

Neil Carrier, *Little Mogadishu: Eastleigh, Nairobi's global Somali hub*. London: Hurst (pb £22 – 978 1 84904 475 2). 2017, 340 pp.

A frequent backdrop to studies of urban refugees, sensationalist accounts of terrorism, piracy and money laundering, and even a setting for Hollywood productions, Nairobi's Eastleigh estate is the analytical focus of Neil Carrier's thoughtfully researched and finely written book, *Little Mogadishu*. By tracing the development of one of the most distinctive areas of the Kenyan capital, Carrier explores the factors that have shaped Eastleigh's socio-economic fabric and its very identity and have built its popularity on the national and international stage. His book reveals sharp yet colliding images: a shelter for refugees from Somalia, a hideout for terrorists, and a major trade hub in East Africa. Over the past twenty years, Eastleigh's position at the centre of transnational flows of capital and goods has nurtured the mushrooming of shopping malls, which have become unique landmarks within Nairobi's urban landscape. This trend has consolidated the area's reputation among Kenyans and Somalis as a vast marketplace in which wholesalers and retailers can find any item at a competitive price. At the same time, 'Little Mogadishu', the title of the book and the nickname by which the area is known in the Kenyan and international press, conjures up ideas of both foreignness and danger. The aim of this urban ethnography is to peel off this label and explore what lies beneath: the human infrastructure of the estate and the web that connects the neighbourhood to the rest of the country and the world. In doing so, Carrier examines the transformations of Eastleigh against the broader historical trajectory of colonial and postcolonial Kenya, arguing, in fact, that the evolution of the neighbourhood provides a lens to look, simultaneously, at urban development in Africa, dynamics of globalization from below and diasporic practices.

The first two chapters of the book reconstruct the origins of Eastleigh, delving into the zoning logics that drove colonial urban planners and explaining how a mostly Asian residential suburb was gradually turned into a destination for internal migrants of Somali origin as well as others from north-eastern Kenya. As civil war broke out in Somalia, several waves of displaced Somalis fled the violence and famine and made their way to the area. Little Mogadishu began to take shape. Chapter 3 reveals the complex ethnic tapestry that lies behind the widespread view of the neighbourhood as a Somali enclave, teasing out the area's multi-layered identity. Carrier reveals that Eastleigh is not only a transit area for refugees waiting for resettlement to a third country, but also a catalytic site of entrepreneurial aspirations and consumer desires. Chapter 4 discusses how these aspirations and desires are translated into practices through the mobilization of different forms of capital, while Chapter 5 fleshes out and interrogates the notion that trust dominates the self-narratives of Eastleigh traders. In fact, Carrier argues that the way in which the concept is used to make sense of the functioning of local social and economic relationships is steeped in the values of clanhood and Islamic faith, yet simultaneously glosses over inequalities and hierarchies harkening back to Somalia's pre-war past. Chapter 6 follows the economic and social life of four different commodities: *khat* (a mild narcotic grown in central Kenya and popular in the Horn of Africa), foodstuff, gold and clothing. Here, Carrier describes the value chain of each item, examining their significance in the neighbourhood economy and the social networks that straddle local and international boundaries. The last chapter discusses both the place of Eastleigh within the Kenyan state's vision of development and its site as a source of anxieties within a context of Kenya's military involvement in the volatile Somali region, the looming threat of terrorism, and the securitization of refugee policies.

As he charts Eastleigh's overlapping social, ethnic and economic maps, Carrier zooms in and out of the neighbourhood, interspersing the description of broader dynamics with the individual experience of Somali refugees and diasporas lured in by the 'Eastleigh dream'. What emerges is the description of an urban space actively shaped by the often conflictive interaction of policymakers' and residents' visions of the neighbourhood.

This book is a useful reminder that the reality of displacement, particularly with reference to the protracted Somali crisis, is multifaceted and animated by both needs and aspirations that translate into, and thrive upon, material infrastructures. It also offers a refreshing contribution to the literature on transnationalism, which too often emphasizes the significance of flows while forgetting that of locality and permanence.

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Alex de Waal, *Mass Starvation: the history and future of famine*. Cambridge: Polity Press (hb £55 – 978 1 5095 2466 2; pb £16.99 – 978 1 5095 2467 9). 2018, xiv + 260 pp.

Alex de Waal's *Mass Starvation* argues that 'better politics have led to fewer famines' (p. 172) and shows that famines have become rarer, and that relatively few people now die in them. Humanitarian and public health efforts have helped, but most important, the book argues, has been (p. 6) 'the decline of megalomania and of political attitudes that regard people as dispensable'. Nazi Germany's 'Hunger Plan' to depopulate the Soviet Union is seen as archetypical of famine as a mass political crime, but the book identifies many others.

De Waal divides the history of famines into those of: (1) European colonialism; (2) the period 1914–50; (3) 'post-colonial totalitarianism' (including the 1958–62 famine in China); and (4) crises since 1986, mostly associated with conflict. The last group includes smaller 'new atrocity' famines in Uganda, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan and Nigeria. The recent absence of famine from Ethiopia, despite considerable population growth, is given a chapter. It might be questioned whether some of the events discussed – such as Japan's treatment of war prisoners – are best described as 'famine'.

It is hard to disagree with de Waal's claim that the recent 'near eclipse' of famine owes much to political progress – in the broad direction of democratization. He discusses Amartya Sen's point that famines do not arise in democracies. He also acknowledges that famines are often multi-causal, that non-political factors can be involved, and that in certain respects population increase can be problematic. Nevertheless, apropos some crises, he arguably gives insufficient weight to non-political factors some of which are outlined below. In explaining the recent decrease of famines, there is inadequate discussion of progress in infrastructure, communications and mass education. The book would have been helped by a list of acronyms and the endnotes often contain little comment or substantiation. Finally, criticized views are sometimes portrayed in over-simple terms. It is partly a campaigning book; excellent in places, elsewhere frustrating.

First, a specific point. De Waal refers (p. 80) to the exceptional famine that led to 'the doubling of child mortality in Iraq in the 1990s, due to the havoc caused by the first Gulf War, the international sanctions regime and the policies of Saddam Hussein'. He exhibits some caution about the exact number of deaths.