

## Conclusion

Returning to Salasala in 2022, I was struck by two developments. The first seemed to confirm that Salasala had “arrived”: a mall development attached to a ten-storey tower block was under construction along the main tarmac road through Salasala, apparently being built with South African money. It was the tallest structure in Salasala by a considerable margin. Across northern Kinondoni only the private Rabininsia Hospital and the Wazo Hill cement factory, both a few kilometers away in Tegeta, were taller. Within a decade, the retail space along this road had developed from a string of disparate small concrete block “frames” constructed by local residents to rent out to small businesses selling soft drinks, fresh food, and small groceries into a more upscale collection of retail shops and service businesses. Aside from the mall, by 2022 there were two new petrol stations, two large expensive-looking private pharmacies, and several new bars arranged with matching furniture in landscaped gardens that had been built as local investments to serve a more affluent local clientele. The second development suggested something else: that just as Salasala was reaching “peak development,” residents were looking for opportunities to buy plots to build houses and small businesses further out, in places that had yet to fully “arrive.”

When I arranged to visit Rosemary, who had been living in a rapidly densifying neighborhood in Salasala, she invited me to her newly constructed frames in Mabwepande, ten kilometers to the north of Salasala near the border with neighboring Coast Region. To get there, I took a bus to Tegeta, then switched to a shared bajaj (three-wheel motorized transport), which took me several kilometers along earth roads through a half-built landscape of modest newly constructed houses, pieces of land enclosed by makeshift fence posts, and lots of trees, to a small cluster of local shops, beyond which the road disintegrated into several small paths. From

there a motorcycle taxi took me the final kilometer, along a sandy riverbed, to Rosemary's new place. Along the main path through this emerging neighborhood and opposite the only other nearby shop, which sold building materials, Rosemary had constructed a row of five frames. She ran a small grocery business from two of the frames and was in the process of completing the other three for business rentals. She had just moved into a newly constructed, three-bedroom house nearby; the Salasala house was now being rented to tenants. Rosemary explained that it had become too congested there, whereas here in Mabwepande she and her husband had managed to buy the land—from someone who was subdividing a larger piece of land—before prices had started to rise, and there was an opportunity to expand her business as other newcomers arrived. She anticipated that the suburban frontier would come to Mabwepande.

#### THE MIDDLE CLASSES, PROPERTY, AND THE COLONIALITY OF SPACE

Middle-class formation in Dar es Salaam is driven by the shared class project of constructing the suburban frontier. It is a project of making property, landscape, and lifestyle. In Salasala aspirant house-builders bought plots of land and engaged in various practices to secure them: they erected fences, walls and gates, negotiated boundaries and access paths with neighbors, had their plots surveyed, attempted to navigate government bureaucracy to obtain land titles, and contested pieces of land in the local courts. These house-builders accelerated the long, slow process of dispossessing Zaramo farmers through the market that had begun in the 1980s. They transformed the formerly periurban zone that had been dominated by small-scale farms and shifting cultivators into a desirable residential landscape characterized by relatively low-density buildings with sufficient space for a three-bedroom house and a yard for infrastructure such as a water storage tank or a well, a septic tank and soak pit, equipment such as a pickup or a home-based enterprise such as rearing livestock, or a small shop. This shared class project was not only driven by dispossession, commodification, and enclosure on the city's former periurban fringe: it was also an aesthetic project in which ideas about desirable urban space and who deserved to live where in the city were put into practice. The suburban ideal in and around Salasala was to build differently from *uswahilini*, which the middle classes saw as a place of cramped living quarters, constant noise, and a lack of privacy. On the suburban frontier, the middle classes could build what they considered to be good-quality houses, even if most of the streets in Salasala lacked state-provided paving, piped water, electricity, and sanitation. These were not the big, ostentatious houses of the elite, but they were large enough to be distinguished from the homes of the poor.

Modest houses were designed as a variation on the bungalow model, which had been the architectural basis of most residential buildings constructed with

permanent materials since the colonial period, and distinguished by the incorporation of new architectural features and modern materials. They were built with imported reflective glass windows or expensive, locally made hardwood window frames, colored roofing sheets, imported decorative tiles, and domestically produced paints, and internally furnished with a carefully curated mix of locally made and imported furniture and soft furnishings that nodded to a globalized middle-class aesthetic. Beyond their homes, the middle classes invested in small local businesses to suit their tastes and lifestyles. Bars, hair and nail salons, and shops selling livestock feed, fresh food, and groceries lined the main streets through the suburbs, punctuated by a new church or mosque, an English-medium primary school or nursery, or a private-hire hall, creating an archipelago of middle-class sites and services held together on the suburban frontier by the private car. The suburban frontier became a place of middle-class formation where material and cultural capital could be slowly accumulated.

In foregrounding property as material and cultural capital, this book has developed an approach to understanding Africa's middle classes that pays attention to the multidimensional nature of social class. Such an approach takes seriously the new aspirations and experiences, as well as the cultural politics and modes of wealth creation that characterize this emerging social group.<sup>1</sup> Middle-class formation on Dar es Salaam's suburban frontier has gone hand-in-hand with the making of property as land has been commodified and enclosed, houses have been built, and landscapes and lifestyles have taken shape. As they have fenced in their plots, installed gates and grilles, and invested in a landscape that meets their aesthetic aspirations, suburban house-builders have developed a distinctive repertoire of property-based class practices that have mutually constituted the suburban frontier *and* the middle class.

As scholars of property Nick Blomley and Carol Rose have pointed out, property is material, spatial, and social, and requires constant work.<sup>2</sup> In Dar es Salaam this work is similar to the shared "state of mind" that E. P. Thompson identified as the driving force behind the ruling classes' introduction of the Black Act in early eighteenth-century England.<sup>3</sup> Thompson demonstrated that a shared disposition towards property and the law developed among the English ruling class in response to relatively minor threats to their private property from villagers and foresters who claimed agrarian use-rights. The move to protect private property inscribed in the Black Act of 1723 served to dignify the violence of class struggle. In Dar es Salaam, the middle classes have developed a similar disposition towards the property and the landscape they have constructed. This shared "state of mind" in relation to property and landscape channels their class anxieties in apparently neutral ways—"this place will become congested"—rather than in terms that are explicitly exclusionary or violent towards the urban poor. It is true that there is a difference in the class interests that are being protected in these two cases, for the houses and landscapes of the middle classes in contemporary Dar es Salaam are

not equivalent to the properties of the landed gentry in early eighteenth-century England. The land on which the houses were built in Dar es Salaam is a store of value that can be used as savings, income, speculation, or inheritance, but the houses themselves currently have little exchange value, as most people build rather than buy, not least because of the lack, or undesirability, of affordable credit. In addition, houses are not widely used to leverage formal finance due to a combination of the lack of formal property titles and affordable finance options, and a widespread unwillingness to risk a significant asset by using it as collateral. Yet in both cases property held aesthetic value that was central to class positions, and that value was perceived as under threat from class others. In Dar es Salaam, middle-classness was partly characterized by the anxiety that the aesthetic value of the houses and landscapes that had been constructed would be diminished if land continued to be subdivided into smaller plots and sold to lower-income urbanites. The fear of *uswahilini*, of densely arranged, lower-quality housing, was widespread among the middle classes. The property of the suburban frontier—the self-built houses and landscapes that have been explored in this book—is a store of aesthetic value that is central to classed relations on the suburban frontier.

The value judgments attached to different kinds of built environment in Dar es Salaam are a symptom of the coloniality of space. The syntax of the postcolonial city, the coloniality of space, is a mode of making space that draws on and reworks colonial forms of building, imagining, and living in the built environment. The coloniality of space has been assembled by colonial and postcolonial governments and urban dwellers over decades as ideas accrete about who belongs where in the city even though the city itself has changed. This is not to suggest that space is in some way ossified, forever trapped by its colonial enframing, but rather to draw attention to the way that many urban residents continue to make sense of social differentiation in urban space in part through reference to the colonial past.<sup>4</sup> The coloniality of space throws light on the dynamics of urban space as it is made and experienced by the middle classes on the suburban frontier who are anxious to maintain social and spatial distance from the urban poor. This was the very purpose of the original suburbs built by and for Europeans during the colonial period. In the contemporary city the coloniality of space is evident in the choices that the middle classes make about where to live in the city, in ideas about what a good house looks like, in the continued salience of *uzunguni* and *uswahilini* to refer to rich and poor neighborhoods respectively, and the increasing exclusivity of venues for leisure and celebration. It is also evident in the continued uncertainty over land tenure on the suburban frontier, where the apparently neat colonial bifurcation between native/rural/customary and nonnative/urban/statutory broke down long ago as the city grew into its former hinterland and the state failed to clarify the nature of land tenure there. The coloniality of space is therefore central to the contemporary middle-class urban experience—in both shaping the conditions in which many middle-class urbanites were able to access urban land and

also condemning that land to insecurity. It also goes straight to the central contradiction at the heart of middle-class construction on the suburban frontier, for the porosity of land and landscape there threatens its very existence. The middle classes are, in effect, victims of their own success, since their investment in land and housing on the suburban frontier has made it a more attractive place for other aspiring house-builders. That has increased congestion and reduced exclusivity. The middle classes will move on, and the suburban frontier will move with them.

#### THE MIDDLE CLASSES AND THE STATE IN TANZANIA

Across much of Africa, a large proportion of the middle classes are state employees.<sup>5</sup> This is true in Tanzania, although not all middle classes are employed by the state, and neither are all state employees middle class. Yet the conditions for middle-class formation have been created by the state. State employees have received salaries, perquisites, allowances, and (some access to) subsidized housing, during the colonial, socialist, and the postsocialist periods. Others made the most of their social relations, knowledge, and other opportunities to tap state or other resources in order to improve their living conditions. The fruits of these efforts have been particularly evident in the case of property. While many urbanites—not only the middle classes—took part in the slow enclosure of periurban land on the suburban frontier in the wake of the state *ujamaa* and food production campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s, the middle classes and the elite were better placed to capitalize on the ambiguous nature of postcolonial periurban land tenure as land commodification accelerated after the 1990s. They were also instrumental in extending the party-state to the suburban frontier, establishing branches of the CCM and acting as *balози* (the ten-cell leaders) and, after the shift to multipartyism in the mid-1990s, subward governments. They benefited from the wider circulation of cash in the economy under presidents Mwinyi, Mkapa, and Kikwete. While much attention has rightly focused on the ways in which the country's postcolonial political and economic elite have availed themselves of the resources of the state in "grand corruption" schemes,<sup>6</sup> "the state" nevertheless encompasses a wide range of people who do very different kinds of work across different "scales."<sup>7</sup> As Jon Schubert has noted in Angola, many people developed their own ways of "working the system."<sup>8</sup> Constructing middle-classness on the suburban frontier has been a project of slow, quiet accumulation of material and cultural assets in a contradictory context where the state has both enabled and disavowed middle-class formation over decades.

In contrast to middle-class formation in countries such as Angola, India, Mozambique, and South Africa,<sup>9</sup> the Tanzanian state has never publicly championed the middle classes as ideal national citizens, even if they embody national visions of progress such as those embedded in the Tanzania Development Vision 2025.<sup>10</sup> During the socialist period the state actively sought to undermine them,

and the same could be said for the recent government of John Magufuli (2015–21). In the postsocialist period, the middle classes have been mostly invisible, unnamed in official government discourse or policy programming, and uncelebrated when the country ascended to the World Bank income classification of Lower Middle Income status in July 2020. As one commentator opined, the middle class in Tanzania has had to “fend for itself” in a postsocialist country that has not fully turned its back on its socialist past.<sup>11</sup>

The state’s ambivalence towards the middle class was particularly evident during the presidency of John Magufuli, who styled himself after Nyerere as the defender of the nation’s poor and downtrodden against a cast of exploiters, both domestic and foreign. National development was now to be pursued via state investment in large infrastructure projects and factories, and the middle classes were expected to play their part by contributing to the domestic tax base. His public pronouncements excoriated the lifestyle and consumption habits of the elite and he pursued those accused of “grand corruption” in the courts, to much public satisfaction. But he also targeted mid-level government officials whose petty corruption was castigated for hampering national progress and frustrating ordinary citizens. Many were fired, as for example in land administration, but he also cut public servants’ allowances and clamped down on absenteeism and various kinds of fraud (including, for example, relating to educational credentials). Magufuli’s tenure heralded a new political economic landscape for the middle classes in which business, property, and land taxes were aggressively pursued and government workers came under significant scrutiny. Many opined that money was “not circulating” or that democratic space was shrinking; or they viewed Magufuli’s economic and political program as parochial or antibusiness; but most just wanted things to go back to the conditions of the Kikwete period when they were left alone to pursue their various *miradi* (“projects”). All the while, houses continued to be built on the suburban frontier during Magufuli’s presidency and the government launched a drive across the country to encourage people to formalize their land ownership, including on the suburban frontier, where the coloniality of space had long rendered tenurial rights uncertain. Middle-class formation did not come to a halt during the Magufuli era, even if the middle classes had to lie low for a while in order not to draw too much attention to themselves. Hidden in plain sight, their houses on the suburban frontier announced middle-class formation even while they did not seem to officially exist.

In this context the middle classes have quietly positioned themselves as the bearers of legitimate culture sandwiched between what they consider to be a parasitic and immoral elite, who are thought to accumulate wealth through dubious means, and the uneducated poor, who are cast as the subjects of “development.”<sup>12</sup> The middle classes see themselves as having earned their position through a combination of hard work and education, despite the fact that the structural barriers to education success in Tanzania are substantial.<sup>13</sup> Earlier modes of class distinction

continue to reverberate in the present. The connection between education and cultural capital has existed since the colonial period, when an emerging elite, most of whom came from up-country Christian areas and had been to mission or government schools, considered themselves natural leaders on the national stage.<sup>14</sup> The reference to hard work is also a familiar claim to legitimate national, and urban, citizenship from the socialist period. It distances the middle classes from the accusation of exploitation, particularly via the labor of others. In the contemporary period the middle classes consider their social and economic position as the legitimate reward for their educational success, personal capacity for industry, and skill in making the most of available opportunities, while the poor are considered to suffer from a lack of education, or the wrong “mindset.”<sup>15</sup> These classed relations can be witnessed in multiple settings from the development workshop in which middle-class NGO workers proceed with a natural right to instruct the poor on “development” to everyday interactions in which those lower down the social hierarchy wait for instructions to run errands or undertake labor for those higher up, often for the latter’s income generation projects.<sup>16</sup> The flipside is that the nature of these social relations means that there are multiple claims on the incomes of the middle classes, and the redistribution of cash through kin and other social relationships is part of everyday life.<sup>17</sup>

#### URBAN ACCRETION IN “CITIES OF CASH”

Cities accrete.<sup>18</sup> Their built form takes shape slowly over time as urban residents, businesses, governments, investors and many others construct them piece by piece. This book has shown that the South African shopping mall and Rosemary’s shop frames were among the most recent developments on Dar es Salaam’s northern suburban frontier in a long period of slow transformation stretching back to at least the late nineteenth century. Since then, the land in and around Salasala was settled by Zaramo shifting cultivators and then Shomvi and Arab plantations; it was alienated by colonial powers and then sold to Greek plantation owners; it was nationalized and then cleared of subsistence cultivators during the *ujamaa* campaign of the postcolonial state; and most recently it has been enclosed, commodified, subdivided, and built on by urbanites who have transformed the landscape into a frontier of middle-class suburban living.

This book has proposed a way of thinking of the city as an accretion of land and property that is produced in a dialectical relationship with society—the suburb and the middle classes construct each other. As a particular form of urban accretion, the suburban frontier captures one dynamic of contemporary social and spatial change in postcolonial cities where the majority of urban residents build their own houses. The suburban frontier is a dynamic zone created by layers of dispossession, commodification, risk, aspiration, construction, experimentation, and accumulation. As the middle classes have acquired land and built houses,

landscapes, and lifestyles, the suburban frontier has emerged as *the* place where the middle classes are shaped. We need to look more closely at how urban residents are investing in their cities and beyond, to better understand how social class is spatially reproduced in contemporary Africa.

Domestic investment on Dar es Salaam's suburban frontier may not match universalized assumptions about what counts as productive property, value, or surplus, and putting cash into urban property may not offer much in terms of capital accumulation. In economies dominated by cash, land and houses are important stores of material and aesthetic value. Urban residents' investments in land and housing drive opportunities for land value capture and urban rents in African cities.<sup>19</sup> My aim in this book has been to demonstrate the social and spatial significance of the small, yet widely repeated, investments of the middle classes, which mostly take place outside of global circuits of finance capital as cash is put directly into property. As Jane Guyer and Sara Berry have shown in West Africa, everyday cash transactions and domestic investments in houses, cocoa farms, and teak trees reap "marginal gains" over time and drive social class formation.<sup>20</sup>

This does not mean that African cities and their residents exist outside of global financial markets. The ways in which different financial circuits and systems are interconnected in people's everyday lives would repay further research.<sup>21</sup> Some money that goes into housing comes from remittances that might be sent as cash or through a money transfer operator or mobile money app,<sup>22</sup> though this is not yet a major contributor to the financial landscape in Dar es Salaam.<sup>23</sup> Better understanding the dynamics of urban land is key. The "land grab" literature in Africa has made a recent welcome urban turn and has drawn attention to large-scale investments of elite and international capital in African cities.<sup>24</sup> There have been a few such developments in Dar es Salaam, such as the (now stalled) gated communities at Dege Village and Kawe, though compared to other cities Dar es Salaam has yet to become a favored site for gated community developments.<sup>25</sup> But there is much to learn about how Africa's urban residents are themselves investing in cities, intermediate towns, and rural areas in less immediately visible but no less significant ways.<sup>26</sup>

The most common use of land in African towns and cities is for housing. Yet the question of how most housing is produced in urban Africa has fallen off most governments' and researchers' agendas. In Accra, Addis Ababa, Kigali, and Lagos, international companies and elite members of the diaspora have invested in high-end real estate, or are building "world class" city appendages.<sup>27</sup> In Addis Ababa and Luanda, governments have decided to redesign urban living space or to tackle the housing crisis from the supply side. Yet in most urban areas across the continent, urban residents fashion their own living space.<sup>28</sup> The majority of urban residents make urban space through the everyday practices of saving, building, investing, and renting. This is a form of urban space-making that is small-scale and cash-based, yet widely repeated across time and space. As I have shown for



Dar es Salaam's middle classes in this book, they acquire, buy, occupy, use, enclose, or lend land, and they build, rent, extend, and improve their domestic space. In so doing the middle classes make property, raise land values, produce rental opportunities, and slowly accumulate material and cultural assets that reproduce middle-classness. In the process, they make urban space that works for them.