

Introduction

Mobile Urbanity

Somali Presence in Urban East Africa

Tabea Scharrer and Neil Carrier

This is a book about how complex patterns of mobility shape and reshape urban landscapes and the lives of those who live within them, and how urban landscapes in turn shape and reshape patterns of mobility. Migrants, mobile goods, capital and ideas constantly reach, pass through or sojourn in urban spaces, while also connecting cities with other places through their movement. From New York to Guangzhou, cities bear the marks of all this movement, and attract further movement in turn.¹ In some ways urbanity itself is mobile – inhabitants of urban areas not only take with them an urban lifestyle and habitus when they move elsewhere, they often rebuild familiar urban features wherever they settle.² This connection of mobility and urban transformation is ever more obvious in cities and towns throughout the contemporary world, although archaeological and historical evidence shows that the two have always been linked.³ In addition, cities are increasingly the focus of migration policy debates, as demonstrated by a recent International Organisation of Migration (IOM) conference and report on the topic focussing on cities and ‘managing mobility’ (IOM 2015). Likewise, the city now looms large in migration scholarship, not just as a backdrop for migrants and mobility, but also as a key agent constituted by, and generating new forms of movement (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2010). In this book we focus on these themes through a case-study of the impact people more commonly associated with mobility rather than urbanity have had on towns and cities in East Africa: Somalis.

Somalis are perceived as people on the move. This is not just due to the romantic image of them as nomadic pastoralists. They have long since left the

Horn of Africa in search of various types of opportunities. As Muslims, many have made pilgrimage to the Arabian Peninsula over the years – shared religion has encouraged patterns of mobility of people, beliefs and practices. As seafarers, others reached distant shores from India to Wales (see for instance Lodhi 1992 or Turton 1974). The proximity of Somali territories to the Gulf, has led to much work and trade migration over the years to that region, especially in the boom oil years (Abdi 2015). Others went to study in the USSR when the government of Siad Barre had close ties to the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. With the outbreak of civil war in Somalia in the late 1980s, Somalis spread further still, mainly as refugees, forming in the process a vast diaspora with communities in towns and cities from Australia to North America. So-called ‘Little Mogadishus’ have sprouted in the process in places such as Minneapolis and Toronto where these communities are especially dense. Somalis have thus changed the fabric of much urban life in such places, bringing Somali identity, language, food and business to all corners of the globe.

Perhaps the greatest impact of Somalis beyond their home regions in the Horn has been on the neighbouring countries of East Africa, including Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, but most especially, Kenya. Somalis have lived in the areas belonging to what is now Ethiopia and Kenya since pre-colonial times, and spread to Uganda and Tanzania during British colonialism in these two countries. In recent times Somalis have been a major focus of the politics of this region as continuing conflict – and the occasional drought – in Somalia has maintained a near diaspora of refugees. While in the early 1990s about 300,000 Somalians⁴ were officially registered as refugees in Kenya, this number decreased to about 200,000 people in the mid-1990s. Their numbers rose again from 2007–08 onwards and peaked in 2011 (a time of severe drought) at about 500,000. In February 2019 there were still about 260,000 refugees from Somalia registered in Kenya. In addition, there are an unknown number of unregistered forced migrants living in Kenya.⁵ Since 2006 (Ethiopia) and 2007 (AMISOM) respectively, troops from various East African countries have operated inside Somalia attempting to defeat the Islamist group Al-Shabaab within an African Union mission. Al-Shabaab has reacted to this military intervention with its own operation within these countries. This is true for Uganda, but especially for Kenya where there have been a number of attacks perpetrated by the group (including those on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi in 2013, the Garissa University College in 2015 and the 14 Riverside complex in Nairobi in 2019).

The presence of Somalian refugees in Kenya is most conspicuous in the refugee camps of Dadaab and Kakuma, located in remote parts of the country and home to hundreds of thousands of refugees for almost thirty years (Horst 2006, Rawlence 2016). These camps have long been threatened with closure by the Kenyan government who depict them as breeding grounds of insecurity. The



Map 0.1 Map of Kenya.

vast logistical effort required to manage these camps, combined with the national and international politics surrounding them and the humanitarian needs of people trying to survive in them, means they have come to dominate much recent telling of the story of Somalis in Kenya.

However, Somali migrants have also had an enormous impact on the towns and cities of East Africa. While Kenya has a large population of ethnic Somalis indigenous to its northeastern region and its towns such as Garissa and Mandera, Somali presence is more and more conspicuous in urban areas within the rest of the country and beyond into Uganda and Tanzania. Chief among these urban areas is the now famous district of Nairobi known as Eastleigh. This quarter has become a major commercial zone for East Africa through Somali trade. It is now populated with Somali-owned and run shopping centres and thousands of East Africans come to shop there daily. Eastleigh is not the only urban area, which has changed due to Somali migration. Similar processes of urban transformation have occurred in other areas of Nairobi, in cities such as Nakuru and Mombasa with significant Somali populations, and even in parts of Kampala and Dar es Salaam. Somali mobility has led them into many East African urban areas, bringing transformation in their wake. Such transformation has been controversial and contested, especially that of Eastleigh, which is often portrayed within Kenya as a place of foreigners, a part of the Somali Republic somehow dropped into Nairobi. Concern about Al-Shabaab also means its economic transformation is seen through a highly securitized prism, both within Kenya, and by international policy makers and media.

Somali presence in Kenya has long been viewed with concern by the authorities from colonial times onwards (Scharrer 2018). In the postcolonial period, their place within the Kenyan nation was seen as precarious in the years following the secessionist war of the 1960s, where many in the northeastern parts of Kenya wished to secede. The legacy of this war and its brutal suppression has been long lasting, and even Somalis born and bred within Kenya have had their citizenship questioned. Lochery (2012) has vividly described the screening operations of the 1980s that made many Kenyan Somalis feel second-class or ‘ambiguous’ citizens (Scharrer 2018). More recently fears of terrorism have led to further screenings of Somalis in Kenya, most notoriously during Operation Usalama Watch in 2014 (see chapters by Lowe and Yarnell as well as by Wandera and Wario, this volume). While raids on Eastleigh and elsewhere appear to come in waves, harassment of urban Somalis by police and other state security forces has been the norm. Somalian refugees in particular are targeted as they are seen as both wealthy yet vulnerable. The link of Somalians with Indian Ocean piracy has also affected how they are seen in Kenya and beyond, and there are suspicions that piracy and other forms of criminality underlie their apparent wealth. This image gives less visibility to the majority of Somalis in urban Kenya who live under conditions of poverty or lower middle-class livelihoods.

It is in this context that our volume emerges, a volume that intends to demystify Somali presence in urban East Africa, showing its historical depth and the deeper underpinnings of the urban transformations it has wrought. While Somali-led urban transformation has not always been a positive story, it is a far

more complicated one than is often portrayed. When we started to work on this edited volume, with the aim of bringing together as many of the researchers working on issues of Somali urbanity in East Africa as possible, tensions were extremely high in the aftermath of Operation Usalama Watch, and so a number of papers study this political context in detail. Others are more focused on the historical and socio-economic aspects of Somali urban presence in East Africa. This combination allows for a rounded look at how towns and cities have shaped Somali life and society in East Africa, but also how their presence has in turn shaped these same towns and cities and broader urban practices. However, the volume has much wider implications beyond the particular case-study of Somalis in urban East Africa.

These wider implications are summed up in our concept of *mobile urbanity*. Through this concept and its application to the case of Somalis and East African urban transformation, we hope to contribute to growing debates on the interface between migration and urbanization, both being seen as critical social processes in our contemporary world. The already mentioned report of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) focussing on cities and ‘managing mobility’ implies a need to tighten control of this movement despite acknowledgement in the same document of the benefits migrants often bring to cities and their economies (IOM 2015). In the African context too, there have been calls for a deeper exploration of the links between mobility and the city (Bakewell and Jonsson 2011). Furthermore, as we shall elaborate below, recent scholarship suggests that there is a need to move beyond seeing the city as simply a backdrop for migrants and migration, but to study them as mutually constituted (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016).

Migration has always been a constitutive part of urbanization processes. This entanglement has also long been a focus of academic research, as the vast literature on rural–urban migration and ethnic enclaves – the ‘Chinatowns’ and ‘Little Italys’ of the world – suggests. Now it is getting more attention than ever. However, this new attention is very much ‘transnational’, exploring not just how migrants integrate into a particular urban context – as the literature on ethnic enclaves tended to do – but also on how social and economic ties maintained to other urban sites across the world affect all the places linked to migration. We argue that the Somali case in East Africa is highly resonant with these wider debates on migration and the city, showing how socially, historically and politically complex such a relationship is. Indeed, the case offers a lens to think through the challenges and opportunities urban migrants both face and bring through their mobility.

Mobility

Mobility is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon in our contemporary world. The Syrian and Rohingya refugee crises have brought *forced migration* into

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focus, while anti-migrant sentiment in developed and developing countries alike echoes in the rhetoric of populist politicians, and in the xenophobia and increasing recourse to discourses of autochthony in Africa, Europe and elsewhere (Crush and Ramachandran 2010; Geschiere 2009). However, the term *mobility* covers a far wider range of forms of movement, and not just those of people (Urry 2000). Mobility conveys a degree of agency, suggesting the ability to move, and so brings to mind those with at least some social and economic capital. As a term its open-endedness is useful, conveying not just migration to settled lives in other places, but also the intricate patterns of movement that constitute many contemporary lives – and have constituted many lives in the past too, despite the framing of our age as the ‘age of migration’ in the words of Castles, de Haas and Miller (2017 [1993]). Work on transnationalism and diaspora by authors including Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton (1992), Levitt (2001) and Cohen (2008) has for two decades highlighted how many people live transnationally, for example working in one country but remaining tied through family and other forms of belonging to places of origin or to other countries. This engagement is even being praised as a means of development, harnessing the flows of remittances constantly moving back to the regions of origin. Others leave the diaspora and move ‘home’ to start businesses or NGOs, or enter politics, sometimes with an explicit developmental aim: such ‘return migrants’ are seen by some as the ‘new developers’ (for a nuanced analysis of this in regards to Africa, see Akesson and Baaz 2015).

The emphasis on remittances as a stream of potential developmental capital shows how one form of mobility can generate another – in this case that of money as well as people. Likewise, spatial mobility can lead to social mobility. Human mobility also increases the mobility of trade goods. Unlike people, goods and capital seem to flow relatively unimpeded. Trade deals at national and super-national levels attempt to facilitate this movement, while clearly there is concern that this mobility has its shady side. Indeed, the flow of arms, drugs and ‘conflict goods’ (such as ‘blood diamonds’, coltan and the like [Cooper 2001]) – the ‘dark side of globalization’ in the words of van Schendel and Abraham (2005) – is aided greatly by the sheer volume of global trade and the corruptibility of the global trade system. Contraband crosses borders, while tax and duties are often easily evaded, and borders become resources for those who can control these flows. Money criss-crosses the world with ease, both in hard cash and electronically. The Panama Papers released in 2016 highlighted only too strongly how the capital of the world’s elite is remarkably mobile, being transferred from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in attempts to evade tax.

As Ferguson argues (2006), the supposed intensification of globalization excludes many from its key benefits, while exposing the less fortunate to its risks; it is a phenomenon that leaps and hops, rather than a seamless integration of our planet and its people. Meanwhile, as Nyamnjoh argues in regards to the African context, some people are represented and imagined as only passively mobile:

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‘nothing African moves unless provoked by forces beyond their control’ (2013: 659). Yet migration and the flow of goods and capital have certainly not just been the preserve of the rich, although the poor face far more barriers to their own movement and trade, especially in an era where such movement is increasingly securitized (Kibreab 2014) and demonised, not just in North America and Europe, but within Africa too. While the type of globalization of multinational corporations and those transferring money from one tax haven to another has come to dominate how the phenomenon is imagined, for many globalization is experienced in different ways, often through what has been termed by Portes, Mathews and others as ‘low-end globalization’ or ‘globalization from below’ (Portes 1997; Schlee 2001; Mathews 2011; Mathews, Ribeiro and Vega 2012). Mathews’ focus is on small-scale (and some large-scale too) traders who criss-cross borders – usually to the manufacturing and trade hubs of Asia – in search of cheap consumer goods popular not just in India and Africa, but in western countries as well. Such goods, as Mathews argues, allow access to the products of globalization by the world’s poor. But there is also much mobility beyond such trade, with people travelling too for work and business opportunities, or to provide care for family members.

The case of Somalis highlights all these mobile complexities. The collapse of the Somali state in the late 1980s and ensuing conflict and other crises (including drought) have meant that many Somalis have become refugees, and the hundreds of thousands of residents in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in northern Kenya have become symbolic of the Somali experience of the last two decades (Horst 2006). While protracted displacement in such camps has been the experience of migration for far too many, Somali mobility is much more multifaceted than this might suggest. Of course, as people associated with pastoralist livelihoods and nomadic patterns of life, movement has been a feature of life for many Somalis, as evoked by the classic ethnographies of I.M. Lewis (e.g. Lewis 1961). The romantic vision of Somalis as a nomadic people, however, is somewhat misleading.⁶ This is not only true for the many generations that led more sedentary lives (including the ‘Somali Bantu’ whose livelihood was principally agricultural, and town dwellers such as the inhabitants of Mogadishu and other urban areas in precolonial Somalia), but also for those having become more sedentarized during the late colonial period and after independence (Hogg 1986; Besteman 1998). However, the nomadic imaginary still remains a key aspect of identification for many, also for those now living very different lives in towns and cities. An urban life, however, does not preclude mobility – there is a rather high mobility within Somali families, mainly for care-giving reasons, and people might move from one urban area to the next for education or economic reasons (for example see Hassan, this volume).

Displacement following civil war in Somalia itself has led to the creation of a vast Somali diaspora, which has settled in many countries around the world from

the USA to Australia, as well as in other parts of Africa, including a significant population in South Africa (Steinberg 2015; Abdi 2015; see also the chapter by Ripero-Muñiz in this volume). Currently, more than 10 per cent of the Somalian population lives outside the country. Transnational ties are woven throughout this diaspora, and remittances sent in support of family members or for investment flow through the networks of which it is made (Lindley 2010). Such remittances and other forms of investment by those who have become wealthy in the diaspora have provided much support for development initiatives inside Somalia and in Somali regions elsewhere, including northeastern Kenya, as well as the refugee camps and the cities of Kenya and Ethiopia. In the process, links to the ‘low-end global’ manufacturing powerhouses of the East have also grown as Somali mobility encompasses China and Thailand, as well as the trans-shipment hub of Dubai. Thus, out of displacement have sprung many opportunities for economic growth that Somali businesspeople have exploited skilfully, an example of what Hammar (2014) terms ‘displacement economy’.

All these varied forms of Somali mobility come strongly into focus in Kenya. As its territory contains land criss-crossed for many decades by Somali pastoralists, it is home to traditional patterns of Somali mobility and nomadism. It has also long been a destination and centre for Somali migration within East Africa and the continent more broadly, a temporal dimension we aim to tackle by showing the historical depth of this migration. The marginalization of its indigenous Somali population (Lochery 2012; Scharrer 2018), and the fraying tolerance shown towards Somalian refugees by the Kenyan state (see Lowe and Yarnell, this volume), are highly suggestive of the contemporary politics of migration, especially in the securitization of these politics in the wake of attacks by Somali militant groups. The economic implications of Somali displacement are also evident in Kenya, including the refugee camps of Dadaab, themselves the hub of trade (Pérouse de Montclos and Kagwanja 2000).

But it is the effects of all this migration upon urban Kenya that most interests us in this volume. From the early settlement of Somalis in Nairobi and the politics of where they should live (Whittaker, this volume), to the urban impact of new forms of trade goods (Carrier and Elliott, this volume) and ways of doing trade (Scharrer, this volume), as well as remittances and other forms of support from the recently formed diaspora (Mwangi, this volume), Somalis and their mobility have played a huge role in forming and transforming urban Kenya. Indeed, they constitute a major case-study of the conjuncture of mobility and the urban and all the dynamics therein.

Urbanity

The urban itself is constituted by mobility. When people started to settle, new nodes of connection emerged, linking people from different origins, and

urban areas of ‘relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement[s] of socially heterogeneous individuals’ (Wirth 1938: 8) developed. Such urban areas are generally characterized not just by a high population size and density, but also by a greater specialization of economic structures and occupations beyond agriculture (including animal-husbandry, see Potts 2017), and by a change in social relations and lifestyle. Knowing all other town dwellers is impossible in these bigger settlements, making voluntary associations more important and reducing the dependency upon particular persons often associated with kinship ties (see Wirth 1938: 12; for an example from Zambian colonial cities see Gluckman 2009 [1961]). Heterogeneity in urban areas mainly results from immigration, but is also due to spatial and social differentiation and mobility in the urban areas (Wirth 1938: 16). It is, however, not only people who shape urban structures and city life, but their lives are equally influenced by city structures, old and new, and the logics of city life taking place in these structures. Indeed, urban life impacts on the way people move: the ‘city acts as a forge for migratory behaviour’ (Bakewell and Jonsson 2011: 13).

For a long time, African cities were, with some notable exception, either not the focus of research or were treated as a deviation from the norm, as different from what cities ought to be. Mbembe and Nuttall (2004: 353) criticize the (academic) discourse about contemporary African cities, arguing that it is still overshadowed by the ‘metanarrative of urbanization, modernization, and crisis’. Likewise, they bemoan that Africans have for a long time been depicted in anthropological and historical writings as ‘essentially rural creatures’. This is especially true for pastoral people, as Whittaker shows in this volume. Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) therefore call for a deprovincializing of the scholarship on Africa, meaning less focus on the originality and difference of African cities, and more on the fundamental connections to other regional and global places, that is to say, on the ‘worldliness’ of African life.

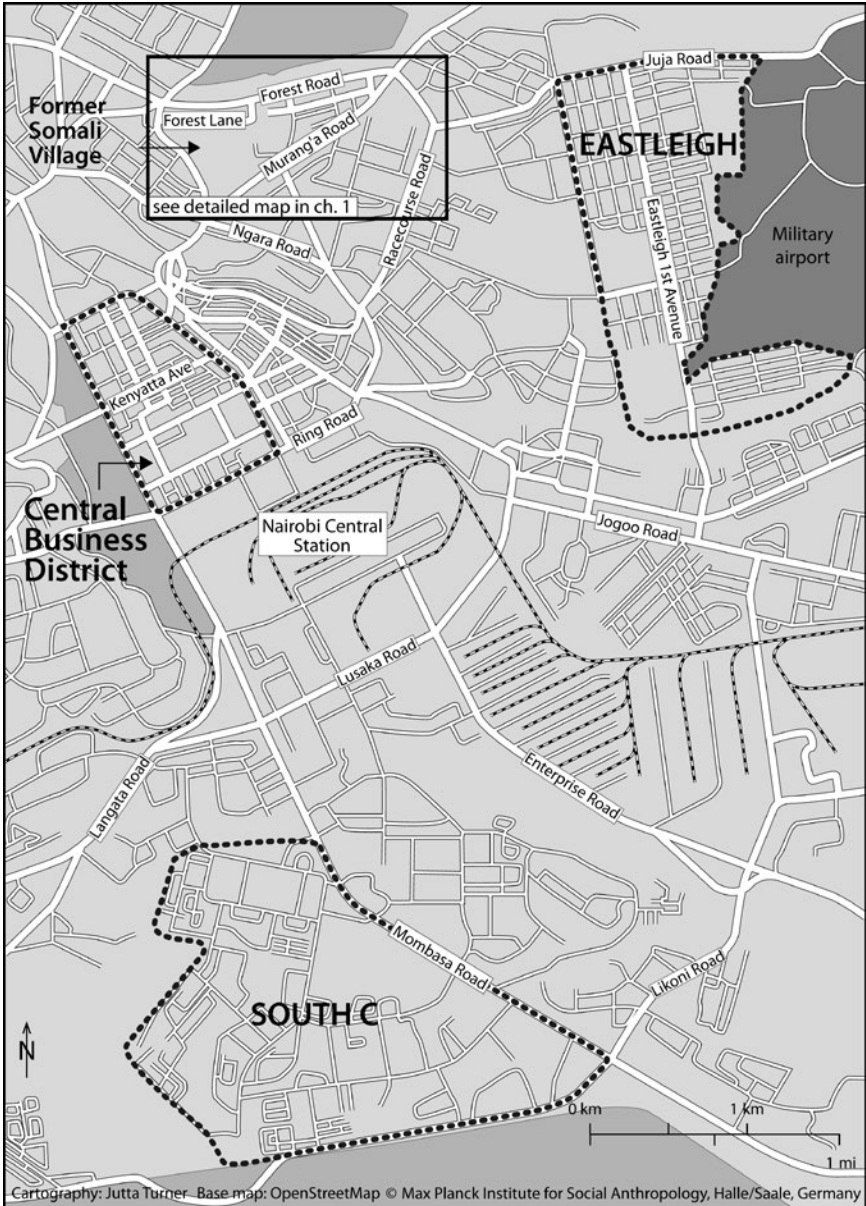
Nonetheless, even authors who aim at challenging this notion of African cities as deviating from an abstract (euro-centric) norm, end up depicting sub-Saharan Africa cities as different from those in other parts of the world. Danny Hoffman (2007), for instance, uses his research area, the war-torn cities of Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Monrovia (Liberia), to generalize about the future of the postcolonial (African) city itself. He argues that armed conflicts do not lead to a ‘temporary suspension of the “normal” functioning of the city’, but that they create one possible ‘manifestation of the way economies and governmentalities are organized in the contemporary period’ (Hoffman 2007: 404). Within the city he describes zones of legal exception with which the state had reached an ambiguous, and ambivalent, accommodation. These zones, which are ‘beyond the reach of the law’ protect those living inside from the reach of the state, but appear threatening and lawless from the outside (ibid.: 414). Meanwhile, Abdumaliq Simone (2006: 358) speaks of a ‘generalised practice of piracy’ in everyday African urban life.

While urban physical and social infrastructures are underfunded, in some cases purposefully, urban populations not only experience uncertainty, but also make use of the very unpredictability and the unregulated practices as resources. Piracy, as an ‘act of taking things out of their normal ... frameworks of circulation and use’ (ibid.: 357), whether through using the pavement as a market (in the case of informal traders) or by appropriating cinemas as churches, thus becomes part of normal everyday life.

So, do African cities work differently from those elsewhere? A way to bring these two different notions, of African specificity and of African worldliness, together is the idea that all cities, no matter where they are situated, follow their own specific intrinsic logic (*Eigenlogik der Städte*, Löw 2012), allowing one to see the heterogeneous experiences within African cities. Löw argues that in every city a distinct constellation of knowledge and forms of expressions develop. These emerging contexts of meanings influence the practices of people as well as their ‘identity, emotions, attitudes, and thinking’ (Löw 2012: 310). These practices in turn ‘reproduce a logic specific to the given city’ (ibid.). When thinking with the idea of an ‘intrinsic logic’ of cities one has to make sure, however, not to overlook other aspects of city life, such as the internal heterogeneity of urban areas, the changes taking place in them or their involvement in global processes.

Is there an intrinsic logic to Nairobi, the major focus of this current volume? First of all, as a city founded during the colonial era, Nairobi is still very much shaped by a colonial partitioning, sub-dividing the city into different racially and ethnically segregated neighbourhoods. In addition, there was a sharp contrast between functional and residential zones. After independence this sectioning remained, the post-‘apartheid’ grid building the base for the growing city and further fragmentation now more along the lines of class. Similar urban histories and structures can be traced in Nakuru (Kenya), Kampala (Uganda) and Johannesburg (South Africa), that feature in the chapters by Tabea Scharrer, Gianluca Iazzolino and Nereida Muñiz-Ripero, respectively.

Nairobi itself is important for the study of various types of urban development. These include such famous ‘slums’ as Kibera and Mathare, such informal settlements having long been studied, among others by Andrew Hake (1977). He described Nairobi as a ‘self-help city’, referring to the informal settlements that emerged around Nairobi over the twentieth century and their relationship with the more formal city. By contrast, since the 1990s, Nairobi has also become a regional hub for international organizations and multinational companies, serving as their headquarters for East Africa, and in some cases for the whole sub-Saharan African region or even globally. Many of these international organizations work in the humanitarian sector, especially in the field of refugee protection. In this way too, Nairobi became part of a ‘displacement economy’ (Hammar 2014) – not only as an area of refuge and settlement for forced



Map 0.2 Map of Nairobi.

migrants, but also as a place of transit for much international humanitarian aid, a place where political deals between warring parties were brokered and a place where money coming from the war-torn regions could be secured and reused for commercial deals. Many of these activities took place in different parts of the city, whose inhabitants normally live rather segregated lives, yet became

connected through these various activities. While the international organizations work in the high-end areas in the northwest of the Central Business District (CBD), most of the Somalian activities take place in Eastleigh, situated east of the CBD.

Migration into the cities leads to an urbanization process. Urbanization describes the growth of urban areas, but is also a subjective process for those who come from rural areas and have to get acquainted with city life. This is certainly true for a number of Kenyan Somalis and Somalians who moved to Nairobi having previously been pastoralists. It is not clear though, how big this group actually is. Cassanelli (1982) and Reese (1996) have shown the importance of urban centres in the South of Somalia in precolonial times and it can be argued that Somalia was at least as urbanized as Kenya in the 1950s (which is true also today, see Potts 2017: 73, figure 2). Furthermore, as several authors (Turton 1974; Hogg 1986; Whittaker 2012) have shown, in Kenya there was a growing urban Somali population from 1900 onwards. At first these were mainly people working for the British colonial army and administration (see chapter by Whittaker, this volume). Later on many Somalis in the northeastern part of Kenya also sedentarized, either by political force in closed camps (called 'villages'), to participate in the wider economy or out of destitution. Some of these settlements later became towns and cities. Meanwhile, many Somalian forced migrants in East Africa were already urbanized. They were either long time city dwellers, forced to flee the city they lived in, or started to live in cities or city-like camps as refugees. Even though it is debatable whether refugee camps can be described as cities (in the way it is done by Pérouse de Montclos and Kagwanja 2000 and Jansen 2016),⁷ they certainly share some aspects with urban areas – their sheer size, their population density and partly their infrastructure. However, they do not provide the freedom and independence experienced in cities, a very important reason for refugees to become self-settled in the Kenyan urban areas (see Lowe and Yarnell, this volume).

Lastly, the continuous movement of people, goods and information within the region, across primary and secondary cities and along transnational circuits, is an important element of urbanity (Simone 2011), constantly respatializing social networks, social positions and resources, and gives these cities a certain volatility. Alongside people, certain *forms of urbanity* are also mobile, and travel as lifestyles and spatial practices with those who move from one area to another. In this way, once rural practices become urbanized, Ethiopian restaurants become meeting points for people from different regions from the Horn of Africa, and Somali shopping centres are being built not only in East Africa (see the chapters by Scharrer and Iazzolino, this volume), but also in South Africa, Arab countries or in the USA.

Eastleigh

While our book has a wide focus on Somali urbanity in Kenya and Africa more broadly (as well as their links to urban sites shaped by Somali migration throughout the world), several of the chapters focus on one place in particular: Eastleigh (often written as Islii in Somali spelling). This has become the archetypal Somali urban space beyond Somalia (for a book-length historical ethnography of the estate, see Carrier 2017) and one symbol of the urban transformation that migration can bring. Eastleigh has long been one of the urban places of ‘uncertain trajectories ... simultaneously demonstrating marked development and decline’ (Simone 2011: 380). It began when land speculators bought up the land in the early twentieth century, intending it to become a European populated township. However, few Europeans ever settled there, and instead much of it was bought up by Asian investors in the late 1910s and settled by their countrymen. Soon people of Asian origin dominated the estate. Maps from the colonial period show how Indianized the estate was at that time, many street names reflecting links to the Indian subcontinent (Carrier 2017). Importantly, alongside this Indian population was a smaller contingent of Somalis who had settled there as early as anyone else (*ibid*; Whittaker, this volume). This population would form a magnet for later Somali influxes.

In the late colonial and early period after independence, Swahili and other urbanized East Africans moved into the area, while better off Asians relocated to other quarters in Nairobi.⁸ In the Kenyatta era, Kikuyus would come into the estate in large numbers, and still to this day they own much property in the estate. Thus, from the beginning onwards Eastleigh has been a multicultural and cosmopolitan estate. Like other parts of Nairobi too, Eastleigh suffered from infrastructural deterioration during the 1980s, which led again to demographic change, as the more affluent moved to more salubrious areas of the city. Soon the estate’s demographics would shift yet again through migration.

On the one hand, military conflicts in the Horn of Africa led to an increased influx of refugees to Kenya (Ethiopian and Somalian), a great number of whom passed through or settled in Eastleigh. On the other hand, the economic system in northern Kenya changed as well due to these conflicts (and drought), increasing internal migration to the bigger towns. The pre-existing Somali population of Eastleigh would act as a draw for Somalian refugees and Somali internal migrants from northeastern Kenya.⁹ It was in this age that Somali identity and dominance of the estate grew, leading some to dub it ‘Mogadishu Ndogo’ or ‘Little Mogadishu’, a nickname perceived with ambivalence by many in the estate (Carrier 2017), and one that hides other populations resident there, including a large population of Ethiopian Oromo (Carrier and Kochore, this volume). It was also at this time that the estate transformed into a commercial hub, as its shopping centres began to sprout (see the chapters by Hassan and by



Figure 0.1 Eastleigh viewed from the Grand Royal Hotel, 2011 (by now the road has been repaired) (photo: T. Scharrer).

Scharrer, this volume; Carrier and Lochery 2013), built upon remittances from the West (Mwangi, this volume) and cheaply manufactured goods of the East (Carrier and Elliott, this volume), processes that we describe in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Overview

Following the introduction, Yusuf Hassan, the Member of Parliament of Kamukunji Constituency in Nairobi (within which Eastleigh is located), gives a personal perspective on the history of Somalis in urban Kenya and their growing contribution to Kenya's politics and economy, a contribution symbolized by the transformation of Eastleigh. In doing so he combines his own personal history with that of the broader Somali community in Kenya, showing also the connection between mobility and urbanity.

The second part of the book focuses on the theme of urbanity and its role for Somali mobility, and also places the spatial epicentre of this book, Eastleigh, into a wider context. Hannah Whittaker (*The Somali Factor in Urban Kenya: A History*) provides an overview of early Somali migration into Nairobi and other urban areas of Kenya. It deals with migration to these towns, settlement patterns within them, the political mobilizations around resettlement programs by the

colonial authorities, the position of Somalis in Kenyan society and economic struggles (especially regarding grazing rights). This historical contextualization of Somali mobile urbanity focuses on two aspects of early Somali urban settlement: the precarity of their legal status and the agency of Somali townspeople. It shows that the colonial discourses about Somali urbanity resemble to some extent contemporary discussions.

Next, Nereida Ripero-Muñiz (*The Port and the Island: Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Identity Constructions among Somali Women in Nairobi and Johannesburg*) places Eastleigh into a wider African landscape by shedding light on the similarities and differences between Nairobi and Johannesburg and the life of migrants within them. Both cities share certain characteristics for Somalis: they have become transitional places, as Somalis journey through or temporally inhabit these two cities on their way to somewhere else. They also find hostility in both cities from members of the local population and governmental organizations: their mobile urbanity is resisted. However, Nairobi and Johannesburg also offer cosmopolitan contexts for Somalis to interact, adding cosmopolitan practices to their vernacular ones. Nairobi has become a port of Somalia, an entry and exit point into and out of the country, not only for people but also for goods, money, ideas and practices. The Somali community here is bigger and more established than the one in Johannesburg, offering a larger network of economic and emotional support. Meanwhile in Johannesburg, a much smaller Somali community is found and isolation seems to be the main collective feeling. The city and its surroundings are perceived as a land of opportunities; its thriving economy, quite unique in the African context, makes it a 'treasure island' for many African migrants. This is also the case for Somalis, who endure a tough journey through the African continent full of great expectations that often melt away upon arrival (see also Cawo Abdi's 2015 book *Elusive Jannah* on the mixed fortunes that can await migrants upon reaching such destinations).

The third chapter by Neil Carrier and Hassan H. Kochore (*Being Oromo in Nairobi's 'Little Mogadishu': Superdiversity, Moral Community and the Open Economy*) situates Eastleigh in the wider ethnic landscape of Kenya by describing life in Eastleigh for a non-Somali population. Eastleigh is a much more heterogeneous and cosmopolitan place than is often realized, and many non-Somalis live and work in the estate, including a substantial population of Oromo refugees from Ethiopia. They have transformed parts of the estate into a 'Little Ethiopia' and make a substantial contribution to the Eastleigh economy. This chapter considers the journeys the Oromo make to Eastleigh as well as the religious and social factors that enable them to integrate within the Somali-dominated economy. It will also show how patterns of urban life in Eastleigh are replicated in other parts of the Oromo world, as elements of the estate's economy have been transplanted to Johannesburg in an important demonstration of mobile

urbanity. Furthermore, interactions with Somalis continue as the two groups find their lives interwoven in other parts of the world including the UK and USA where many have been resettled.

The third part of the book turns towards the economic networks built up and used by the Somali community in the urban areas and through their mobility. Neil Carrier and Hannah Elliott (*Demanding and Commanding Goods: The Eastleigh Transformation Told through the 'Lives' of Its Commodities*) focus on the goods that Somali businesspeople import and export through their, often transnational, networks. Situating their chapter within the anthropological literature on commodities – including Appadurai's famous volume *The Social Life of Things* (1986) – they show how understanding the 'social life' of the items that criss-cross Eastleigh reveals the importance of growing production of cheap clothes and electronics in Asia, and the increasing demand for these products in East Africa. Access to both the supply and demand side of these products has been leveraged by Somalis into the kinds of urban transformation we see in Eastleigh. Thus, a key focus of the chapter is on these products, situated in what Gordon Mathews terms 'low-end globalization'. The chapter looks also at other goods whose flow impacts the estate, from *miraa* (the stimulant more widely known as khat) to gold, a holder of much economic and cultural value for Somali women.

The chapter by John Mwangi Githigaro and Kenneth Omeje (*Capital Mobilization among the Somali Refugee Business Community in Eastleigh, Nairobi*) looks in depth at how Somalis in Eastleigh have raised the capital that has created such a booming economy in this former residential area of Nairobi. Mwangi punctures the rumours as to the source of the money behind this transformation by showing how the Eastleigh economy represents a convergence of local and international capital of various forms – financial and social. The chapter describes how this capital is mobilized through clan and kinship networks (that often stretch around the globe), through rotating credit associations (known as *ayuuuto* in Somali), community contingency funds known as *qaran* among Somalis, business partnerships (often again linked to clan and kinship), personal savings, capital from other business ventures, and even, on rarer occasions, through bank loans. Mwangi also argues that rather than being a drain on Kenyan society, Somali mobile capital has made much positive contribution to the Kenyan economy.

Holly A. Ritchie focuses in her chapter (*Challenging the Status Quo from the Bottom Up? Gender and Enterprise in Somali Migrant Communities in Nairobi, Kenya*) on the situation of refugee women. She looks at how they try to survive through entrepreneurship despite their insecure legal status and the many challenges they face, including violence and other forms of abuse. Ritchie's focus is on the petty refugee traders, who actually form a great proportion of those operating in the Eastleigh economy. She highlights how their businesses operate,

Mobile Urbanity

Somali Presence in Urban East Africa

Edited by Neil Carrier and Tabea Scharrer

<https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/CarrierMobile>

many combining different sorts of occupations. Most of her interviewees were focused more on survival rather than business growth. Such humble enterprises are beset with challenges, from raids by the City Council (checking for valid business permits), gang violence and harassment, but most especially navigating the changing religious norms within a society where Salafist teachings have much influence on how women conduct their business and lives in general. Ritchie thus shows how Eastleigh remains a challenging urban environment for its refugee residents, despite the evident wealth.

The last chapter of this section, by Tabea Scharrer (*Reinventing Retail: 'Somali' Shopping Centres in Kenya*), explores how changes in the Eastleigh business sector, which rely very much on a transformation of the notion and usage of space, became a model for Kenya in general and the whole East African region. Using the example of Nakuru, it is shown that these Somali shopping centres follow a different spatial logic than the markets and shops that used to dominate Kenya's retail sector. Coming mainly from Mogadishu with hardly more than their knowledge on how to do business, Somalian refugees transformed hotel rooms in Eastleigh to shops during daytime, bigger shops were subdivided into smaller stalls and later on shopping complexes were built, where every inch is made use of. These shopping centres combine elements of open-air markets and Western style shopping malls. Lacking the glamour of the latter, 'Somali' shopping centres have one or more floors with traders either renting a shop, a table, or a place outside a shop. While open-air markets are open, public places, shopping centres are privately owned and driven, often with a rather long chain of brokers, owners, leasers and sublesers. Contrary to Western style malls, there are often no places for recreation or public meetings, the pragmatism of trade reigns supreme. These transformations were taken up as a model quickly spreading throughout Kenya and beyond: such urban transformations are themselves mobile.

In the fourth and last section of the book, different aspects of the politics of Somali mobility are examined. All three chapters in this section are heavily influenced by the period in which they were written. Following spates of terror-related violence since 2011, including the Westgate Mall attack of 2013 and intermittent attacks in Nairobi, Mombasa and in parts of northeastern Kenya, the security forces of the Kenyan Government embarked on a large-scale crackdown on Eastleigh and other urban areas in 2014. In an operation called Usalama ('Peace') Watch, Kenya's security forces raided houses and caused shops to be closed. Hundreds of residents were incarcerated at the Safaricom Kasarani Stadium, from where they were sent to the refugee camps or were deported to Somalia. Lucy Lowe and Mark Yarnell (*Perpetually in Transit: Somalian Refugees in a Context of Increasing Hostility*) focus on the life of urban Somalians in Eastleigh. On the one hand, they focus on a time of heightened political tension with many assaults by the police. On the other, they provide an answer to why

people opt to live in cities in contrast to life in refugee camps, even though they cannot profit from humanitarian aid provided in camps, and suffer from a challenging security situation. Living in the city, and specifically within a predominantly Somali neighbourhood, allowed Somalian forced migrants to gain an existence as non-refugees. There, through private businesses and corruption, they are able to purchase goods, health care, education and even a particular sense of freedom. The perception by Kenyans and non-Kenyans that Eastleigh was ethnically Somali, established an environment in which people could be Somalis, rather than refugees. The temporality of this space, which could be understood as rented rather than owned, the ambiguous legality of residency and the ubiquitous insecurity meant that the boundaries and definitions of who was, or was not, Somali had to be continually reinforced.

Joseph Wandera and Halkano Abdi Wario (*Framing the Swoop: A Comparative Analysis of Operation Usalama Watch in Muslim and Secular Print Media in Kenya*) focus on the public discussion of the security operation Usalama Watch. There was unprecedented media coverage of the operation, with secular and faith-based media channels covering the government's action in diverging ways. This chapter analyses the framing of the swoop in Eastleigh and other urban areas inhabited by Somalis by the *Daily Nation*, a leading secular newspaper, and by the *Friday Bulletin*, a journal published by the Jamia Mosque in Nairobi. Embedding the chapter in the theoretical framework of 'securitization', the authors ask how far the particular publishers are willing to buy in and to support the state's effort to frame the security situation in Kenya in a way that allows for extraordinary security measures.

The tenth and last chapter in this volume, by Gianluca Iazzolino (*Beyond Eastleigh: A New Little Mogadishu in Uganda?*), focuses on recent changes in Somali migration flows to Uganda. It examines the Somali routes to Kampala, which provide an interesting case-study to reflect on: the complex interweaving of factors shaping migration/mobility patterns; the often not so clear-cut separation between forced and voluntary migration categories; and the influence of low-end globalization (Mathews, Ribeiro and Vega 2012), referring to transnational networks based on low-capital and informal business. The chapter retraces the historical origins of the Somali presence in Uganda and the development of a new 'Little Mogadishu' in Kampala's Kisenyi district. The recent influx to Uganda was driven by several factors at a regional level: the growing pressure on Somalian refugees in Kenya, as well as the ease of access from Uganda to neighbouring areas, particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and, until recent upheavals, South Sudan – but also to Somalia, thanks to a visa policy which allows Somali passport-holders to re-enter Uganda. The immigration of Somalians to Uganda is also facilitated by the legal framework of the latter, especially the implementation of Uganda's 2006 refugee law. Therefore, the case of the Somali diaspora in Uganda offers insights into the relation between the

state security apparatus and refugee populations and offers a counterpoint to the manner in which Kenya has attempted to deal with its Somali population and their mobile urbanity.

In an *Afterword* Günther Schlee provides some concluding remarks to the collection of papers in this volume. He focuses his discussion on two main issues: the question of how far the people presented in this volume can be discussed as part of a ‘global Somali community’ (therefore widening the scope of this volume to a global one), and the importance of urban life for the Somali diaspora. He argues that the heterogeneous background of Somalis, spatially and historically, makes it difficult to talk about one community. Furthermore, patrilineal links and clanship are still highly important features, dividing Somalis into several segments. This division is somewhat dissolved in the urban settings of East Africa, as the relative peace there seems to favour inter-clan cooperation. In addition, Schlee contends that urbanity has become a global lifestyle of Somalis, who often choose well-connected cities as a place for settling down, cities that facilitate their mobile urbanity.

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Notes

1. On Guangzhou and how its rapid growth links to the mobility of people and goods, see Mathews, Dan Lin and Yang (2017).
2. This also means that our concept of ‘mobile urbanity’ is quite different from that of Piscitelli, for whom, following De Certeau, it is a ‘heuristic tool to read the city through the everyday life experiences of mobile subjects’ (2018: 34).
3. For the southern African examples of Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe, see Pikirayi (2017).
4. The term ‘Somali’ designates an ambiguous category that straddles ethnic and national levels. In Kenya there are many who are ethnic Somalis but Kenyan by nationality –

Somalis now form the sixth-biggest ethnic group in Kenya according to the (contested) census conducted in 2009. Yet the term Somali can also refer to someone from the Republic of Somalia. Many refugees in Kenya are Somali by ethnicity and nationality (though some of these refugees were born in Kenya). To complicate matters further, some come from other Somali parts of the Horn of Africa, including the Ogaden in Ethiopia, the Republic of Somaliland and Djibouti. Thus, in this book we use Somali to refer to a broader category that encompasses Somali speakers or people from Somali families whether from Somalia, Somaliland, Kenya or from the Somali diaspora abroad. When referring specifically to Somalis of Kenyan origin, we use the term ‘Kenyan Somali’, and when referring to Somalis from the Republic of Somalia in particular, we use the term Somalian. Even these labels cannot avoid some ambiguity, as so many people and their families have long straddled identities as Kenyan and Somalian purely by dint of the arbitrary colonial placement of the border between the two countries.

5. For a comprehensive summary of the presence of Somalian refugees in Kenya and the changing Kenyan refugee policy see Scharrer (forthcoming).
6. See Schlee (2001: 23) who argues that it is often difficult to distinguish ‘migrant knowledge’, deriving from the adaptation to often precarious situations in the course of migration, from effects of socialization (be it in the region where people grew up or where they settled later in their lives).
7. See also the blog entry by Jeff Crisp who argues against the idea that refugee camps can be considered as cities (<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/blog/zaatari-camp-and-not-city>; retrieved 16 September 2016).
8. Carrier (2017: Chapter 1), P. Goldsmith (2008), ‘Kenya: Eastleigh Goes Global’, *The East African*, 17 August. <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200808190301.html>, retrieved 26 January 2010.
9. According to a Somali politician (interviewed in September 2014), there were about 200,000 Somalis living in Eastleigh, half of whom were Somalian refugees. Many of them were either registered in the refugee camps, but living in Eastleigh, or they were not registered at all (see also Scharrer 2018).

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