

Introduction

Middle-Class Construction on Dar es Salaam's Suburban Frontier

The house stirs at five a.m. on a Monday morning. There is noise and clatter as doors are banged on to wake those still asleep, bathing water is heated in the kettle in the kitchen, milk with spices is warmed for tea, breakfasts are hastily thrown together from the remains of last night's dinner, shirts are ironed, and school books are collected. Godwin corrals his nephew and his two children with a sense of increasing urgency. One by one the family members get into the car parked outside the house. On a good day they manage to leave by six a.m. Sammy, one of the domestic workers, pulls open the metal gate to let the car out. Headlights on: it's dark on the bumpy drive down the earth road that twists through the neighborhood to the smooth tarmac, where suddenly everything speeds up as you join the line of cars heading towards the city center. If you're not on the tarmac road by six a.m. you won't reach the city center until nine a.m., that's what they say.¹ Godwin, who works as a civil servant in a government office in the city center, takes a short detour from the tarmac road to drop his children at their private English-medium primary school. Later he drops his nephew, who has just started work with a state-owned bank on the other side of the city center. If all goes smoothly Godwin can get to his office, twenty kilometers from the smart house he built with his wife in Salasala, in the city's northern suburbs, by half past seven. His wife Gilda, who is self-employed, leaves the house later on in her smaller, older car, having instructed the two members of the domestic staff on their duties for the day. She runs a couple of small pharmacies and beauty parlors that she and Godwin have built in nearby suburban neighborhoods.

In the afternoon, the school bus brings the children back home. They watch television, play on the PlayStation, and maybe do some homework. Mercy, one of the domestic workers, starts preparing the evening meal based on instructions

she has received on her mobile phone from Gilda, who is still at work supervising the repair of a hood hair dryer in one of her salons. She comes home at eight p.m. and quickly fries some fresh fish that she bought from a roadside vendor on the way home, to accompany the potatoes and vegetables that Mercy has prepared. Godwin comes in at half past eight, having mostly sat in traffic jams snaking out of the city since he left the office two-and-a-half hours previously. The household eats, some sitting in the open-plan kitchen/diner/living room, some in front of the large flat-screen television mounted on the wall in the living room, which is showing the national news. The headline is a story about a group of poor urban residents who are complaining about a government scheme to relocate them thirty kilometers from the city center after their makeshift homes in Dar es Salaam's Msimbazi Valley were destroyed by floods. Godwin grumbles, "But they know they shouldn't have been in there [the Valley] in the first place." His nephew arrives later on a *bodaboda* (motorcycle taxi) that he picked up at the nearby junction with the tarmac road, having reached there from the city center by bus. He has been to evening class after work to study for a graduate accountancy qualification.

By ten p.m. the front door and grille are locked and everyone is resting in their bedrooms, except for Gilda, who sits in front of the television, flicking between a US Christian television channel, a Nigerian Pentecostal channel, and her WhatsApp groups on her smart phone—one each for her family members, her husband's family, the church committee, one for parents at the children's school, a group of neighbors, and one for a group of women entrepreneurs in Dar es Salaam. At five a.m. the next morning they start again.

This is a typical day for an upper-middle-class family in twenty-first-century Dar es Salaam, and I begin with it because it is both spectacular and ordinary. It is spectacular because the land on which Godwin and Gilda now live, in their self-built bungalow surrounded by a high wall, was farmland until the turn of the twenty-first century. As recently as the 1990s the city's northern hinterland was sparsely populated by a patchwork of extensive farms owned by indigenous Zaramo, who tended cashew and coconut trees, and some farms of various sizes owned by in-migrants and urbanites who grew fruit and vegetables for local markets, the larger of which grew for export.² In between were scattered small settlements, a couple of large stone quarries, some abandoned sisal plantations, and a cement factory. Just two decades later, the transformation of this hinterland into low-density, desirable residential neighborhoods was well underway as urbanites sought affordable land on which to build the house to which they aspired. It is also ordinary: middle-class suburban life centered on so many unremarkable dwellings that seem to embody a global suburban ideal: close enough to benefit from the city's economic and social life, but far enough not to have to deal with the everyday hubbub and hassle.³

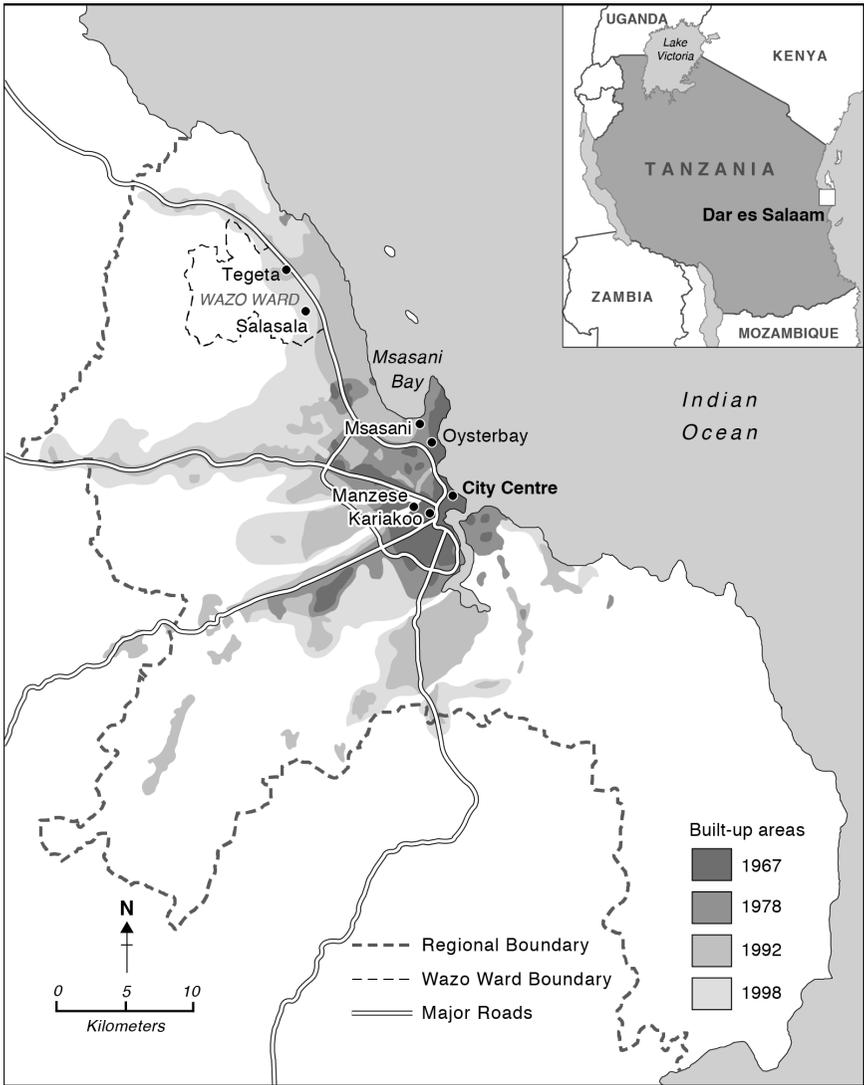
These suburban neighborhoods have much in common with a globalized suburban model, but they are also distinctive in significant ways. Perhaps most



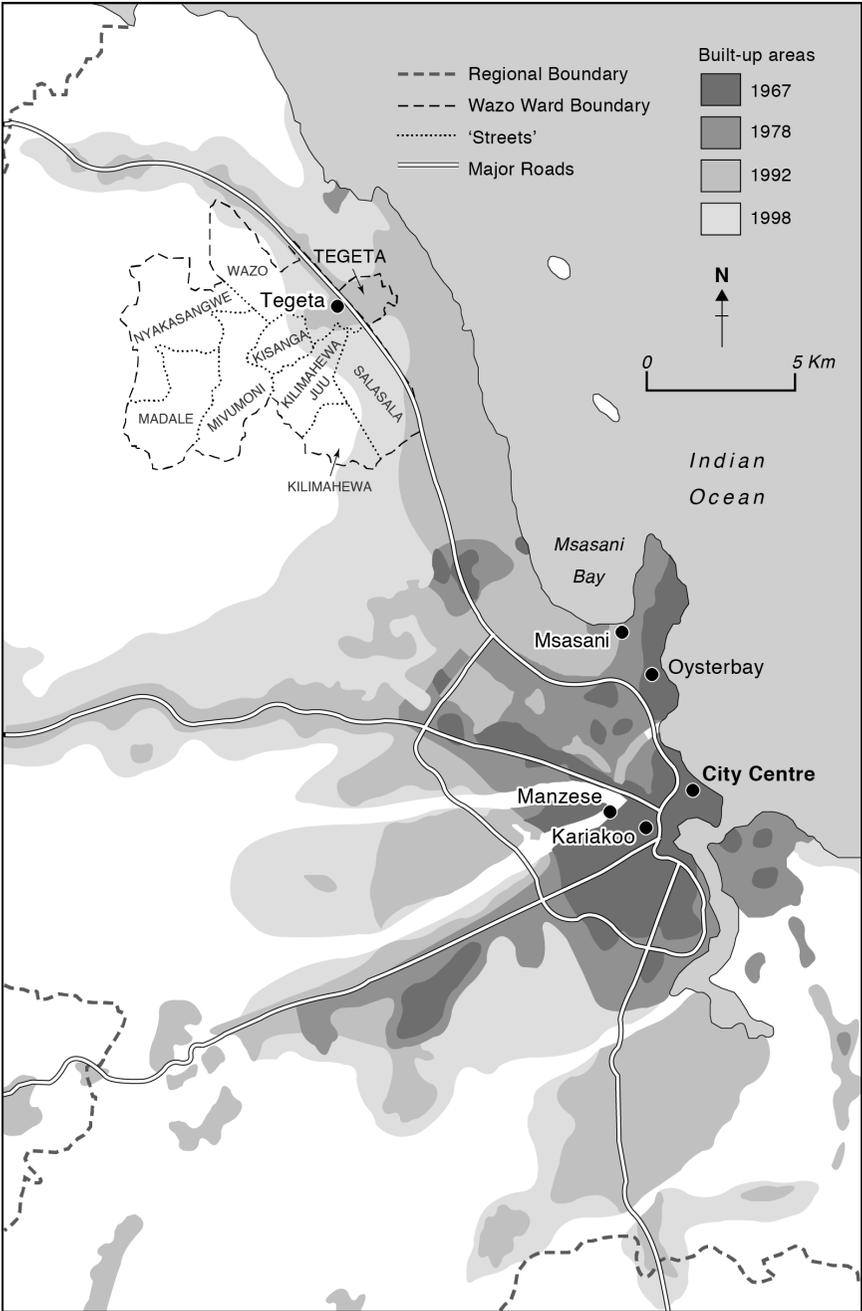
FIGURE 1. A house in the early stages of construction, Salasala, September 2012. Photo by author.



FIGURE 2. The same house in April 2015. Photo by author.



MAP 1. Dar es Salaam, showing growth of the city over time and the location of Wazo Ward and Salasala. Drawn by Mina Moshkeri 2018, based on Briggs and Mwamfupe (2000) and Andreasen (2013).



MAP 2. Subwards (*mitaa*) in Wazo Ward in 2018. Drawn by Mina Moshkeri 2018, based on Briggs and Mwamfupi (2000) and Andreasen (2013).

importantly, they are being developed through the repetition of thousands of individual cash-based domestic building projects rather than through large-scale financialized property development. The long history of land use and settlement that precedes the more recent self-building boom has given rise to a socially and spatially heterogeneous suburban zone, much of it lacking tarmac roads, sanitation, and running water. These are, in fact, mostly informal settlements, but not as they have been commonly represented in African cities. Most residents may lack formal legal titles to the land they occupy, but that has not stopped many of them from making substantial investments in their suburban property. It is not uncommon to walk past coconut trees down an earthen lane to discover a recently completed two-storey house, smartly painted in the latest pastel colors and roofed with the most up-to-date aluminum roofing sheets, just visible behind an elaborately decorated concrete wall topped with shards of broken glass. Over the last two decades people like Godwin and Gilda have increasingly congregated at, and transformed, the city's edge. Who is building these houses here, how, and why? What kind of urban space is under construction? What is it like to live here? And what does this mass autoconstruction on the city's former periurban edge tell us about the contemporary reshaping of African cities?

This book addresses these questions. It examines the transformation of Dar es Salaam's periphery since the late nineteenth century from rural hinterland, to periurban fringe, to suburban frontier, from the vantage point of the neighborhood of Salasala. The land on the present suburban frontier, which curves around the city twenty kilometers from the center, has been transformed from a zone of shifting cultivation sparsely populated by the Zaramo into residential neighborhoods containing some of the most sought-after property in the city. Starting from the last third of the nineteenth century, land was enclosed, alienated, nationalized, enclosed again, and commodified as it was claimed by Arab and European investors, then colonial and postcolonial governments, and then farmers and urban residents. By the early 2000s most remaining Zaramo had been dispossessed through hundreds of individual informal market transactions. In their place, a mosaic of the urban poor, lower-middle, and upper-middle classes had transformed this formerly rural hinterland into a residential suburban frontier. By the mid-2010s, as land prices climbed ever higher, savvy suburban residents were anticipating where the next suburban frontier might develop beyond places like Salasala. They were buying land close to Dar es Salaam in the neighboring districts of Kibaha and Bagamoyo in the expectation that the suburb would come to them.

There is more to this story than a narrative about changing land use on the urban periphery. The central aim of this book is to examine the suburban frontier as *the* place where Africa's middle classes are shaped. Drawing on the long tradition of sociospatial dialectical thinking in human geography,⁴ I argue that Dar es Salaam's middle classes are building distinctive suburban landscapes, and that

those landscapes in turn shape what middle-classness is. Suburban space is neither an inert backdrop for the ready-made middle-class lives that are to be the subject of analysis, nor an inevitable step on a linear and universal path of urban development. Thinking with sociospatial dialectics enables us to see space and society as dynamically coconstituted in a particular time and place. By spatializing our understanding of the dynamics of middle-class formation, I show how investment in property—land, houses, and landscape—is central to middle-class formation and urban futures in Africa.

If suburbanization is a defining feature of contemporary global urban change,⁵ then Africa's urban peripheries are a key site where that process will unfold. Africa's urban population is projected to triple between 2018 and 2050 to 1.5 billion people, or 22 percent of the world's urban population.⁶ Most of these urban residents will make their lives in extensive neighborhoods beyond the central city, in "the peripheral city that is the real city."⁷ In Dar es Salaam, a city that is projected to grow from just over six million inhabitants in 2018 to over ten million by 2030 to become one of Africa's five megacities, this process is already underway, as the population residing in peripheral areas is growing faster than in central areas.⁸ Much of this urban extension is residential in character and peppered with many small businesses, industries, and retail outlets, often located in people's homes.⁹ This is organic suburbanization, constructed, extended, and improved incrementally as thousands of individual cash-based domestic building projects take shape. It is also highly unequal. The majority of peripheral residents will have to build their own homes, but only a minority will be able to build a comfortable house like Godwin and Gilda's. As Africa's urban peripheries are slowly transformed, new ways of being middle class become possible and new forms of socio-spatial inequality emerge. Understanding how these processes are unfolding on the suburban frontier is vital for thinking about the future of African cities and urban inequality.

THE COLONIALITY OF SPACE

The new urban forms that are taking shape on African urban peripheries defy easy characterization.¹⁰ Recent work in urban studies has generated productive ways of thinking about the dynamics of urban expansion in cities of the Global South such as insurgent and incremental change, and peripheral, plotting, piecemeal, extensive, and massive urbanization.¹¹ Yet none of these characterizations fully captures the dynamics that have shaped Dar es Salaam's urban periphery. This is a space that does not fit existing theoretical or vernacular ways of thinking about cities.¹² It is not quite the suburb of Euro-American urban theory, with its mixed population and spontaneous land use. Nor is it the *maeneo yasiopangwa* (unplanned areas) or the *makazi yasio rasmi* (unofficial residencies/residential areas) that

government officials and planners refer to when talking about the greater part of the city's informally built environment. These terms corral very different kinds of urban space (suburbs, informal settlements, slum areas) into one single negative category, even though the differences between them are significant. The lack of a vernacular term for the urban residential periphery also suggests that these new spaces do not fit an established, collective geographic imagination among Dar es Salaam's residents.

The dynamics of land are central to an understanding of African urbanization. We need to know more about how land—and property more widely—is being accessed, made, and used, and by whom, in Africa's urban peripheries.¹³ In recent years, investment in high-end urban real estate and satellite cities has been fueled by elite and international capital,¹⁴ but the actors and instruments involved in these developments are very different from the small-scale, cash-based transactions that shape the vernacular land markets through which urban populations access and use land in most African cities.¹⁵ To better grasp these processes, I draw on recent scholarship that has explored the significance of land as a key driver of urban dynamics in cities of the Global South,¹⁶ as well as work on land in rural Africa and agrarian change more broadly. This work draws attention to the political and economic dimensions of land: to the specific mechanisms of dispossession, enclosure, and commodification; to the enduring colonial legacies on land tenure and recent attempts at land reform; to the relationship between property and authority; and to the consequences of all this for social differentiation and class formation.¹⁷

The first residential suburbs to be built in many African towns and cities were constructed by colonial governments in their attempts to racially segregate urban space.¹⁸ In former British colonies such as Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, for example, suburbs were planned as exclusive residential enclaves for Europeans, and continue to be seen as relatively exclusive, well-serviced residential zones. Colonial urban planning—however patchy and incomplete—enframed African cities, leaving its imprint not only on the city's material form, but also on how people thought about urban space and their place in it.¹⁹ The coloniality of space lingers in the built environment and the visceral experience of the city's landscapes.²⁰ The colonial is not the only logic of the production of urban space, but it remains as the spatial residue of the coloniality of power.²¹ It endures in colonial land tenure regimes that render the majority of urban residents as squatters without access to decent housing. It endures in residents' ideas about the aesthetics of good urban space in terms of topography, planning, and architecture. It endures in a hierarchical way of thinking about urban space in which some places are better than others and people higher up the social hierarchy deserve to live in better places. As I show in this book, it is central to middle-class urban imaginaries and urban spatial practices.

In Tanzania, popular representations of urban space are saturated with the residue of the coloniality of space. The tripartite colonial enframing of Dar es Salaam divided the city into three zones distinguished by building regulations, which became known in Swahili as *uzunguni* (the place of the European), *uhindini* (the place of the Indian), and *uswahilini* (the place of the Swahili, referring to the coastal African urban culture but in this context meaning “African”).²² There are other, more localized terms that refer to specific neighborhoods. Yet this colonial enframing is nevertheless persistent and pervasive as a typology of postcolonial urban space that is used to refer to upscale planned neighborhoods (*uzunguni*), commercial districts historically dominated by the Indian community (*uhindini*), and unplanned, unserviced neighborhoods containing densely packed housing (*uswahilini*). This framing is regularly deployed in everyday life in cities across the country even if, as I explore in chapter 4, the newly constructed suburban landscapes of the urban periphery do not quite fit this geographical imagination.²³ They may be more desirable residential neighborhoods, but they do not quite approximate *uzunguni*, the original suburbs built and serviced for Europeans by the colonial state; and they are not like *uswahilini* either, since the lower density and larger scale of houses on the suburban periphery produce very different landscapes. The fear that these new suburban areas might eventually degenerate into *uswahilini* drives middle-class residents to seek land further out, where they plan to build again. In the process, they push the suburban frontier further outward.

THE SUBURBAN FRONTIER

The making of Dar es Salaam’s suburban frontier has been far from a smooth and linear trajectory. Alienation, dispossession, and enclosure have stalked the city’s hinterland through the years of colonialism, socialism, and liberalization. These processes have produced distinctive trajectories in and around Salasala, such that enclosures were later undone by nationalization, and socialist policies paved the way for further dispossession and enclosure. Land has remained alienated since the advent of German colonial rule, but the processes of dispossession, enclosure, and property-making in the city’s hinterland have been slow and incomplete.

The suburban frontier emerged when the first spacious and well-serviced suburbs—the original *uzunguni*—were laid out for Europeans at Oysterbay in the 1930s. Located five kilometers north of the city center, Oysterbay was designed as an exclusive European enclave from which Africans, apart from those who worked as domestic staff, were excluded.²⁴ The rest of the urban population was left to fend for itself in terms of housing provision. The houses that were built from local materials to accommodate Africans in the city center, known as Swahili houses,

constituted valuable urban property from which a new class of African landlords profited, but supply was always outstripped by demand.²⁵ In the late colonial period the state belatedly invested in a small number of housing schemes for Africans, opening up new suburbs in Ilala, Magomeni, Temeke, and Kinondoni, where an emergent elite, most of whom were salaried government workers, could live in improved conditions with formal, secure tenure. By the eve of Independence in 1961 a state-built suburban frontier, characterized by better-quality housing and planned layouts, was beginning to emerge in archipelagic form on the city's edge from Oysterbay in the north to Temeke in the southwest.

In the 1970s and 1980s the suburban frontier was pushed slowly outwards towards the city's rural hinterland, away from the original inner suburbs, which began to densify. This shift was prompted by limited government attempts at urban housing provision. These included a large-scale urban planning scheme in Mbezi; Sites and Services schemes in Sinza, Kijitonyama, and Mikocheni in the late 1970s; and Sites and Services schemes in Tegeta and Tabata in the early 1980s. These schemes planted new suburban oases of formally planned land with secure tenure to the west and north of the city. The majority of these schemes were located in the north, consolidating Kinondoni's position as the most desirable part of the suburban frontier. Plots were allocated or passed on to an emerging upper-middle class, most of whom were state employees.²⁶ The Sites and Services schemes drove demand for adjacent unplanned land, such that by the end of the 1980s land on the suburban frontier had become a "hotcake."²⁷

During this time the periurban and rural areas that lay beyond the suburban frontier underwent significant, if imperceptible, change. After independence and the shift to socialism heralded by the Arusha Declaration in 1967, most of the plantations, estates, and other properties that had been privately enclosed during the precolonial and colonial eras were nationalized. Villagization was carried out in the rural parts of Dar es Salaam and Coast regions in the mid-1970s, forcing Zaramo scattered throughout the city's hinterland to leave their farms and move to communal *ujamaa* villages.²⁸ Since claims to land outside of the city rested on customary land tenure, there was great uncertainty over people's control and use of land, which paved the way for new enclosures and dispossession. Relocated farmers were allotted plots and farms in the *ujamaa* villages, sometimes on land previously owned by others. Some farmers abandoned their former farms located far from the *ujamaa* village.²⁹

As agricultural production declined and a food crisis unfolded, urbanites were directed to farm on the city's edge through a series of government "operations" in the late 1970s and early 1980s, setting in motion land commodification and further enclosure, and entrenching Zaramo dispossession. Unused land that fell within village boundaries was allocated to city dwellers by village authorities; land was also acquired by urbanites from Zaramo and other farmers, who sold their land or parcels of it for a small fee. Others claimed land or were resettled on

the nationalized estates and plantations. Although land itself could not legally be bought and sold at this time, “secret sales” became increasingly common in the 1980s on the pretext of paying for trees and other improvements on the land such as buildings.³⁰

In the 1990s a combination of economic liberalization, population growth, and housing demand pushed more urbanites into the city’s periurban and rural hinterland in search of a piece of land on which to build or farm. Among the urban middle classes, many of whom were government workers in receipt of perquisites for housing and travel, the suburban frontier became a favored location in which to invest in land to support small-scale farming and livestock activities to provide additional income streams.³¹ By the time Tanzania’s new Land Acts were published in 1999, permitting the sale of bare land, there was already a thriving land market. Demand for land grew, land prices increased, and former farmland was subdivided and sold off. Newcomers fenced in their plots and began to build large modern houses using the newest building materials. This book is concerned with what, and who, was constructed in the process.

The book develops the concept of the self-built suburban frontier as a zone of commodification, dispossession, accumulation, risk, aspiration, and experimentation that is especially productive for middle-class formation.³² The middle classes have been the principal beneficiaries of the commodification of land and the enclosure of plots on the suburban frontier, accumulating assets in the form of land that can be built on, loaned, or sold, and houses that can be lived in or rented out. Yet their property is also at risk in this suburban gray zone where the statutory land tenure of the city bleeds into the customary land tenure that prevails in the formerly rural hinterland.³³ Middle-class experience on the suburban frontier is thus shaped by the twin possibilities for accumulation and loss. Property is always open to contestation from neighbors or strangers, or reclamation by the state under eminent domain. The suburban frontier is also a zone of aspiration where the middle classes seek to consolidate their social position through the aesthetic value of the architecture and landscapes they have created.³⁴ In building desirable residential space that has pushed into the city’s rural hinterland, the middle classes have transformed the landscape from scattered farms and bush into a sea of small-scale self-built houses on individual plots. The relative size, quality, and lower densities of these buildings, together with the attention paid to architectural design and the use of new building materials, has produced what residents consider to be a desirable suburban landscape when compared with both the congested inner-city neighborhoods and the scattered, poorer-quality housing of the periurban fringe that lies beyond the suburban zone. Finally, the suburban frontier is also a social and cultural frontier.³⁵ Here the new middle classes are pioneering suburban lifestyles built around new consumption practices and privatized leisure, transport, and social services. By way of the private car, food is purchased, children are schooled, family is visited,

religious services are attended, and weddings are celebrated without one's having to enter the city's historic core. For the middle classes, life is increasingly lived on the suburban frontier.

TANZANIA'S MIDDLE CLASSES

Amidst the enthusiasm for "Africa rising," in 2011 the African Development Bank produced estimates of the size of the middle class in forty-four African countries.³⁶ At an estimated 5.2 million people, Tanzania had one of the smallest middle classes on the continent.³⁷ The country was placed eighth from the bottom of the African Development Bank's table, with 2.9 percent of the population categorized as "middle class" (with a daily per capita expenditure between US\$4 and US\$20) and 12.1 percent categorized as the "middle and floating classes" (with a daily per capita expenditure between US\$2 and US\$20).³⁸ Despite its small size, the apparent emergence of this middle class fitted well with international financial institutions' and consultancy firms' narrative of African economic successes that had resulted from their policy prescriptions. In Tanzania macroeconomic trends were strong from the 2000s, with growth rates hovering between 5 and 7 percent.³⁹ The country reached Lower Middle Income Country status in July 2020.⁴⁰ Poverty rates also fell. Between 2007 and 2017–18 the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty, as measured by the national food poverty line, dropped from 11.8 percent to 8 percent, and the percentage of the population falling below the national basic needs poverty line fell from 34.4 percent to 26.4 percent.⁴¹

A cursory glance beyond these positive macroeconomic indicators shows that the headline trends have not translated into fewer people living in poverty, and that inequality is on the rise.⁴² The World Bank, for example, notes that about 49 percent of the population still live below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per person per day, and that despite reductions in the proportion of the population living below the poverty line, population growth has meant that the absolute number of those living in poverty has increased.⁴³ The vastly different experiences of Tanzania's recent macroeconomic growth are captured in the Gini coefficient, which has grown countrywide from 0.34 in 1991–92 to 0.38 in 2017–18, and has grown even more in Dar es Salaam (from 0.30 in 1991–92 to 0.42 in 2017–18).⁴⁴ Despite this polarizing picture, there is also evidence that the livelihoods of some have been slowly improving over time as a result of modest household or individual investments in agriculture, land, and livestock.⁴⁵ In Dar es Salaam, that evidence is writ large on the urban landscape. Housing conditions have improved.⁴⁶ Investments in small properties have provided opportunities for income and modest accumulation. A third of homeowners in the city rent out rooms in their own house.⁴⁷ In 2012, rental of business and residential property provided a quarter of disposable income in Dar es Salaam households.⁴⁸ Dar es Salaam residents have also been investing in both urban and rural land. While this is difficult to quantify

due to the lack of a reliable cadastre, especially at the city level, national data suggest a substantial increase in the proportion of medium-scale farms (over twenty hectares) owned by urban households, which was up from 17.2 percent in 2005 to 78.9 percent in 2010.⁴⁹ These households may not easily map onto the African Development Bank's measure of the middle class, but the evidence for incremental increases in property ownership points to a significant driver of socioeconomic differentiation across urban and rural space.

The "discovery" of Africa's middle classes has generated considerable debate about how they should be understood.⁵⁰ Critical voices have warned that the boosterist discourse around the middle classes suggests that neoliberal economic reform has reaped benefits. Others have questioned the consumption focus of research on the middle class at the cost of analyzing wealth, or whether these middle-class groups constitute a social class at all.⁵¹ The middle classes have a longer history in Africa than their recent discovery suggests. Their emergence is not simply a recent and inevitable step along a universal trajectory of economic and political development. Given the changing ways in which social science has approached questions of class in Africa since the mid-twentieth century, the middle classes, in their true fashion, have not always been clearly discernible.

The actors in most accounts of Tanzania's political economic history are usually members of the elite, made up of top politicians in CCM and government bureaucrats;⁵² their financial backers in the private sector, many of whom are Tanzanian Asians; and top military personnel; or they are the poor.⁵³ This is understandable in a country that embarked on one of Africa's most committed socialist projects, where the ruling party has held power since independence in 1961, and the majority of the population makes a living from small-scale agriculture or the informal economy. Yet the elite-poor binary does not capture the full spectrum of socioeconomic differentiation and social experience in Tanzania. I develop this point in more depth in relation to middle-class appropriation of property in Dar es Salaam in chapters 2 and 3, and provide a brief outline here.

During the German and British colonial periods interstitial classes began to emerge as a result of colonial policies around commodity production, education, and housing.⁵⁴ In Dar es Salaam government jobs were only available to those who had attended the elite government Tabora School or one of the Christian mission schools, which in 1933 amounted to 1.84 percent of the territory's African population.⁵⁵ Nevertheless a "middle stratum" emerged, formed of lower-level government clerks, traders, and landlords,⁵⁶ such that by the eve of independence a colonial report suggested that "a nucleus of an African middle class which enjoys a relatively comfortable standard of living and regards itself as a different and superior stratum of African society" was discernible.⁵⁷ Yet this was a very small group, particularly in comparison to other African countries with much longer histories of development in the professions, trade, or landownership.⁵⁸ The class relations of the independence period have been most thoroughly laid out by Issa

Shivji, who argued that this small middle stratum of clerks, traders, and teachers solidified into a petty bourgeoisie during the independence struggle, out of which a “bureaucratic bourgeoisie” or ruling class finally emerged and took control of the state and the economy.⁵⁹ The shift to socialism and the associated nationalization of productive assets, trade, and property enabled the bureaucratic bourgeoisie to wrest control of the economy from the commercial bourgeoisie, most of whom were Asian, though they were still subordinated to the international bourgeoisie. The bureaucratic bourgeoisie was formed of the top echelons in politics, the administration, economy, and military and constituted about 0.1 percent of the labor force in the 1970s.⁶⁰ Below it, Shivji parsed the petty bourgeoisie into three strata based on occupation and position in the party-state bureaucracy: an upper stratum of intellectuals, headteachers, higher civil servants, professionals, prosperous traders, farmers, transporters, businessmen, and private executives; a middle stratum of employees in mid-level government and parastatal positions, teachers, salaried employees, rich farmers, soldiers, police, security and military personnel; and a lower stratum of small shop-owners, craftsmen, and lower-salaried workers. Despite laying out these different strata, Shivji’s analysis was mostly concerned with the class dynamics of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, and he had less to say about the petty bourgeoisie.

Subsequent work on the socialist period has taken this middling group more seriously, underlining the relationship between these groups and the politics of urban space. Joseph Kironde and James Brennan have examined how elites and middle classes accessed and profited from urban space through landlordism and housing schemes (see chapters 2 and 3).⁶¹ Dar es Salaam’s rentier class of the 1960s and 1970s was made up of landlords “of varying means and all colours.”⁶² Control over urban property was central to the race and class dimensions of national politics. It also underpinned livelihood strategies for many urbanites beyond the urban elite and shaped the popular politics of the time for the urban majority. For example, landlords, as well as traders, shopkeepers, and civil servants, came under increasing scrutiny in the 1970s, their socialist credentials subject to suspicion. In the popular discourse of the time, this group was often referred to as *naizisheni* or *naizi* (from “Africanization,” the move to replace colonial and Indian control of the economy, property, and the state after independence).⁶³ At the same time, the educated middle classes asserted their symbolic capital more quietly, as for example through the production and dissemination by urban Christian women of advice literature for young women who had recently arrived in the city.⁶⁴

As *ujamaa*-era controls on accumulation were dismantled in the 1980s, those who could do so embraced the opportunities that came with liberalization and the opportunity to acquire, trade, build, and consume. Those with less access to economic resources and fewer political and bureaucratic connections were more likely to cleave to socialist ideology and modest living.⁶⁵ As liberalization

proceeded through the 1980s and 1990s, the possibilities for middle-class reproduction began to diversify away from the state. There were limited employment opportunities in the private sector, and in business,⁶⁶ the land market developed and private schools were established at the same time as structural adjustment took hold and inequality began to increase.⁶⁷ The changing social fabric was captured in local social commentary on the emergence of the *wakubwa* (“bigshots”) the *matajiri* (“the rich”), as well as the *deiwaka* (“day labourer”), *walalahoi* (“those who sleep heavily after hard labor”), and *wanyonge* (“the oppressed”).⁶⁸ No moniker entered the popular consciousness that readily identified the middle classes, who became “the unmarked carriers of the moral status quo” and who saw themselves as educated, hard-working, altruistic, and modest.⁶⁹ They stood in contrast to the *wakubwa* and *matajiri*, who were widely held to have benefited from liberalization through corrupt practices and who were viewed with a mixture of envy and suspicion as a result.⁷⁰ They also stood in contrast to the poor, a position most commonly expressed through the ideology and practices of *maendeleo* (“development”). *Maendeleo*, on a personal level, indicated the achievement of a certain level of education and an ability to plan and improve one’s life. People who demonstrated personal *maendeleo* undertook activities such as membership in women’s groups or investment in modest long-term projects such as new-breed dairy cows, new crops, houses, and rental properties.⁷¹ They patronized the respectable performing arts and avoided those they considered *ya ushenzi* (“uncivilized”).⁷² Others saw it as their responsibility to “develop” the poor through NGO or social protection work.⁷³

By the time the African Development Bank discovered the middle classes in the 2010s, they were already a socioeconomic and cultural force in Tanzania, even if they were difficult to pin down. Macroeconomic growth in the 2000s was not accompanied by structural change in the economy. The lack of industrialization has meant that the middle classes are not precisely defined by the relations of production and have historically been more dependent on the state for their economic and social reproduction. Agriculture is the largest sector of employment (tables 1 and 2).⁷⁴ Manufacturing and construction offer higher incomes than agriculture but employ smaller proportions of the population (4.6 percent and 2.5 percent respectively in 2020–21).⁷⁵ Foreign Direct Investment has been skewed towards extractive industries and has not generated large numbers of jobs.

The middle classes are difficult to grasp in this macroeconomic picture, not least because many of them have developed a portfolio of economic activity to maximize possibilities and minimize risk. Those I have spoken with include high- and low-level state employees, salaried workers in international companies and the banking, insurance, and legal professions, sales managers, employees of religious institutions and universities, business owners, the self-employed, and those retired from public service. Most rely on a combination of formal employment with a business or self-employed activities. Many of them are also homeowners,

TABLE 1 Percentage distribution of employed persons aged 15+ by sector, United Republic of Tanzania 2020–21

Sector	Percentage
Agriculture	58.4
Private	25.8
Household activities	13.0
Public	2.8

SOURCE: National Bureau of Statistics (Tanzania) 2022: 36.

TABLE 2 Percentage distribution of employed persons aged 15+ by occupation, United Republic of Tanzania 2020–21

Occupation	Percentage
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	59.8
Elementary occupations ^a	13.8
Service workers and shop sales workers	11.7
Craft and related workers	8.1
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	2.6
Technicians and associated professionals	2.1
Professionals	0.9
Clerks	0.6
Legislators, administrators, and managers	0.4

SOURCE: National Bureau of Statistics (Tanzania) 2022: 34.

^a Street vending, shoe cleaning, domestic work, building caretaking and watching, refuse collection, and laboring in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, mining, construction, transport, manufacturing.

landlords, and landowners. For this reason, I suggest it is worth paying more attention to property in order to understand the position of the middle classes in Africa.

MIDDLE-CLASS PROPERTIES

The approach taken in this book is to see middle-class formation as a process that takes place over time as property is accumulated. Property, understood here as land, houses, and landscapes, slowly accretes into economic and cultural capital that is passed on within families. This approach retains the understanding from Karl Marx that class is a social relation generated by the social dynamics of unequal ownership of capital and property. It also recognizes, with Max Weber and later with Pierre Bourdieu, that unequal class relations are reproduced through

culture.⁷⁶ In this book, cultural capital is explored through the aesthetic power of domestic architecture, suburban landscapes, and lifestyles. Finally, the focus on class formation follows E. P. Thompson's insistence that class is neither a structure nor a category, but "something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships."⁷⁷ The book examines how this process is spatialized through the dialectical formation of the middle classes and the suburban frontier.

Marx, Weber, Bourdieu, and Thompson were theorizing the dynamics of European societies in historical conditions very different from those that have structured African societies and economies. Recent anthropological writing on the emergence of the "global middle classes" has developed our understanding of class dynamics beyond Europe and America. In this work social classes are not categories into which people fit based on their relation to the means of production, occupation, or measurements of income or expenditure, which is all but impossible to do in contexts where there has been limited industrialization, where much economic activity takes place informally and most people simultaneously manage several projects that generate income. Rather, social classes are formed over time by conjunctural processes that shape economies, societies, and cultures.⁷⁸ Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, and Mark Leichty have gone the farthest in elaborating a practice approach to class that is cognizant of broader political economic structures but also attendant to the everyday repetition of actions that form the basis of social classes and the distinctiveness, or antagonisms, between them.⁷⁹ The focus on practices is useful in the context of Tanzania. The middle classes, as noted above, may be "unmarked" in the vernacular, but the lack of a collective noun for middling types does not mean that they do not exist in practice. Social classes are also shaped by the things that people do, perhaps unconsciously, in the course of their everyday lives.⁸⁰ In this book, I pay attention to the dispersed yet repeated practices related to property on the suburban frontier: how people acquire, secure, and develop plots of land; how they slowly build a house over time; how they decorate their homes; how they represent the landscape; how they plan for the future; how they spend their leisure time. Land acquisition, landscape formation, house-building, and lifestyle are distinctive repertoires of property practice through which middle-classness emerges on the suburban frontier.

The middle classes have a long history in Africa. Class dynamics in Africa have been shaped by the impact of colonialism, globalization, and limited industrialization; the significance of the state for accessing power and controlling resources; overlapping social and political configurations of authority, community, and identity; and different frameworks of land tenure and property rights. Although the conditions of middle-class formation are specific to particular times and places, education and formal employment are significant factors that have shaped middle-class trajectories over time across the continent and were often interrelated. Early access to formal education during the colonial period, available only to a minority

via mission stations, offered the main route to a salaried, if junior, post in a colonial government administration. This laid the foundations for social inequality as many government employees passed their economic and cultural capital on to the next generation through formal education.⁸¹

Alongside these “conditions of possibility”⁸² for middle-class formation, we must add property. Property in Africa has been examined in relation to the social organization of access, use, and control of productive resources such as people, land, livestock, and natural resources.⁸³ Unequal access to and control over these resources has been central to the dynamics of social inequality over time and is at the heart of class analyses of the agrarian question in Africa.⁸⁴ Property has also been analyzed in relation to the construction and exercise of political authority, citizenship, and inheritance.⁸⁵ Yet, with the notable exception of the work of Nkululeko Mabandla, who shows that land acquired over three generations formed the basis of the relative wealth of the middle-class families that he interviewed in Transkei in 2010,⁸⁶ property has received less attention in discussions of Africa’s middle classes.

Property is multidimensional. In much of Africa, land and houses are significant economic assets. Land can be an input to agricultural production, market gardening, or small-scale business, a vehicle for speculation, a means of saving cash, a source of patrimony when gifted or of income when sold. Land also provides valuable space to build a house. Self-built houses provide relief from the vagaries of the rental market and opportunities for home-based businesses or for renting rooms and houses to others.

Property also stores symbolic capital. Houses and neighborhoods are rich sites for making statements about personhood, status, and taste.⁸⁷ As I show in chapter 4, the new self-built suburbs in northern Dar es Salaam are desirable because they are considered to be neighborhoods of lower-density, higher-quality housing. The symbolic capital of middle-class houses and suburban landscapes can be traced back to colonial land law and urban planning. In British colonies, English land laws imported ideologies of land use and “improvement” in which the capacity to use land in ways considered by the colonizers to be productive was linked to the supposed inherent nature of persons and justified what Bhandar has called a “racial regime of ownership.”⁸⁸ In British colonial Africa, the system of indirect rule was developed to govern Africans through what the British thought were the natural tribal units in the countryside to which Africans belonged. In urban areas colonial land laws and urban planning were used to distribute access to urban space and infrastructure unequally among racial groups.⁸⁹ Well-laid-out and serviced suburbs were developed for Europeans while the housing and urban infrastructure needs of Africans were neglected on the basis that Africans were urban sojourners who would return to their rural tribal areas where they naturally belonged. Cemented in the built environment and scaffolded by colonial land law and urban planning, the coloniality of urban space was not dismantled in the postcolonial

period.⁹⁰ In many postcolonial African cities, the ideologies of appropriate land use have seeped into urban culture and continue to shape ideas about the aesthetics of urban space and who belongs where in the city. Middle-class identities are built on the apparent order of well-laid-out suburban landscapes. The ordered and civilized use of urban space is taken to reflect the educated and rational properties of middle-class persons, whose symbolic capital appears to justify their natural belonging in larger houses on bigger plots in better neighborhoods.

Finally, property is a disposition and set of practices that has come to characterize middle-class experience on the suburban frontier. Acquiring, securing, and developing land occupies a great deal of time and emotional labor, from the hunt for an affordable and secure plot, the labyrinthine negotiations and transactions with vendors, neighbors and government officials, to the months and years of incremental building. The middle classes invest much time, money, and energy securing their land and making themselves legible to the state in order to obtain insurance against alienation or other unwanted encroachments. As we will see, such efforts have rarely resulted in the successful procurement of legal title to date. Nevertheless, the financial, physical, and emotional investment required to claim a plot and build a house that matches one's sense of social standing incubates a sense of possession and private property.⁹¹ The middle classes think of themselves as developing the land. They build bespoke homes for their families, clear and maintain access roads, plant or erect and maintain boundaries, and bring water and electricity to their plots. They are not simply "occupiers" or "users" of land parcels, as designated in Tanzanian land law—they have found, bought, staked out, enclosed, built, maintained, and developed their own private property. Property has become a "state of mind,"⁹² an embodied practice and a shared set of experiences and interests among the middle classes. Middle-classness is deeply implicated in the making of property on the suburban frontier.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The book examines the development of suburban space in Dar es Salaam by zooming in on three adjacent *mitaa* (subwards) in Wazo Ward in the north of Kinondoni District (map 2): Salasala, Kilimahewa, and Kilimahewa Juu.⁹³ The area has been progressively subdivided into smaller administrative units over time, and so for simplicity I refer to the three *mitaa* as Salasala unless there is a specificity to note. This also reflects the way in which many residents refer to their neighborhood. Fieldwork was conducted through repeat research visits to Dar es Salaam between 2012 and 2018, and is informed by research in Tanzania carried out over the previous fifteen years. There is little reliable formal data to be collected on land use and property ownership over time in informally developed neighborhoods such as Salasala: only formally owned property appears in the land register, which is in the minority in Dar es Salaam, and even these entries can be erroneous. Recent drives

to formalize property ownership in informal neighborhoods through offering interim property rights have not had much success in making property ownership more legible.⁹⁴ The methods used to gather the data for this book have relied on qualitative and ethnographic approaches. I have switched between ethnographic methods with five key interlocutors, all of whom have built houses in the three *mitaa*, and 210 qualitative interviews with a broad range of suburban residents of different social classes; local, municipal, and national officials; community groups, planners, and local politicians.

Chapters 1 and 2 examine the development of Dar es Salaam's suburban frontier through the relationship between class formation and property. In chapter 1, "Groundwork: The Coloniality of Space," I examine how, since the establishment of the city in the last third of the nineteenth century, those in better-off positions have reproduced their relative privilege through property. From the German and British colonial officials who alienated land to suit their interests, to the Arab, Indian, and African landlords who built and rented urban property, to the post-colonial elite members of party and government who manipulated state housing schemes, those who could claim and invested in property. In so doing they shaped the city and laid the foundations of social differentiation on the basis of race and class. Yet at the same time African urban residents have a long history of finding space for themselves in the city, however small, and despite property laws being stacked against them. The chapter ends in the late 1970s as the city was convulsed by economic problems, the urban population had almost tripled in just over a decade, and self-built, informal settlements had begun to seep into the peri-urban and rural hinterland as the expanding population sought to find their own solutions to the city's chronic housing shortage.

Chapter 2, "The Suburban Frontier," analyzes the consolidation of the suburban frontier from the 1980s, when Ali Hassan Mwinyi became president. Known as *Mzee Ruksa* or "Mr. Permission," his name is synonymous with the period of economic liberalization and opportunity for the *wabenzi* (those who drove expensive imported cars such as Mercedes Benz). While much has been written on the political and economic elite during this period, less has been said about the middle classes, who also took the opportunity to shore up their position by investing in land and buildings, transforming the city as they did so. From the mid-1980s the period of *mageuzi* (reforms) brought significant economic, political, and sociocultural change and forms the context for much of what follows in this book. These reforms opened up the land market, enabled access to imported consumer goods from bottled beer to everyday plastic homeware items to building materials and cars, and eventually saw the increasing popularity of new lifestyle trends such as baby showers and school graduation parties (explored in chapter 6). Yet while *mageuzi* brought significant change, this period is also characterized by stark continuities with the processes outlined in chapter 1, including socioeconomic inequality and the unequal possession of property. The chapter examines

how this played out on the city's northern edge, as the suburban frontier was pushed north through Kinondoni as more people sought urban land to invest in. A slow-motion land grab unfolded through multiple small-scale instances of dispossession, commodification, and enclosure. By the time of my fieldwork in the mid-2010s, I neither encountered nor learned of any Zaramo who continued to live in Salasala. In their place emerged a periurban economy of farms and homes, many of which were owned by elite and middle-class urbanites who supplemented their incomes with proceeds from their periurban farms. During the 1990s and the 2000s, Kinondoni's periurban zone was transformed into a suburban frontier of investment and enclosure. Plots and houses were enveloped by walls and fences, ever smaller pieces of land were claimed and built on, and the unique self-built suburban landscape took shape.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 flesh out life on the contemporary suburban frontier in Salasala. I start with land, which is foundational to the analysis developed in this book about the suburban frontier, property, and middle-class reproduction. Land enabled the investment of earnings, opened up future income streams (for example through renting or conducting business from the property), projected social status, and ensured social reproduction. But land was also unstable: most suburban residents had built on unplanned land in informal settlements. In this uncertain environment, buyers can be duped by brokers, neighbors can encroach on boundaries, strangers can invade unguarded land, family members can feud over a plot, and government agencies can demolish unauthorized constructions to accommodate official changes in land use. Chapter 3, "Land," explores the ways in which the middle classes are better placed than the urban poor to navigate these challenges, given their generally higher levels of education, their connections to strategically useful individuals, and their experience of and confidence in dealing with government bureaucracy: indeed, many in the middle classes are themselves part of the bureaucracy. The chapter discusses how unplanned land is transacted outside of formal land allocation procedures, and describes the measures that those with knowledge and experience of urban land markets take to secure their investments, including in the local courts. I discuss my interlocutors' experiences with the formal planning and land administration system in their attempts to get their unplanned plots surveyed and titled. Though the middle classes have more resources and networks at their disposal than do the urban poor, they rarely succeed in gaining state recognition of their land ownership and must therefore make do with other strategies to secure their asset. A fine-grained hierarchy of options emerges in which middle-class residents make their property private by placing beacons around their boundaries, building walls, surveying their land, or obtaining an "offer" of a formal title from the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. Herein lies a key difference between the middle classes and the elite, who rarely struggle to obtain state recognition of their property.

Chapter 4, “Landscape,” turns to the relationship between the aesthetic qualities of the suburban frontier and the pursuit of middle-class distinction. In Dar es Salaam, landscape aesthetics are not only a matter of taste and social judgment, but are also deeply informed by colonial attempts to enframe African urban space and the ensuing coloniality of space.⁹⁵ I show how colonial Dar es Salaam was shaped through planning regulations into three racially distinct zones that came to represent separate and distinctive types of urban landscape: *uzunguni*, *uhindini*, and *uswahilini* (the place of the European, the Indian, and the Swahili [African], respectively). Drawing on Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s insistence on the psychological and visceral impact on the colonized of the colonial enfolding of urban space, I analyze middle-class suburban residents’ references to this colonial enfolding as they make and represent suburban space. Just as the colonizers’ self-representation relied on the integral presence of the colonized, so too does middle-class suburban self-representation rely on the presence of *uswahilini*. Middle-class suburban residents in Salasala continue to reproduce the coloniality of space, enfolding *uswahilini* as a chaotic, disorderly space, and to distance themselves from it. Yet this enfolding strategy, this projection of power, is only partial, as the material landscape falls between *uswahilini* (because it is unplanned and lacks services) and *uzunguni* (because of the relatively low-density, high-quality buildings). While the suburban middle classes can build walls around their houses, they cannot protect the suburban landscape from insurgent house-building by the less well-off. It is difficult to assert authority over the landscape amidst the cacophony of claims in the autoconstructed city.

Chapter 5, “Domestic Architecture,” turns to the scale of the home and examines the house-building projects of suburban residents as they attempt to build the home to which they aspire. Houses are significant because, it seems, everyone has a building project. Houses consume time, money, imagination, and emotions. They are also unambiguously visible on the suburban landscape. In a political context in which accumulation and conspicuous consumption are often viewed with suspicion, these houses index the growing inequality that has characterized the postliberalization era in Tanzania. In this chapter I explore the politics of domestic architecture on Dar es Salaam’s suburban frontier, in which the size, style, and speed of a building project are read by family, friends, and neighbors as a statement on how the builders view themselves, their place in Tanzania and in the world. Drawing on the projects of five suburban residents, I examine the ways in which building, decorating, extending, repairing, and living in a house are central to middle-classness. These five residents and their building projects capture a range of similarities and divergencies in terms of socioeconomic position and family configuration, building stage, taste, and aesthetic orientation. This allows us to grasp something of what holds the middle classes together as a social group while also appreciating the differences among them. Houses make a clear statement about the middle-classness of their builders. To the extent that building is

an open-ended process, the capacity to build is key to being middle class. But in their not-quite-as-imagined state, these houses capture both the desires and the frustrated aspirations that characterize middle-classness in Dar es Salaam.

Chapter 6, “Lifestyle,” asks what all this house-building and suburban investment means for everyday life in these neighborhoods. How do people spend their time in suburban space? What new lifestyle practices are possible, and how are existing social practices being reconfigured? The chapter examines how Dar es Salaam’s new suburban neighborhoods are oriented to leisure activities and sites of consumption that have become central to middle-classness. Two things are notable: the expansion of the range of social events that now warrant conspicuous celebration to include new rituals; and the increasing privatization of those celebrations, by withdrawing either into the private space of the home or to an exclusive space in one of the newly constructed suburban private-hire function halls. The chapter first discusses the home as a site of both work and leisure and as a space for the cultivation of distinctive habits, activities, and tastes. I then turn to consider key suburban sites where the middle classes congregate—the private-hire hall, the English-medium private school, and the bar. The suburban neighborhoods that are under construction are increasingly oriented to the sites and services of consumption central to middle-class reproduction.

The conclusion draws the empirical material together to show how residents build and use the suburban frontier to reproduce middle-classness in Dar es Salaam. The suburb is a key site of middle-class reproduction, where property can be invested in and lives can be lived at some remove from the urban poor. Yet the stability of this strategy for middle-class reproduction is threatened by a contradiction at the heart of this sociospatial configuration. For all their efforts to secure land and to build new urban neighborhoods, the middle classes cannot enclave themselves on the suburban frontier. People continue to sell off ever smaller plots of land, and newcomers continue to buy and build whatever they can on it. The threat of *uswahilini* is never far away. And so the middle classes plan their next move. They scope out opportunities in adjacent periurban and rural districts, they buy land, and they plan their next building project. The suburban frontier will move on.

The sociospatial dynamics of the suburban frontier described here challenge contemporary claims about what drives urbanization in Africa. Urbanization is indeed taking place without industrialization, but the processes of accumulation and class formation that drive urbanization are not limited to large-scale, financialized flows or the investments and deals of elites. Part of what drives urbanization in predominantly cash-based economies where housing stock is insufficient are the everyday investments that people make in land and buildings. People’s unequal ability to do so produces not only the poor and the elite: the middle classes have also been constituted through this process. In Dar es Salaam and beyond, they are reshaping the city.