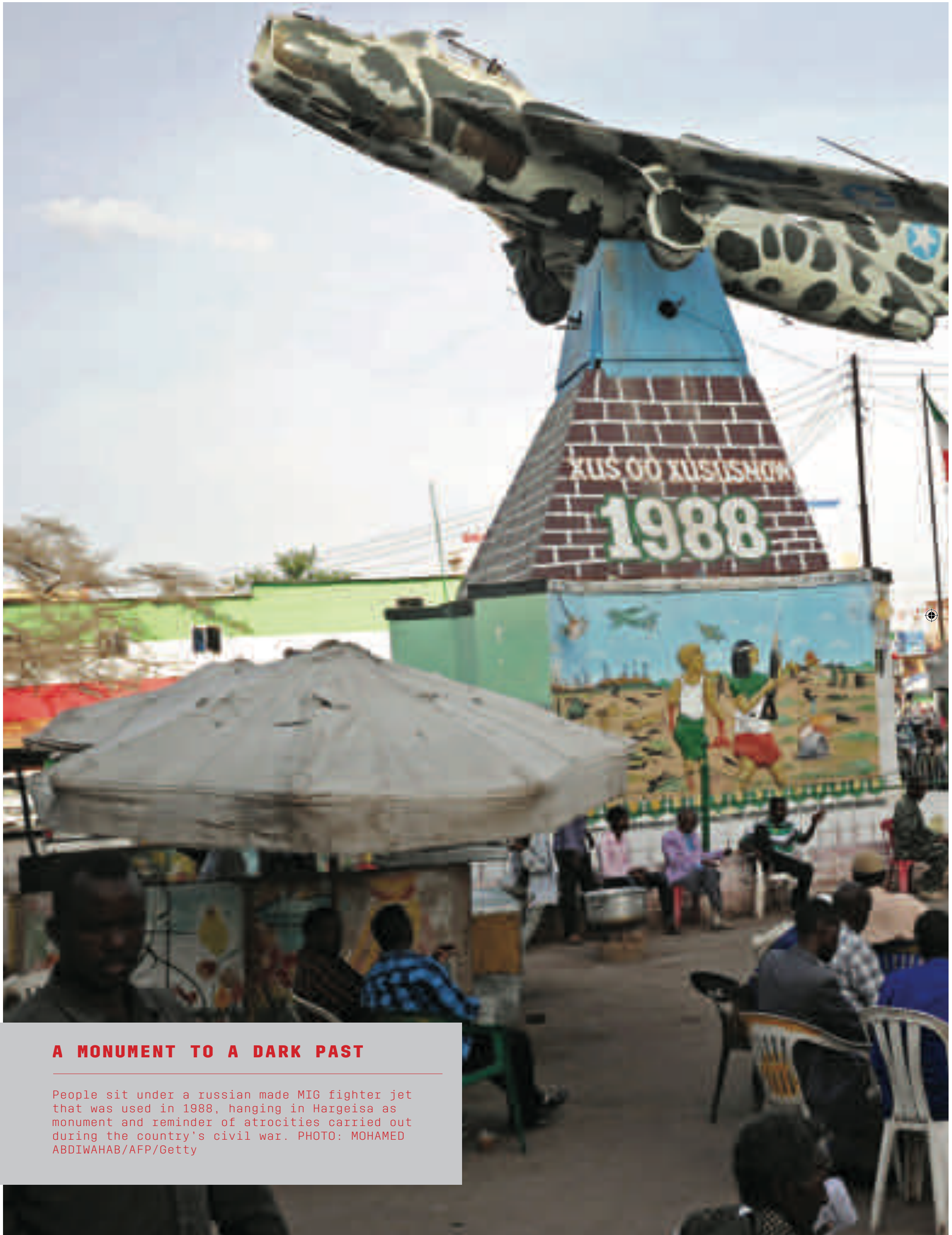
The Russian jet atop of the monument underscores the absolute helplessness of the Hargeisa people being bombed in the painting. It reminds the people of Hargeisa of their painful relationship with Somalia, the cruelty that was meted out and carnage that occurred. Although composed of aesthetically dubious paintings, the memorial is an eloquent statement on the victimhood of Somalilanders, as well their resilience and survivalist spirit. The switch from helpless victimhood to resolute

resistance suggests the country's hard-fought liberation is not yet complete.

At the base of the monument, two dates are acknowledged: 26 June 1960, when Somaliland achieved independence from Great Britain, and 18 May 1991, when the country unilaterally declared independence from Somalia. Interestingly, with the exception of acknowledging these dates, the monument says nothing about Great Britain. Since the monument memorialises moments of oppression by earlier and later colonisers, the silence regarding Britain's wrongs in Somaliland is deafening.

Instead, the monument mobilises residents and visitors to Hargeisa to see Somalia-Mogadishu as an enemy. This view of Somalia mediates business, culture and political interaction in Hargeisa, within and without. In 2015, Hargeisa's most renowned band, Hidigaha Geeska (The Horn Stars), were arrested on their return to the country after performing in Mogadishu during the Eid Aduha celebrations: they were accused of waving the Somalia flag during celebrations. Earlier this year, journalist and activist AbdulMalik Coldon was arrested upon arrival at Hargeisa following a visit to Mogadishu where he had met President Mohamed Abdullah Farmaajo. It is claimed he vowed to return to Somaliland and preach unification with Somalia-Mogadishu. Perhaps, if Coldon and the musicians with Hidigaha Geeska had been more attentive to Hargeisa's defining monument, to its implicit narrative, they would have avoided arrest. In the context of Somaliland's present politico-cultural aspirations, residents of Hargeisa ought to be more attentive of the narrative of their monuments.





A MONUMENT TO A DARK PAST

People sit under a russian made MIG fighter jet that was used in 1988, hanging in Hargeisa as monument and reminder of atrocities carried out during the country's civil war. PHOTO: MOHAMED ABDIWAHAB/AFP/Getty







Nairobi has become a city of malls. After South Africa, Kenya is the largest shopping centre market in Africa. Built in 1983 and billed as a “city within a city,” the Sarit Centre was the first western-style mall in East and Central Africa. More such malls followed, notably in the last decade. All of these malls follow, more or less, the global model of the high-end consumerist leisure space, featuring formalised trade by commercial chains selling known brands for local elites and middle classes as well as tourists. The malls we focus on here are different.

Lacking the glamour of western-style shopping malls, “Somali” shopping centres have one or more floors with traders renting micro-stalls, some as small as a table. The markets are “Somali” in so far as they were introduced as a model by ethnic Somalis from Somalia and Kenya, and are linked to Somali trade networks. The model has since been taken up by non-Somali businesspeople as well, complicating their classification as “Somali”.

The Somali shopping centre evolved in the early 1990s following changes in the usage of urban space. Three parallel processes led to this change: the liberalization of the business sector, broader urbanization processes, and the migration of business people from Somalia to Kenyan cities as refugees.

The Nairobi suburb of Eastleigh is known for its substantial population of refugees; it is also a global commercial hub, whose 50 shopping centres are integrated

GIVING INFORMALITY ROOM

Somali entrepreneurs in Kenya have transformed the informal retail economy in substantive ways

TABEA SCHARRER & NEIL CARRIER

into networks bringing cheap consumer goods from Asia to East Africa. Eastleigh has dramatically changed over the last two decades following the arrival of refugees from Somalia. Once a lower-middle class residential estate, it is now dominated by multi-storey shopping centres, hotels and residential apartments.

The evolution of the Somali shopping centre as a distinct model can be traced back to Garissa Lodge, a hotel occupied by Somalian refugees in the early 1990s. Some of the Somali lodgers brought with them trade experience from Mogadishu and were able to access flows of smuggled goods—especially clothes and electronics—coming from Dubai, through Somalia, into Kenya. They began trading these from their rooms, displaying them on their beds by day. Word gradually spread among Kenyans that cheap goods could be bought at Garissa Lodge, and the growing trade transformed the nature of the premises.

As demand for goods increased among Kenyans, other buildings in Eastleigh began to be used in similar ways. The increased demand for retail space by traders saw retail leasing become a highly lucrative enterprise. As space became even scarcer, new buildings were built. In most cases they were funded by advance payments from the prospective trader—payments known as “goodwill”. The aggregated payments provided enough for construction and a modest profit. These newer malls retained the older shopping centre formula, but incorporated features such as hotel space and mosques.

Very soon the model of the Somali shopping centre spread to other towns across Kenya, including Nakuru, northwest of Nairobi. The fourth largest city in Kenya, Nakuru is a regional centre positioned along the country’s main trading route. The first Somali shopping complex here opened in the centre of town, near the Jamia mosque, in 1995. It occupies a run-down two-storey lodge built in the 1970s. In the next couple of years three more Somali shopping centres opened in close proximity, all operated by Kenyan-Somalis. These buildings are single-storey and consist of long corridors from which the shops can be entered. Non-Somali tailors occupy spaces at the rear of the buildings. Many of the traders are as well not part of the Somali community.

Dubai Shopping Centre is the largest Somali retail space in Nakuru. Opened in 2010, it is also the first such purpose-built edifice in Nakuru. In its first year of operation, stores were spacious and the building exuded a touch of luxury. By year two shops were

The markets are “Somali” in so far as they were introduced as a model by ethnic Somalis from Somalia and Kenya, and are linked to Somali trade networks



subdivided into smaller units and further outdoor stores were created around the building; extra retail space was also carved out of the inner corridors.

Eastleigh is significant to most of the traders in Nakuru as it functions as their distribution centre. Goods imported into Kenya by Somalis are sold wholesale at Eastleigh to traders from all over Kenya, many of them non-Somalis. This model has been taken up by non-Somali businesspeople too. Established in 1994, Freemark Limited subdivided the plenary hall at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) into table-sized stalls; by the end of the 1990s, the subdivision trend had spread to many shops along Moi Avenue in central Nairobi. In other urban parts of Kenya similar developments took place, with newly constructed office buildings sometimes including “exhibition” stalls on the lower floors.

While open-air markets are held in public spaces, the Somali shopping centres are privately owned enterprises, often with a rather long chain of brokers, owners and complex network of leasers and sub-leasers. These retail businesses are marked by three spatial innovations:

shopping centres are established in structures often built for other purposes (architectural repurposing), several small shops are created inside existing stores (retail density), and additional retail stores are established in common spaces inside and outside buildings (sprawl).

Despite occupying private spaces, Somali shopping centres operate more like open-air markets than western-style malls. Small-scale traders, who often work alone or have only one employee, typically run these stores. Their wares are often cheap; traders do not sell branded goods produced for and bought by the rich. The product offerings are not especially varied, and often traders cluster in one area selling similar items. Furthermore, the price setting inside Somali shopping centres resembles that noted by Clifford Geertz in 1978 in a “bazaar economy”, not the set-price model prevalent in western-style malls. In his 2011 book *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong*, Gordon Matthews describes the mall as the “epitome of the American Dream,” and typifies bazaars as “marts of low-end globalization”. In Kenya, the newly built Somali shopping centres adopt the image of the

formalised western-style mall, in effect projecting the urban traders’ dreams of wealth and progress.

What distinguishes these shopping centres from markets and malls are their functional focus on processes of selling and buying. Markets are often open places where people meet. In some cases, they are used to stage political or religious rallies, and are therefore public arenas. Shopping malls, while not designed as public places, provide space for recreation, and urban dwellers appropriate the malls for uses other than consumption, re-making private spaces into public ones. By contrast, Somali shopping centres are, in many cases, highly specialized consumption spaces where the pragmatism of trade dominates. In Nakuru, there are no areas where people can eat or drink, or even sit down and chat—architectural researcher Hannah le Roux has described these as “slow spaces”. Their absence may partly be due to the location of slow spaces around the shopping centres in Nakuru, but we argue it is also an outcome of the intense economic usage of space.

The traders occupying these shopping centres face competition from hawkers selling goods on the street. The competition for customers can be fierce. In 2016, tensions between market traders and hawkers in Eastleigh resulted in the temporary closure of shopping centres in protest against the proliferating street trade. Despite the low overhead costs of hawkers, traders in the Somali shopping centres nonetheless enjoy significant custom. It is our contention that the Somali shopping-centre model is successful because it gives informality a room. Our understanding of informality is informed by Keith Hart, and here refers to a relative absence of regulation alongside many elements of uncertainty.

Informal business practices are entrenched in Kenya. The limited space in official public markets provided by the Kenyan administration prompted many people in the 1980s and 90s to work in informal economic structures. Structural adjustment programmes, which stymied the formal economy, and rapid urbanization contributed to the growth of the informal economy. The possibility of earning a living was met by a consumer demand for cheap goods.

The informal economy is noted for its precarity. In the 1980s, a time of political tension and heightened violence and insecurity, traders faced a worsening economic climate and arbitrary policies regarding street trade. Hawkers had to endure arrests and government-led demolitions of their stalls, as well as the criminal activities by various street gangs. The first Somali shopping centres opened in the early 1990s. They offered new commercial networks and a secure space—from police and thieves—for doing business. Goods could be secured inside shopping centres, which also provided protection against rain and sun. The stability of a shop also generates trust in shopkeepers: wholesalers are more likely to entrust goods on credit to someone with a physical shop than to a mobile hawker.

National and regional governments responded to this commercial development by building new public markets.

Operating them proved difficult in many cases. In Nakuru, for instance, the construction of Wakulima and Nasher markets was overshadowed by corruption allegations. In contrast, the private shopping centres still flourish, creating an interlinkage of informal and formal ways of doing business. Over time some of these businesses have become more formalized: they are fully incorporated into the Kenyan retail landscape, though within their walls much business activity remains more or less informal.

Rents for micro-stalls in a Somali shopping centre are much lower than for a room-size shop in a western-style mall, and even with a relatively small investment it is possible to establish a respectable business in these shopping centres. While rising rents and “goodwill” payments have reduced the number of people able to lease these shops, the model of the Somali shopping centre offers many Kenyans otherwise excluded from the retail economy an opportunity to become small-business owners and shopkeepers. Significantly, this change in the retail economy was not the result of governmental intervention or public planning, but of private investment by ordinary businesspeople. The model of the Somali shopping centre offers shopkeepers a secure but also accessible trading platform, a space to potentially prosper in the face of the uncertainty that accompanies informal economic practices.



CEMENTING THE FUTURE: FROM CRISIS TO PROSPERITY?

The stacks of concrete blocks in the Mozambican suburb of Inhapossa tell an optimistic story

JULIE SOLEIL ARCHAMBAULT

There is something about cement—and the way it can be mixed into concrete—that captures the imagination. At the

moment, Africa is the continent with the fastest growing cement consumption and demand is expected to rise by 50% by the year 2020, according to a 2015 Bloomberg report. The cement industry has even described sub-Saharan Africa as “the last cement frontier” (Waerp and Arnoldson, 2011). Some speak of cement as the “new oil” while others refer to the richest man in Africa, the Nigerian businessman Aliko Dangote, as the “king of cement” (Agbugah, 2016). With the growing number of cement factories opening across Africa, the continent is unlikely to remain a net importer of this crucial building material for much longer.

All this cement is not only channelled towards projects of futuristic satellite cities, shopping malls, tower blocks and ring roads, but also towards the millions of small domestic construction projects that are increasingly visible on the peri-urban landscape. Drawing on research in Inhapossa, an expansion suburb in central Mozambique, I approach cement as both an index and a driver of socio-economic transformation in the region. I further show how, as a politically and affectively charged material, cement offers a useful vantage point from which to examine the contours of prosperity.

After spending the last few decades uncovering the roots of uncertainty and documenting the different creative ways in which people get by in trying environments,

scholars interested in Africa have developed a wealth of concepts and tools to make sense of how people tackle and engage with adversity and frustrated aspirations. But what happens when conditions on the ground start changing, seemingly for the better; when economic growth begins to trickle down? While there is ample reason to qualify the “Africa rising” thesis proposed by *The Economist* in 2011, it seems more difficult to dismiss all this excitement about cement as mere

With the growing number of cement factories opening across Africa, the continent is unlikely to remain a net importer of this crucial building material for much longer

hype; more difficult to ignore the building boom that is fuelling, and to some extent also fuelled by, the rising demand in cement.

Prosperity is commonly assessed by its signs and symbols such as economic growth, investment in infrastructure; but prosperity, like well-being more broadly, is also experiential. Prosperity, in short, has its own materialities and temporalities. It also tends to be aspirational, something to strive towards, and often, especially when the focus turns to the global South, something that needs to be promoted.

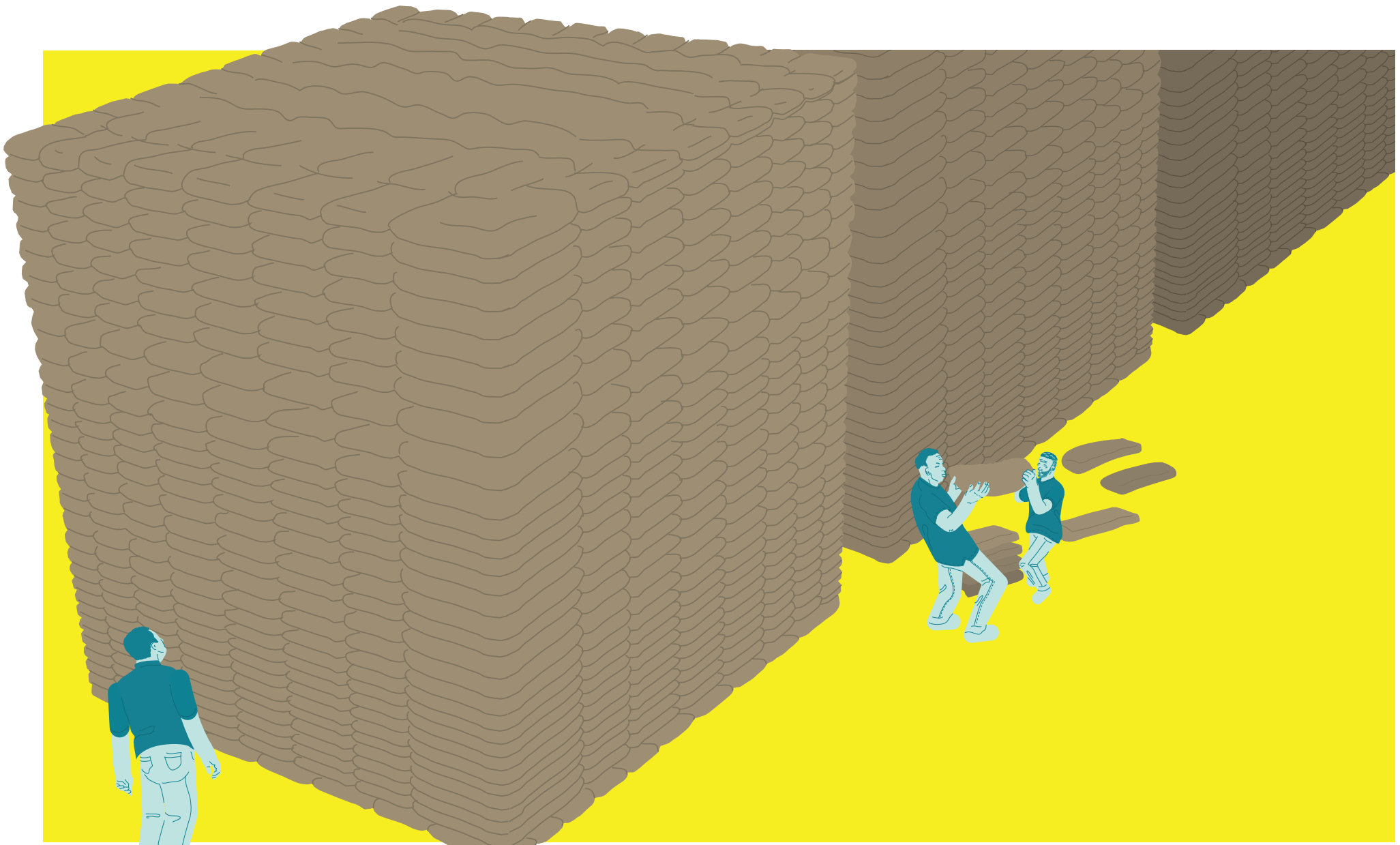
Here, I am more interested in the materiality of prosperity than in prosperity as an ideal.

It is my contention that prosperity, like crisis and poverty, for example, deserve academic attention. Instead of simply qualifying the “Africa rising” thesis, or dismissing it all together, I propose to take prosperity seriously. Although I recognise that far too many in Mozambique live in abject poverty, I wish to give prosperity the benefit of the doubt. To do so, I ask what the vast quantity of cement that is being imported, manufactured, invested in, dreamt about and ultimately mixed into concrete can tell us about the contours of prosperity.

If building a house is every young person’s dream and a key marker of adulthood across sub-Saharan Africa, for many it has become, at best, a deferred dream, as young people throughout the continent struggle to get by, let alone become able and respectable adults. Over the last decade, I have seen young people in southern Mozambique devote much time and energy to worrying about their bleak prospects. However, when these same young adults, started making blocks in earnest and relocating to Inhapossa, it became evident that the “crisis of social reproduction” framework no longer gelled with the realities I encountered on the ground.

The growth of Inhapossa owes, in part, to a happy combination of demographics and new opportunities. Among the children of refugees who fled to the city at the height of the war in the late 1980s, many have since graduated and a number have recently secured jobs as teachers, police





officers, administrators and technicians. Their story is turning into a rather happy one. Across the suburb of Inhapossa, there are piles of neatly stacked concrete blocks everywhere, increments towards the materialisation of particular building dreams. In recent years, “making blocks” (*bater blocos*) has shifted to the forefront of local concerns. Everyone, from civil servants to day labourers, seems to be buying cement and making blocks. In fact, people talk about making blocks and building, more broadly, as being “in fashion”. Overlapping geographies of labour migration, Portuguese colonial rule, civil war and a brief socialist period, shape how Mozambicans reimagine the city towards and from suburbia.

Mozambicans have long engaged with cement as a politically and affectively charged material. Colonial cities were commonly built on the divide between the cement and the reed city, the former for settlers and the assimilated few, the latter for the indigenous population. Across the continent today, decaying infrastructure stands as reminders of more prosperous days, as reminders, also, of what could have been; in southern

Mozambique, decaying art deco buildings recall the prosperous days of Portuguese colonial rule. Amidst this decay, however, are freshly moulded concrete blocks oozing with promises of a better future. Indeed, it is only recently that cement has become so accessible.

Construction, more broadly, is entangled in claims of belonging and citizenship, and involves making a powerful statement about how actors—individuals, families, municipal governments—project themselves into the future. Anthropologist Morten Nielsen has written extensively about this. He argues that the sub-contracting of large infrastructure projects—many of which are funded by Chinese capital under the banner of “resources for infrastructure” deals—highlights the weakness of the state and testifies to the “retreat of sovereignty”, to use anthropologist Charles Piot’s formulation. In this view, these projects merely participate in the spectacle of the state, a state subsisting on performance. But I find it more useful to approach nation-building as a dialogue between the state and its citizens; a dialogue expressed in the language of cement.



In Mozambique, infrastructure projects trigger anything from measured excitement to cynicism. They never pass unnoticed. “The state is working,” I have heard people say on numerous occasions. That the tendering process is tainted by corruption is not lost on anyone, but the state is working, doing something tangible, moving the country forward, despite its shortcomings in other areas, including, in fact, in the area of infrastructure. In Inhapossa, while everyone is busy “making blocks”, the municipal government has recently started paving some of the city’s main arteries. Residents are enthusiastically hopeful: “One day we’ll no longer have to walk on sand!”, I was told.

In this era of growing prosperity, there seems to be more at play than performance and spectacle. I think that behind the façade, behind what Andrew Apter calls the “empire of signs” (2005), lies something more substantial, possibly more enduring. At play, at least in part, is a growing emphasis on transparency and accountability, and also a revived faith in progress and modernization. Meanwhile, by investing in cement and eventually by building, Mozambicans insist that they are doing their part in helping the country move forward; in helping Mozambique look beautiful. Whether academics agree or not on measuring prosperity through its signs and symbols, this is often how everyone else assess prosperity and progress.

If the end of the Cold War marked, as Piot suggested in his book *Nostalgia for the Future* (2010), “a real break from the colonial system of governance,” especially following the drying up of Cold War monies, then I think it is time to look at the so-called global financial crisis as an important threshold in Africa, which as a whole, has emerged rather unscathed in comparison to the north Atlantic economies. The growing popularity of reverse migration, as it is sometimes referred to, whereby Europeans seek their fortune in former colonies—scores of Portuguese nationals have, for instance, immigrated to Mozambique and Angola in the last few years—certainly speaks to significant global reconfigurations.

Much of the growth in Mozambique, like in Angola, has been fuelled by the exploitation of oil and gas reserves and is therefore ineluctably volatile. Renewed fighting along the national highway, along with civil unrest, are reminders of just how tenuous this prosperity is. Scholars like Jason Sumich, who focus on the Mozambican elite, speak of the “uncertainty of prosperity”. It remains unclear how recent developments, such as the “secret debt scandal” which exposed secretive loans totalling \$1-billion that led the country to default on debt repayment, will affect living conditions and opportunities. For the young people I have been following for over a decade, however, things at this specific juncture are definitely improving. I hear narratives of frustrated aspirations and nostalgic

By investing in cement, mozambicans insist that they are doing their part in helping the country move forward—helping mozambique look beautiful

idealization far less these days than I did only a few years ago. Prosperity rather than crisis has come to dominate local narratives. Prosperity inevitably comes with new (and sometimes not so new) dependencies, exclusions and interdependencies, and China’s recent economic slowdown may prove to have far reaching consequences. Questioned on this very issue in a 2015 interview, Aliko Dangote, who has probably done his market research, said: “We don’t think that short term. Africa will be building for decades.” As an increasingly powerful medium, cement simultaneously indexes and drives prosperity. Cement, in short, is the thing of now.





If the African middle class is growing, how is this group shaping contemporary urban landscapes? I sketch out an answer

by looking at the relationship between middle-class growth and suburbanization in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The middle classes and the suburbs are mutually constitutive in contemporary urban Africa. Processes of circulation and accretion involving land and housing shore up claims to middle classness at the same time that they produce distinctive suburban landscapes in what was, 20 years ago, the peri-urban edge of the city.

These suburban landscapes have emerged in an arc about 20–30km to the north and west of the city, in places such as Bunju, Goba, Kimara, Segerea and Wazo. Dar es Salaam has had suburbs, defined by single houses in individual plots, sometimes surrounded by a garden or a wall, since at least the 1970s with sites and services schemes in the (now) inner suburbs of Sinza and Kijitonyama, about 10–15km from the city centre. These places have since undergone low-rise densification (subdivided plots, larger building footprints on plots) and the frontier of suburban growth has subsequently moved outwards into the city's former peri-urban hinterland. Low-density residential neighbourhoods dominate these suburban spaces. The housing is characterised by detached bungalows and villas, surrounded by gardens and enclosed by walls. However, these houses are self-built—they are not the large planned housing schemes built and then sold by developers that are underway along Dar's coastline.

THEORISING DAR ES SALAAM'S MIDDLE-CLASS SUBURBAN LANDSCAPES

Law reforms in the 1990s commodified land in Tanzania and stimulated middle-class land acquisition and homemaking

CLAIRE MERCER

The emerging suburbs are dominated by the middle classes, but not (yet) exclusively so.

New and distinctive lifestyles are evident in Dar es Salaam's suburbs, characterised by the house as a site of display and consumption, a preference for English-medium private schools and a reliance on the private car, which partly explains the grinding daily commute of up to three hours to the city centre. Those who do not work in town avoid the city centre altogether and conduct all of their shopping, banking and social activities locally. Daily groceries and fresh foods, baked goods, pharmaceutical products, livestock feed, building materials, clothes and homewares can all be purchased in the many small shops interspersed with the bars, hair salons, wrought-iron workshops and religious buildings lining the roads and paths that wind through the suburbs.

As these observations suggest, in the course of the broader project that this piece comes from I have been thinking about how suburban landscapes get made in post-colonial contexts, and, in particular, the role of the middle classes in making these landscapes. I am particularly interested in the middle class “boundary work” that distinguishes interests, lifestyles, values, aesthetics and socio-economic position. Here I draw attention to the specifically spatial forms of boundary work that take place in the suburbs. Starting from the assumption that the social and the spatial make each other, I argue that we should pay attention to the ways in which the spaces invoked in discussions of boundary work, social hierarchies and inequalities

are material as much as they are social—and that they do, in fact, matter.

This has led me to think about the suburb as a spatial, built form as much as it is a particular social space in which class difference is reproduced socially and culturally. Class difference is made and reproduced through the practices of acquiring land, building a house and living a suburban lifestyle. Such practices involve local and global circulations: among other things, of people, cash, documents, building materials, cars, design ideas and soft furnishings. But they also involve accretion—of assets such as houses and cars, of ways of doing things such as planning and building, and of the built environment, such as landscapes. Suburban landscapes are the outcome of decades of overlapping colonial and post-colonial laws, planning procedures and attempts at urban development; ad hoc donor and private sector interventions; and the accretion of thousands of individual building projects. In the rest of this piece I want to briefly show how suburban landscapes, suburban housing and suburban futures provide windows on to the circulations and accretions that enable middle class accumulation in contemporary Dar es Salaam.

Although these suburban landscapes are relatively new they have been in the making since at least the 1960s. Today they are socially mixed places, dominated by individual walled plots and punctuated by collections of more haphazard dwellings built in the suburban interstices—in valleys and disused quarries, near swamps and open ground for infrastructure like gas pipelines and electricity pylons. This social mix reflects the



different ways that people have accessed land in the area over the last half-century, including erstwhile farmers who farmed here in the 1960s and 70s as part of state-led initiatives to increase agricultural output, but who have now turned their farmland into homesteads.

More recent arrivals include inner-city residents looking for affordable land on which to build a house and a minority who have bought planned plots in newly laid out residential areas. The state has provided some formal planned land for housing, such as the 20,000 Plots scheme launched in 2002 that allocated surveyed land for self-builders in suburban and peri-urban areas. By 2006 some 30,000 plots had been made available citywide. The majority of suburban residents, however, have acquired and developed their land informally over time.

Beginning in the late 1980s, the former peri-urban fringes of the city were transformed into suburbs. As people started to build houses, the peri-urban areas transformed from what John Briggs and Davis Mwamfupe in 2000 described as “a zone of survival” into “a zone of investment”. By 1997, they estimate that two-thirds of the houses under

construction in the new suburbs were being built by middle-class state employees who were entitled to a Tsh100,000 (roughly \$160) monthly housing allowance, while others built with “windfall cash” associated with the new opportunities that presented themselves with economic liberalization.

The rush to acquire suburban land was also fuelled by land law reform (in particular the Land Act 1999 and the Village Land Act 1999), which effectively commodified land and stimulated a land market in Tanzania. Speculation increased dramatically as land acquisition and house-building became significant investment strategies for the middle classes in the absence of mortgage financing. Only a minority of urban dwellers, however, hold legal title to their land, despite attempts at formalisation through the Property and Business Formalization Programme, or Mpango wa Kurasimisha Rasilimali na Biashara za Wanyonge (MKURABITA), which issues residential licenses to people with informal rights in unplanned areas. Efforts to issue titles have fallen way behind applications. In unplanned suburbs residents are still most likely to hold

customary or informal rights to land sanctioned by neighbours and the street government, the lowest level of urban local government.

These changes have meant that places that used to be regarded as the city’s peri-urban fringes have become popular residential neighbourhoods as more people seek relatively affordable land close to the city on which to build a house. In the past plots located 20km and beyond from the city centre would not have been desirable. But city dwellers have been increasingly drawn to the suburbs as residents have brought infrastructure; private car ownership has increased and new private buses now serve the city’s many residential neighbourhoods.

Houses offer perhaps the most revealing window on to contemporary class practices, marrying the circulation of money, things and taste with the slow accretion of concrete walls, window frames and roofing sheets. The suburban villa or bungalow has increasingly become a site of distinction since political and economic liberalization in the mid-1980s. Because each house is an individual building project, they are the clearest statement an individual can make about their status and their taste.





**WHILE MUCH IS NEW IN THE
WE MUST ALSO ATT
LONG-HONED REPERTOIR
PATTERNS OF URBANIZA
WAYS IN WHICH THE LO
INTERRELATION AND CR
OCEAN LITTORAL RESUR
PRACTICES AROUND
DEVELOPMENT OR IN THE AI**





“

**THESE OCEANIC CONNECTIONS,
ATTEND TO CONTINUITIES—THE
VOIRES OF URBAN LIVING AND
IZATION—AS WELL AS TO THE
LONGUE-DURÉE OF MARITIME
CROSSING ALONG THE INDIAN
SURFACES IN CONTEMPORARY
DUND PROPERTY, IN NOTIONS
AESTHETICS OF PROSPERITY**

LÉONIE S. NEWHOUSE & ABDOUMALIQ SIMONE

”



The state has provided some formal planned land for housing, such as the 20,000 Plots scheme launched in 2002 that allocated surveyed land for self-builders in suburban and peri-urban areas

Builders can now tap into a globalised market of architectural features, roof shape, paint colour, materials and level of finishing to distinguish their homes from both poor and middle-class neighbours.

Additional considerations that reflect class position include the physical location of a plot (such as near tarmacked roads and high up on hillsides to capture the breeze), the size of the house and the quality of the garden enclosed within the plot walls. No two houses are the same, but contemporary houses do look very similar to each other. This is partly because of the influence of contemporary fashions and available materials, but it is also an outcome of the fact that, while houses reflect the vision of the individual resident, they are nevertheless built by local builders and craftsmen who share a particular repertoire of building techniques.

Houses are sites of accretion as well as of circulation. In a very physical sense, houses are assembled slowly and almost entirely in the absence of housing finance. Anyone who can complete a house in a short space of time is immediately viewed with suspicion (“Where did they get that much cash from?”). The house, and the land on which it is built, is often an individual’s most significant asset.

Dar es Salaam’s suburban neighbourhoods are the accretions of thousands of individual building projects. The process is almost entirely informal, cash-based and highly precarious. There is no finance capital here, though there may be private debt as a result of market or private loans. There is some state, donor and private sector activity in service provision. Those residents who can afford to, connect to patchy electricity services provided by the state-owned energy utility and some connect to the water services provided by the water parastatal, although many suburban residents prefer to rely on their own boreholes or private delivery service. Some roads have been tarmacked as part of World Bank or state projects, but the majority are dirt tracks that disintegrate in the rains.

Neighbours use social media to raise money for improvements to their local infrastructure. Private primary and secondary schools are relatively plentiful, while poorer residents bear the brunt of the state’s failure to keep up with these burgeoning neighbourhoods. Local government offices exist, but are inadequately resourced and describe their own role as “conflict resolution, keeping the peace and security”. The latter, security, is in some instances organised and provided by residents themselves. Procedures around urban planning, surveying and titling are unpredictable but always expensive. Maps delimiting the planned use of space are not in circulation, so that neighbourhoods develop according to their own logics and politics. In any case, maps can always be re-drawn for a fee.

It is therefore no surprise to learn that a major element of middle-class boundary work involves various struggles over land: border disputes (between neighbours or family members), struggles over official tenure (against different levels of the state), state demolition (of structures too close to bits of infrastructure) and the very ownership and use of land (between poor and middle-class residents).

In this context the suburb emerges not just as a place of accretion for middle-class assets, but also as a site through which the middle classes circulate as they accumulate. The middle classes, who partly rely on the distinctiveness of the suburban landscape to shore up their status claims, are nevertheless already making plans to move on. As the unplanned and informal practices that dominate suburban land use lead increasingly to unregulated sub-division and building, so are the middle classes looking to their next building project in Dar es Salaam’s neighbouring regions. Many have already acquired land in these districts, which they currently farm. In ten years time they will move to new houses – possibly by then located in the new suburbs of Dar es Salaam, leaving their current homes as rental projects. Circulating and accreting land and houses in Dar es Salaam is a spatial and temporal middle-class strategy of accumulation.



A SINO-KENYAN STORY OF SHIPWRECK AND SALVATION

Old sea stories are central to China's investment and development of the Kenyan port of Lamu

JATIN DUA

Histories of navigation and the ways through which projects of movement across liquid domains have been productive in shaping regions and geographies are important to negotiating contemporary attempts of port-making in the western Indian Ocean littoral. For instance, in a fifteenth-century poem celebrating the craft of the pilot, the Arab navigator Ibn Majid mentions five routes to traverse the Red Sea. The first two are coastal routes sailing between reefs and the coast. The third route is down the middle, with no land visible, and the final two navigate from island to island, snaking their way down the sea. For Ibn Majid, the first two are “mere child’s play; the routes taken by the *rubban* [representative of the shipowner] of the coast” and “not the path of the true *muallim*” (navigator).

According to Ibn Majid, a real *muallim* sailed up and down the middle of the sea and only moved towards the coast when in the correct position, steering straight into the harbour. From the demands of the *rubban* to jutting reefs and ever-present wind gusts, navigation for Ibn Majid and contemporaries was not merely movement through space but entailed a form of mastery, negotiation, and entanglement—a way of dwelling in inhospitable space. Navigation was also central to creating a trans-regional world of trade and mobility that brought together a string of port cities across the Indian Ocean littoral, from Mogadishu to Malacca.

As early as the first century AD, tales from ports in the “land of Punt” appeared on papyrus in

ancient Greece. Compiled into the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, these parchments describe a rich commercial world shaped by wind patterns where the lure of *lubban* or frankincense drew traders from across the ocean to ports like Berbera and Mogadishu. Following the *Periplus*, the east African coast and Somalia appear in the early Islamic works of the ninth century including al-Hamawi’s *Kitab Mu’jam al-Buldan*, a geographical dictionary that noted the importance of Mogadishu as the central trade emporia on the east African coast.

Practices of armed escort, narratives of notorious pirate monarchs and coastal raiding communities bear testament to the intertwined and slippery relationship over the longue-durée between trade and raid

By the first half of the tenth century, a ring of coastal towns emerged creating a world of trade along whose pathways travelled a dazzling array of material objects, free and un-free people, and the world Islamic religion. Vasco da Gama’s entry into this world in 1498, facilitated by a mysterious local navigator, claimed by maritime communities from Calicut to Malindi, marked a shift from a regional economy to a global one. Prior to Portuguese

arrival, few European goods were in demand. The Portuguese brought silver from the Americas, thus connecting the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean world.

A now, largely-discredited, view also emphasized European incursions as marking the end of peaceable trade and ushering a melding of cannon and commerce in these formerly placid waters. However, as historians like Patricia Risso, Sebastian Prange and Lakshmi Subramanian note, piracy and other forms of predation have been equally central to this liquid domain. Practices of armed escort, narratives of notorious pirate monarchs and coastal raiding communities bear testament to the intertwined and slippery relationship between trade and raid.

Much has been made of recent Chinese investment and infrastructural engagement in this region. These debates have usually sought to place the movement of Chinese capital and labour into frameworks of neo-imperialism or indexing possibilities for more equitable south-south solidarity. Thinking through navigation is not a denial of the possibilities of exploitation or solidarity across continents, but instead, recognition of the weight of history as both process and project in shaping the world of port-cities, past and present, in the western Indian Ocean.

In August 2014, China’s largest state-owned infrastructure enterprise, the China Communications Construction Company (CCCC), signed a \$478.9 million deal to construct three berths at the Kenyan Indian Ocean port of Lamu. This construction



project is part of a wider Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor and at completion will include a 32-berth port along with railroad and oil infrastructure connecting inland east and central Africa to the wider Indian Ocean. Originally conceived in 1972, the idea for a container port in Lamu—one of the earliest coastal settlements on the coast of east Africa—was beset by delays and controversies from the outset, and was eventually shelved in the late 1970s.

In the early 2000s, as the Kenyan government turned to the Indian Ocean as part of a wider eastward shift, the Lamu port project was revived amidst interest from the Chinese government looking to establish a port-of-call on the east African coast. In the midst of negotiations to construct the port, the Chinese government also sought to create a longer narrative of Chinese presence on the east African coast. Anchored in DNA testing and underwater archaeological expeditions, Lamu was established in this narrative as the locale of one of Zheng He's shipwrecks from the early fifteenth century.

A Hui Muslim, Zheng He's voyages across the Indian Ocean have been central in establishing a vision of pre-modern China as a global power with sovereignty over the sea. As Chinese state focus and capital moved across the Indian Ocean, interest in Zheng He and his oceanic wanderings has been revived as historical precedent for China's contemporary westward expansion through the New Silk Road and other infrastructural initiatives. Zheng He's navigations were central to "securitizing" Chinese investment by locating contemporary Chinese efforts to create a *mlango wachina* (Chinese doorway) into east and central Africa within a familiar language of genealogy and oceanic exchange. In the Lamu archipelago, the Shange and Famao clans on Pate Island, just north of the proposed port, claim descent from Chinese sailors who survived a shipwreck off the coast of Pate.

The largest island in the Lamu archipelago, Pate was once the political, economic and religious locus on the east African coast. By the eighteenth century, Pate's prominence was eclipsed in a series of conflicts with its more illustrious neighbour to the south, Lamu, and its lack of a natural

deep-water harbour. Today, Pate is a lush jumble of ruins amidst ramshackle settlements. It has a distinctly frontier feeling. The crumbling remains of mosques, tax houses and other buildings testify to the former glory of Pate and the numerous comings and goings that characterized life on this island, and the Swahili coast as a whole. In one such ramshackle town is a small mud house that in recent years has become a site of pilgrimage and curiosity for Chinese diplomats, western journalists and solitary anthropologists.

Residents of Siyu used to call the inhabitants of this house the *wachina* based on a passing physical resemblance to the occasional Asian tourists who made their way to Lamu. In 2005, a team of Chinese geneticists arrived to verify these claims and through DNA samples taken from these families, discovered that six Siyu residents were of distant Chinese ancestry, including the residents of this house. These inhabitants of Pate soon became known as the "Lamu Chinese." With great fanfare, the Chinese government invited the young woman who lived in that house, Mwamaka Sharifu Lali, to Nanjing to attend celebrations of the six-



hundredth anniversary of Zheng He's voyages. Sharifu was also given a scholarship to study in Beijing and continues to live in China. "We used to be ashamed about being called Chinese, but now I'm happy that we have a home across the sea," Sharifu's mother told me.

In addition to DNA testing, the Chinese government also funded underwater archaeological expeditions in order to recover material traces of Zheng He's visits. This was not the first time that Zheng He's journey had been linked to capital investments and the forging of other south-south engagements. Unlike Tanzania or socialist Somalia, Kenya remained firmly in the orbit of the United States throughout the Cold War. Kenya did however have significant interaction with China shortly after its independence in 1963. Diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, as opposed to Taiwan, were established soon after independence. The move was led by the left wing of the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) party, in particular by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, then KANU's vice president.

Odinga's vision of relations with China was one greatly influenced by a post-Bandung internationalism and anti-colonial solidarity. Bandung internationalism was nonetheless rooted in a territorial nationalist imaginary and emphasized the common experience of colonialism and a valorisation of the nation-state—shared experiences of colonialism, not shared histories. Zheng He's voyages were seen as emblematic of this form of internationalism and numerous Chinese visitors to newly independent African countries would emphasize the decidedly non-colonial nature of his voyages. One such example occurred in 1964 when Chinese Premier Zhou En-Iai, addressing a packed audience in Mogadishu, highlighted that Zheng He did not occupy a single piece of land or seize any ill-gotten wealth.

Zheng He's navigation was transformed in this moment as an example of anti-colonial nationalism. What was important was that Zheng He had no imperial ambitions and left without a

trace: cannon and commerce were firmly separated in this rhetoric of engagement. This anti-colonial transnationalism failed to gain much footing in official circuits in the early era of Kenyan independence. Indeed, Chinese and Kenyan relationships were quite tense in the 1960s and 70s, although both countries paid lip service to this vision. In the 1980s, in the aftermath of structural adjustment and liberalization, the call of business and investment was central to building new relationships between China and Kenya, mostly in manufacturing and private investments.

In 2005, Zheng He's sprit was revived when Kenya and China signed a memorandum of understanding for infrastructural investments. The memorandum, among other things, listed funding for archaeological digs along the coast and funding Kenyan underwater archaeologists to search for Zheng He's wrecks. Unlike the Zheng He of the 1960s, who left without a trace, it was precisely the material and genealogical remains of this fifteenth-century voyage that now mattered. It was within this newer narrative of navigation that Sharifu and the Lamu Chinese were swept up: material remains of older histories that sought to anchor modern investments. Ming coins, shipwrecks and strands of DNA emerged as the infrastructure through which offshore oil drilling, port projects, and expanding rail lines from coast to hinterland were framed.

Navigation is bumpy. If Sharifu's story fits seamlessly into Zheng He as historical proxy for the contemporary expansion of Chinese state-owned enterprise capital, other tales of navigation muddy these waters and also become framing devices to think about the ethics of infrastructure and investments. Unlike Sharifu, most Famao (Lamu Chinese) recollect a different tale about their origins. For the Famao their story begins with a shipwreck. Instead of a fifteenth-century imperial fleet, it begins with an eighteenth-century ship of Hajj pilgrims en route to the Hijaz, a region in Saudi Arabia bordering on the Red Sea.

In a vividly narrated poem, the Famao tell of winds that disorient and disrupt this pilgrimage. Lost, hungry and parched, all hope is apparently lost as the ship runs aground. Once the storm clears, the shipwrecked pilgrims find themselves miraculously at a beach next to Pate's oldest mosque. Taking this as a sign from Allah, the Famao decide to stay in Pate and bring the correct interpretations of Islam to this village.

This story of shipwreck and salvation highlights a different modality of navigation than the official story of Zheng He's descendants and hegemonic modes of understanding Chinese capital investments in sub-Saharan Africa. Instead of the "smooth" space of imperial contact and seamless long histories, this is a "striated" space of small boats afloat in a dangerous sea. This is a world that reveals, as Maurice Blanchot puts it, the "sovereignty of the accidental". At the same time, there are signs and channels through which to navigate this tumultuous sea. The mosque onshore and the status of the seafarers as pilgrims emphasizes the pathways through which to travel, from sea to land, and the ways to become incorporated into the ebbs and flows of the east African coast.





SECESSIONISM IN MOMBASA: A NATION'S KALEIDOSCOPE

Arguments for and against secession have the potential to open up questions about the nature of the nation-state in Africa

NATASHA ISSA SHIVJI

At their birth, many post-independence nations in Africa saw the looming threat of secession, but calls for secession were dismissed as counter-progressive and as undoing the victories of the independence struggles. Yet secessionist movements persisted, and at every juncture where they surfaced they revealed grievances related to the material realities of the masses and the class contradictions left unresolved by independence struggles. In this essay I argue that while the political language, be it that of the nation or secessionist movement, is mired in contradiction, but rather than dismiss it we should think of it as offering insights into the crisis in social and economic relations.

In different forms, Kenya's coastal peoples, in this particular case in Mombasa, have struggled for secession. The current manifestation of this movement has been the Mombasa Republican Council. One of the main contests has revolved around land, particularly the relationship to land, in particular the struggle over *waqf* endowments. The *awaqaf* agreements organize properties held by Muslims as endowments for the benefit of the community, or for the benefit of family lineages (extinction of right of property without transferring the property to anyone else). Most importantly the properties that are endowed cannot be owned by a third party and remain so in perpetuity with the funds from the property benefitting the community at large. The *awaqaf* agreements must be honoured in perpetuity to protect the property and land from arbitrary confiscation.

These *waqf* endowments have come to define the urban space of Mombasa. There have been attempts by the state to curb their historical development to fit in with the capitalist logic of accumulation. The colonial state sought to create the *Waqf* Commission Act in Kenya in order to capture the income derived from *waqf* endowments. The post-independence state maintained the *Waqf* Commission, which was seen as nothing short of corrupt, a vessel in which *waqf* incomes were used to line individual pockets. In many cases the *Waqf* Commission permitted, and in effect facilitated, the transfer of property and lands into the land tenure system, which transformed land into a commodity. In both instances, the funds used and generated from *waqf* endowments (meant to be used to maintain the endowment) were converted into "incomes" that the state would accumulate and administer.

This has been a major point of contention, prompting calls to reinstate *waqf* endowments as a form of resistance to the land grabs.

Waqf endowments have come to define the urban space of Mombasa. There have been attempts by the state to curb their historical development to fit in with the capitalist logic of accumulation.

These calls emphasize a material history informed by Islamic principles unrelated to colonial history, but which have their roots in the Sultanate of Zanzibar (1856–1964)—one of the first periods in which *waqf* endowments were introduced on the East African coast. A debate has ensued concerning whether it is beneficial to privatize and commodify *waqf* endowments by converting them under state institutions.

Proponents for the commodification of land argue for the maximum output and profit; they further argue *waqf* is an outdated system that holds land, rendering it useless and denying an exchange value associated to it. There has also been a great deal of resistance to the commodification of land: it is argued that *waqf* is a sacred historical arrangement that protects the land for the benefit of the community and assists the poor, furthermore that it reaffirms a history that is unavailable to the rest of the Kenyan state, a history that belongs to the Islamic world.

Secessionists have taken up these arguments in their demands and grievances against the state. The struggle for coastal autonomy was first articulated in political terms during the move towards independence from the British. The idea of independent nation was at the forefront of negotiations and debates at the Lancaster House conferences (1960, 1962, 1963) in which Kenya's constitutional framework and independence were negotiated. The Coast Peoples' Party (CPP), one of the coastal parties claiming autonomy, argued that independence would improve the wellbeing of people belonging to a different geographic history, a history that the Kenyan government was not a part of.



In order to make this claim legible to the colonial state and to the nationalist movements, particularly the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU), CPP drew upon the 1895 agreement between the Sultan of Zanzibar and the British Government. In terms of the agreement, a ten-mile coastal strip that had never really been mapped out or properly demarcated was transferred to the British Government as a protectorate for an annual rent to the Sultan. This agreement was used as a peg upon which to hang the demand for coastal autonomy. The main argument was that the legal status of the East Africa Protectorate. The argument was that it was different from the rest of the British colony and upon attaining internal self-government the relationship between the interior Colony of Kenya and the coast changed given their differing legal status. Each should go their separate way, the CPP claimed.

KANU members vehemently attacked the coastal autonomists for delaying the process for

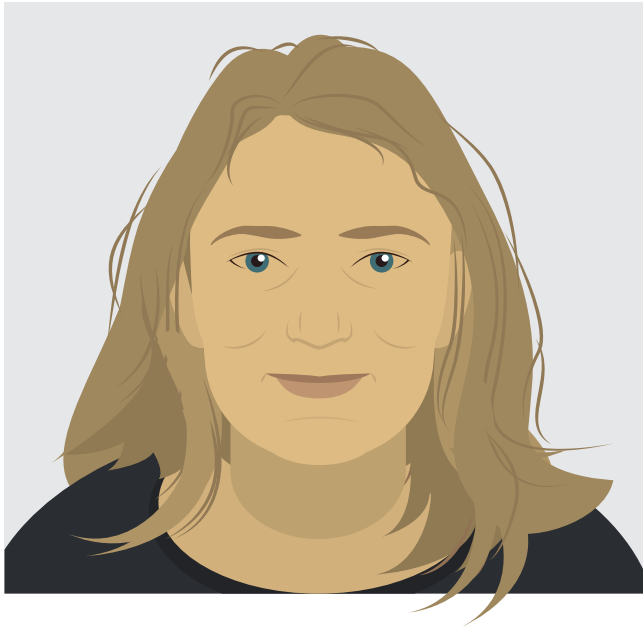
full independence. They also accused CPP of harbouring an anti-nationalist sentiment and betraying the anti-imperialist cause by negotiating with the British regarding their status. While KANU waived the nationalist flag, CPP made a similar claim that they were in fact more nationalist because they did not distinguish between race, religion and ethnicity.

The secessionist's argument drew strongly on the political ideal of nationhood. Interestingly, the use of the idea of an autonomous nation emerged at the same time as the 1895 agreement with the Sultan of Zanzibar for the East Africa Protectorate, and was used as a means to control the Muslim population and bring it under the colonial administration. In the late nineteenth century, the imperial powers were crippled by the so-called "Muslim problem" in East Africa, particularly as it related to labour and administration, but also the common cause proposed by pan-Islamism.

Pan-Islamism was a threat because it contained the germ of political centralization, albeit under the umbrella of the spiritual force of Islam rejecting centralization under the colonial state and the "tribalization" of its subjects. "So much so," remarked a local Ugandan administrator, Captain Philips, "that in enquiring the tribe of the natives one is frequently met with the reply, 'I am a Muhammedan'."

Between 1913 and 1918, British administrators wrote several letters to the secretary of state colonies in Britain drawing upon the German experience to administer and control the Islamic tendency to venture into a political force in sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these letters strongly recommend the need to "encourage strong and isolated tribal nationalism" and the "development of national feeling with its natural divisions, to develop deliberately the 'insulating area' between the great Muhammedan populations, to restrain by means of religious toleration and secular education the inroads of religious fanaticism". The East Africa Protectorate was merely a tool in which the territorial nation was affirmed and the threat of an "Islamic" unity averted; it did not hold much value for the British in terms of the status it had with the Sultanate of Zanzibar.

Historical instances of nationalist sentiment in Kenya have been rooted in both systems of oppression and colonial division, and within the discourse of liberation. It emerged at periods of political contest as a tool of the state and a discourse of liberation. Perhaps these moments of political crisis to do with secession can open up questions about the nature of the nation-state in Africa, and what political claims to alternative geographies reveal about the trajectories of the nation in Africa and the antagonistic social relations it claims to encapsulate and unify.



At the 2011 World Economic Forum in Davos, the government of Tanzania, together with a number of partners—including farmers, agri-businesses, investment banks, private companies such as Nestlé, Monsanto and Unilever, and development agencies like AGRA, USAID, IUCN, UNDP and the World Bank—launched the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), an agricultural enterprise designed to improve agrarian productivity, food security and livelihoods in Tanzania. In 2008 the United Nations proposed the concept of African Agricultural Growth Corridors, which was subsequently adopted at the World Economic Forums in 2009 and 2010. Tanzania is not the only country to introduce high-profile initiatives aimed at converting millions of hectares of land to industrial agriculture and contracting private companies to build related new infrastructure like roads, railways, irrigation, storage, processing and ports. Rather than focus on current debates about the potential impact and variable outcomes of SAGCOT, this essay will pay attention to the long-standing mobilities that have occurred along this corridor for many decades, in particular the small-scale trading relations that have existed between Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam and Sumbawanga. Long before SAGCOT, Arab merchants formed trade routes linking this region's coast and hinterland. These trade routes form a crucial foundation to what archaeologist Mark Horton, in a 1987 article for *Scientific American*, described as the “Swahili corridor”. This corridor refers to a coastal stretch of roughly 3000km

A TRANS-LOCAL SPACE IN TANZANIA'S HINTERLAND

The habits of Swahili families of Arab descent living in Tanzania's interior trouble the conceptual separation of coast and hinterland

JULIA VERNE

that extends from Somalia to Mozambique along the east coast of Africa. In so doing, he situated “the Swahili” neither in Africa nor in Arabia, but between, in a distinct corridor characterised by a specific mixture of influences from both regions.

In Swahili scholarship, the questions who the Swahili are and where to situate them in relation to the conventional regions has occupied a great deal of twentieth-century academic writing. More recently, however, a number of scholars have turned towards the Indian Ocean. In 2002, Erik Gilbert stated, “one can better understand the history of the coast by dropping the traditional Africa/Arabia and Africa /Asia dichotomies and instead view the coast and islands of the western Indian Ocean as a region”. The majority of work following this thesis has focussed on the inclusive nature of the Indian Ocean, a space that is generally considered to unite through following actual relations instead of separating according to artificial colonial or continental boundaries. The bordering effects of the Indian Ocean, its exclusions and limits, however, have been neglected. While a focus on oceanic linkages indeed unites regions that have been regarded separately before, it still creates boundaries. Such maritime thinking, particularly in respect to the East African coastline, creates a rather homogeneous Indian Ocean space on the one hand, while at the same time leading to a conceptual separation between coast and hinterland.

During my research on the trans-local mobilities of contemporary Swahili traders, I have spent considerable time with Swahili

families of Arab descent in Tabora, Sumbawanga and Mpanda. The on-going mobilities of these families, between coast and hinterland, emphasise their strong connection to the Indian Ocean—an ocean that doesn't end at the coastline, but that is based on relations that might stretch far inland. The family I want to concentrate on to illustrate this point lives in Sumbawanga, a town of approximately 200,000 inhabitants situated in Ufipa, a plateau between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Rukwa. Although not on the main caravan route from Ujiji to Bagamoyo, it still lies on the route from Katanga to the coast along the southern end of Lake Tanganyika. In the early twentieth century, as Arab traders struggled with increasing competition from Asian traders, they moved further into the peripheries. Sumbawanga was one of the places that appeared to offer good business opportunities to Arab traders. The city still has a small Arab community, most of who are involved in trading. One such businessman is Mzee Mohamed. He is considered to be the first Arab who settled in Sumbawanga. Although born in Kigoma, he was raised in Oman and returned to Tanzania in the 1940s looking for business opportunities. In the early 1950s he headed for Sumbawanga, first taking the boat from Kigoma and then walking from Kasanga, a fishing village on the southern shore of Lake Tanganyika.

Sumbawanga didn't offer much when he arrived: the market was little more than a few shanties and huts. Mohamed built his large house close to the market and included space for shops in front. Apart from opening a shop, he also started a transport business with several trucks and jeeps running



between Sumbawanga and the surrounding villages. Mohamed spent most of his time sitting in front of his house, supervising the shop as well as the transport arrangements that had to be made. With more and more Arabs coming to live in Sumbawanga, all regularly passing by to greet him and exchange some news, the space in front of his house soon developed into a lively meeting place. To make these visits more comfortable, he decided to open the first *mkahawa* (coffee house) in town. The coffee house, says Mohamed, considerably strengthened the Arab community and made him famous.

Very little of this lively, future-oriented atmosphere evoked by Mohamed in his narratives is left today. The *mkahawa* is often closed, and many of his old companions have left town, mostly for the Arabian Peninsula. But those still around regularly meet to tell stories about the past and their family histories, and jointly imagine the Indian Ocean. This performance of what is considered to be an Arab lifestyle, including the shared stories and memories, form an important way of maintaining and strengthening their imaginative links to the Indian Ocean. The stories and memories shared have been passed on to Mohamed's sons, who have also taken over his trading company and often join the older men in the *mkahawa*.

Mohamed's wife also participates in the transfer of stories when she gathers in her sixteen grandchildren in the courtyard and tells them about her childhood on Zanzibar's islands, and how, after her wedding, she had to take the train to Kigoma and then a boat to Kasanga, from where she was picked up and taken to what seemed to her as "the end of the world". Marriage is certainly another way of emphasizing one's association with the coast. All of Mohamed's sons have married women from Zanzibar.

In the town of Zanzibar especially, many women put considerable effort into looking Arab. This is represented by the style of their *buibui* (the long black overcoat worn by Arab women in the Gulf States) and the particular ways in which they arrange their

headscarves, generally imitating the latest styles in Dubai and Oman. In Sumbawanga these affectations are not necessary. Due to lighter skin colour, different looks and speaking Kiswahili or even Arabic as their vernacular, most women of Arabic descent can easily be distinguished from the majority of Sumbawanga's population—they are immediately identified as so-called *waarabu*. The Arab women in Sumbawanga nonetheless place great store in Arab goods. They will regularly visit the coast, or receive guests from the coast in order to fill

The collaboration between Arab traders ...who have settled in one of the stop-over spots on the old trade routes, and itinerant traders who continue to move back and forth along the trade routes that link the interior of Africa to the coast remain as vital as they were 200 years ago

their supplies of "Arab" items. They include *udi* (frankincense), as well as cream and oils made of it—they are considered essential items for most Arab women to perform their sense of belonging and thus usually fill the bags of the travellers. Moreover, culinary delicacies, such as spices, octopus, dried anchovies (*dagaa*) and nazi (coconut), are prized so that dishes cooked in the hinterland have a proper coastal taste.

The collaboration between Arab traders like Mohamed, who have settled in one of the stop-over spots on the old trade routes, and itinerant traders who continue to move back and forth along the trade routes that link the interior of Africa to the coast remain as vital as they were 200 years ago. As in the past, Arabs in the hinterland generally stay in constant touch with their relatives

at the coast (and beyond), who provide them with supplies of necessary items of Arab culture. The recent infrastructure investments in the development of SAGCOT has intensified this mobility. Not only has it become much more convenient to travel on the new tar roads, actual and expected investments associated with SAGCOT has drawn young Swahili to Sumbawanga as a place "to search for a living" (*kutafuta maisha*) and find new business opportunities. These mobilities should not only be seen as the result of new investment policies and national business strategies along the new corridors but as a continuation of a dynamic Indian Ocean space that transgresses "corridorial" thinking.

The increasing attention given to the Indian Ocean as a useful unit of study generally entails a rethinking of space as it distinguishes itself clearly from the conventional separation of the world into different world regions or areas. Instead of relying on set boundaries of continents, national borders or corridors, conceptions of maritime spaces demand the careful consideration and pursuit of a multitude of relations when trying to define their ends. To this end, the life of the family of Mzee Mohamed shows the extent to which culture associated with the Indian Ocean reaches far into the hinterland—through imaginative, social and material connections.

In Sumbawanga and other places in the hinterland with similar "Arab" communities there is noticeable connection with this maritime region. Even though "Arabs" living in the Tanzanian hinterland clearly make an effort to maintain these Indian Ocean connections, they do not withdraw from their local surrounding in any radical way. They still form part of Sumbawanga, as it is currently included in national development visions. Therefore, it is the study of the entanglements and transgressions of old and new corridors, and how they might relate to and re-enliven the Indian Ocean that encourages us to think of spaces in less clear-cut and fixed terms, as oceanic, meandering, fluid and, thus, always in movement.





THE CORRIDOR

INHABITING THE CORRIDOR: SURGING RESOURCE
ECONOMIES AND URBAN LIFE IN EAST AFRICA

Jesse McClelland is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Geography at the University of Washington

Nidhi Mahajan is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at University of California - Santa Cruz.

Léonie S. Newhouse is a research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen

Michael Degani is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology and member of the Center for Africana Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore

Jonathan Silver is a Leverhulme Research Fellow at the Urban Institute at the University of Sheffield

Hannah Elliott is a doctoral candidate at the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen

Yusuf Serunkuma is a doctoral candidate at Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) at Makerere University, Kampala.

Tabea Scharrer is a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle,

Neil Carrier is a lecturer at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford

Julie Soleil Archambault is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Concordia University, Montreal

Claire Mercer is an associate professor in the Department of Geography and Environment at the London School of Economics

Jatin Dua is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Natasha Issa Shivji is a lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Dodoma and doctoral candidate at New York University

Julia Verne is a professor of development geography in the Department of Geography at the University of Bonn

PROJECT CONVENERS: Abdou Maliq Simone & Leonie Newhouse

EDITED BY: Tau Tavengwa & Leonie Newhouse

COPY EDIT: Sean O'Toole

ILLUSTRATION: Blain Van Rooyen

Funded by the The Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

CONTACT: newhouse@mmg.mpg.de

www.mmg.mpg.de

Heimann-Föge-Weg 11, 37073 Göttingen

