The Coloniality of Space: Landscape, Aesthetics, and the Middle Classes in Dar es Salaam

Claire Mercer

Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics, London, UK,
c.c.mercer@lse.ac.uk

Abstract: In Dar es Salaam, an aesthetic politics of landscape shaped by the coloniality of space is central to middle-class boundary work that drives the city's middle classes to congregate in the city's northern suburbs. The colonial city was divided into three racially marked zones that became known as *uzunguni*, *uhindini*, and *uswahilini* (the place of the European, Indian, and African, respectively). The coloniality of space remains as the spatial residue of this colonial enframing. It endures in an aesthetic politics of landscape in which ideas about what, and who, makes good urban space in terms of architecture, topography, and planning, and who deserves to live where. The paper examines how middle-class suburban residents' mobilisation of the coloniality of space naturalises existing social and spatial hierarchies in the city.

Ikisiri: Katika jiji la Dar es Salaam usimamizi wa mvuto wa mandhari ya jiji umeathiriwa na upangaji wa mji wa tangu enzi za ukoloni ambapo watu wa tabaka la kati ndiyo wamekuwa kiini cha uhalisia wa mpangilio huo ambapo watu wa tabaka la kati wamejazana katika vitongoji vya kaskazini mwa jiji. Enzi za ukoloni jiji hilo liligawanywa katika kanda tatu zilizotambulishwa kwa rangi za wakazi wake ambazo zilijulikana kama *uzunguni*, *uhindini* na *uswahilini* (makazi ya watu wa asili ya Ulaya - yaani wazungu, wahindi na waafrika, mtawalia). Bado kuna mabaki ya upangiliaji wa maeneo ya makazi kwa kufuata uchoraji uliofanywa kipindi cha ukoloni. Mpangilio uliopo sasa bado unaakisi sera ya kupanga mandhari unaohusiana na kilichopo, nani anahusika, kupangilia vizuri maeneo ya mijini kwa kujielekeza katika usanifu wa majengo, topografia na mipango, na nani anastahili kuishi wapi. Chapisho hili linaangazia namna wakaazi wa tabaka la kati wanavyoendeleza madaraja ya kijamii na kimaeneo kwa kufuata upangaji wa makazi ndani ya jiji unaoendeleza ule wa toka enzi za ukoloni.

Keywords: coloniality, land, landscape, aesthetics, class, Dar es Salaam

In this paper I argue that an aesthetic politics of landscape shaped by the coloniality of space has driven Dar es Salaam's middle classes to congregate at the city's northern suburban edge. Dar es Salaam is a predominantly autoconstructed city where the long-term lack of state investment in the city's housing stock has meant that the bulk of the urban fabric has been built over time by residents. The middle classes have been buying land and building houses on the city fringes since the 1980s. In the process they have constructed a landscape that they find aesthetically pleasing. This landscape has become central to middle-class boundary work—the effort, both conscious and unconscious, that goes in to

maintaining middle-class social and spatial distinction (Lentz 2020; Mercer 2020, 2024). Africa's middle classes are in formation, shaped by the long-term political, economic, and cultural dynamics of the colonial and post-colonial periods (Sumich 2018; West 2002). This approach to the middle class maintains a relational approach from Marx that is embedded in unequal control of land and property, as well as the recognition from Weber that class differences are also cultural. To understand the cultural dimensions of the contemporary middle classes, I draw on recent anthropological research on the "global middle classes" that examines how cultural distinction is reproduced through daily practices related to fashion, domestic architecture, interior decoration, family relations, and parenting (Heiman et al. 2012; Liechty 2003; Page 2019). I ask how everyday activities related to the aesthetic politics of landscape are becoming central to middle-class formation in Dar es Salaam.[1]

Landscapes can be understood as material forms of the urban environment that are also experienced, read, and represented aesthetically. The "aesthetic" here refers to the visual surfaces of the built environment—to the way things look—and to the ways in which landscapes are sensed and judged by residents (Dikeç 2015; Jazeel 2013). What people build and how it is read indexes unequal social positions (Gastrow 2024; Holston 1991). In Dar es Salaam, different parts of the city are deemed to be quiet or noisy, spacious or cramped, comfortable or stiflingly hot. The quality and condition of building materials is visually apprehended as being up-to-date or old; the streetscape is experienced as crowded or open; the configuration of buildings densely packed or widely spaced. Roads and pathways are judged for navigability, state of repair, and quality of materials (durable tarmac or erosive organic matter); while domestic lives and home-based businesses might be observable from the street or hidden behind concrete walls. These aesthetic engagements with the city are far from the Kantian notion of "disinterested" aesthetic judgement, for they inform residents' ideas about what, and who, makes good urban space, and therefore who deserves to live where in the city. As Ghertner (2015:16) has noted in Delhi, urban residents share an "aesthetic disposition" that recognises a hegemonic vision of what good urban space (the "world class city") looks like that pits city officials and middle-class neighbourhoods against slums. Following Rancière (2004:12), we can read residents' aesthetic judgements on different neighbourhoods in the city as a "system of self-evident facts of sense perception", or as "a priori spatializations" (Jazeel 2013:19)—a form of spatial politics in which hegemonic ideas about what and who makes desirable urban space is a contingent manifestation of the "distribution of the sensible." For Rancière (2004), the politics of aesthetics lies in the disruption of that common understanding, but here I follow Jazeel (2013) in trying to understand how that common understanding is produced as a way of thinking about middle-class formation in Tanzania. The aesthetic politics of landscape in Dar es Salaam reveals a hierarchy of urban landscapes that appears naturalised, but is in fact socially and spatially produced. Simply put, it seems self-evident that the middle classes should live in better neighbourhoods characterised by relatively large plots and houses, good quality building materials, and low building densities while the elite congregate in the city's most exclusive

residential areas and the urban poor are relegated to interstitial or environmentally hazardous environments. The normalisation of who belongs where in the city does political work by naturalising socio-spatial inequality. The aesthetic politics of the suburban landscape offers a way to understand the social and spatial politics of middle-class formation in the postcolonial city.

Colonial Dar es Salaam was divided into three racially marked zones which came to represent distinctive types of urban landscape. These became known as *uzunguni* (the place of the European), *uhindini* (the place of the Indian), and *uswahilini* (the place of the Swahili or African). In this paper I explore how this colonial frame resonates in the present for many of Dar es Salaam's residents. At first glance it might seem that the development of the suburbs as a distinctive landscape modelled on *uzunguni* has allowed the middle classes to find space for themselves in the city at a distance from *uswahilini*. But in the same way that the middle classes are not quite the elite, the suburban landscapes they have built are also not quite *uzunguni*. On closer inspection, these suburbs seem unfinished: many homes are arranged irregularly, most roads are untarmacked, and the provision of services such as water, electricity, sewage, and drainage are patchy. They are also heterogenous: smaller, older houses, constructed with cheap materials on smaller plots, intersperse the better-appointed homes. In contrast with other places where the wealthy and upper-middle classes have retreated into exclusive enclaves and walled compounds (Caldeira 2000; Harms 2016; Zhang 2010), the landscape of Dar es Salaam's self-built suburbs is shaped by both the middle classes and the urban poor (Andreasen et al. 2020; Izar et al. 2023). The polycentric governance of urban land and planning that is a hallmark of the coloniality of space in Dar es Salaam makes it very difficult for the middle classes to police insurgent house building. This in-between position, of having built suburban landscapes of distinction yet being unable to protect them from infiltration by poorer urban residents, captures a defining characteristic and central tension at the heart of contemporary middle classness in Dar es Salaam.

The Coloniality of Space

I develop the idea of the coloniality of space as a way of understanding the aesthetic politics of landscape in postcolonial Dar es Salaam. Coloniality is the "dark side of modernity", an enduring "colonial matrix of power" scaffolded by racial and patriarchal systems of knowledge and reproduced through systems of economy, authority, gender, sexuality, knowledge, and subjectivity (Mignolo 2011:8; Quijano 2007). Geographical analyses have begun to trace coloniality at work in different contexts ranging from infrastructure investments, to the garment export industry, to air pollution.[2] I add to this literature by exploring the ways in which one postcolonial city has been profoundly shaped by the coloniality of space. Colonial urban planning, while 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 (Mitchell 1991; Myers 2003). The coloniality of space lingers in the built environment and the visceral experience of the city. The colonial is not the only logic of the production of urban space (de

Boeck and Plissart 2004; Simone 2004), but it remains as the spatial residue of the coloniality of power (Stoler 2008). This is manifest in a land tenure regime that has persisted since the colonial period in which secure tenure is enjoyed by the minority; in the lack of investment in the city's housing stock that has forced the vast majority of the city's population to construct their own houses; and in an aesthetic politics of landscape through which ideas about what, and who, makes good urban space and who deserves to live where serves to legitimise historically embedded unequal access to land, services, and housing.

Scholarly analyses of the colonial imprint on contemporary African cities have highlighted the racialised nature of colonial urban planning and its afterlives. Quayson's (2014:86) *Oxford Street, Accra* describes the different "socio-spatial ecologies" in the city that emerged as a result of colonial and post-colonial urban planning practices and produced a "heartland corridor of privileged neighbourhoods" extending northeast from the city centre. Myers' (2006) account of the contemporary legacies of urban government and housing policy in late-colonial Lusaka examines the unintended afterlives that live on in post-colonial governance and planning, while Okoye (2021) has shown that the aesthetics of colonial urban planning continue to shape the way city officials in Accra think about urban space. In Nairobi, Pfingst and Kimari (2021) analyse how practices of settler-colonial punishment and carcerality shape the landscape of Mathare. Kimari (2021) further unpacks the colonial "ecologies of exclusion" that shape contemporary life there as a form of the coloniality of space. In Luanda and Maputo, Roque (2012) and Morton (2019) describe how the cement city of the colonisers (*cidade*) and the reed city of the colonised (*musseques* in Angola; *cidade de caniço* in Mozambique) are read locally as both reflecting and producing social differentiation. As Gastrow (2017, 2024) notes in Luanda, it is widely held that the *cidade* is the place of "good urbanism", good people, and good development.

In *Colonising Egypt*, Mitchell (1991) shows how "enframing" worked as a strategy of 19th century British colonial power that operated by dividing and containing space. The re-design of Cairo, the building of army barracks and model villages, and the establishment of a new education system, projected spatial order and discipline. Power was spatially diffused throughout the city and the countryside through the microphysical effects of urban planning on the body and the metaphysical effects of education on the mind. "Enframing" captures the spatial and psychological effects of colonial authority. Building on Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, Mitchell (1991) shows that the effect of colonial enframing was to both separate, and mutually constitute, colonised and coloniser. The representation of the European as rational, modern, and civilised rested on the representation of the African as irrational, backward, and uncivilised. So it was with the landscapes of the colonial city: the representation of the colonial city as ordered, spacious, clean, and civilised relied on the representation of African urban landscapes as chaotic, congested, unsanitary, and uncivilised. In the work of Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o we are confronted with how this enframing was experienced by the colonised. For Fanon the racialised bifurcation of the colonial city—powerfully described in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963)—was key to the psychological trauma inflicted by colonialism and racism. In his description the European

enclave was characterised by the colonised as a space of order, modernity, and physical luxury, evidenced by the quality of buildings, the provision of streetlights and permanent roads, and the abundance of food. The space of the colonised—the native town—was described as the negative opposite of the coloniser's, characterised by congestion and the lack of embodied comforts, "starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light" (Fanon 1963:39). Writing about postcolonial Kenya two decades later, Ngũgĩ (1986:16) insisted, in *Decolonising the Mind*, that the traces of colonialism remained scattered across contemporary African landscapes, cultures, and what he termed "the mental universe of the colonised." Fanon and Ngũgĩ show that colonial alienation entailed the reordering of material space, and was also experienced psychologically in the struggle in, and for control over, the spaces of cultural production in the postcolony such as the community centre, the theatre, the university, the hospital, and the street (Kipfer 2007). The coloniality of space emerges from the insistence that colonial and postcolonial worlds have been shaped not only by the exertion of colonial power over the material landscape, but also by the less visible but no less devastating spatial and psychological effects of that power, and how people think about and experience the landscapes that have been produced under those conditions.

In Tanzania the aesthetic politics of landscape are saturated with the residue of the coloniality of space. The colonial enframing of Dar es Salaam divided the city into three zones distinguished ostensibly by building regulations. In practice the zones were racially distinct and became known in Swahili as *uzunguni*, *uhindini*, and *uswahilini*. This colonial enframing remains pervasive as a typology of postcolonial urban space that is used by urban residents to refer to expensive planned neighbourhoods (*uzunguni*), commercial districts historically dominated by the Indian community (*uhindini*), and unserviced neighbourhoods containing densely packed housing (*uswahilini*). This enframing is heard in everyday life across the country. It is perhaps surprising that the colonial enframing of Dar es Salaam has so much currency in the city today, not least as the city has been reframed multiple times through the post-colonial state ideologies of nationalism, socialism, and neo-liberalism (Aminzade 2013; Brennan 2012; Brownell 2020; Degani 2022; Rizzo 2017; Shivji 2021; Todd et al. 2019; Tripp 1997). All have left traces on the city's material landscapes and the geographical imaginations of its inhabitants. Yet the colonial enframing of the city has lingered in the post-colonial period. To argue that traces of colonial enframing continue to have currency in the built environment and in the ways that urban residents experience and make urban space in contemporary cities does not imply a lack of agency among urban dwellers or reify a colonial path dependency (Táíwò 2022). Rather my aim is to show how the reproduction of social class is spatially constituted in the present as middle-class urban residents mobilise these ideas in the service of boundary work. Paying attention to the aesthetic politics of landscape reveals the endurance of the coloniality of space in the legal, material, and imaginative legacies that shape land tenure, the quantity and quality of urban housing, ideas about what good urban space looks like, and why some people live in better places than others. In this paper I draw on interviews with residents of Salasala in Wazo Ward,[3] located approximately 20 km north of the city centre at the heart of the suburban frontier (Figure 1), to show
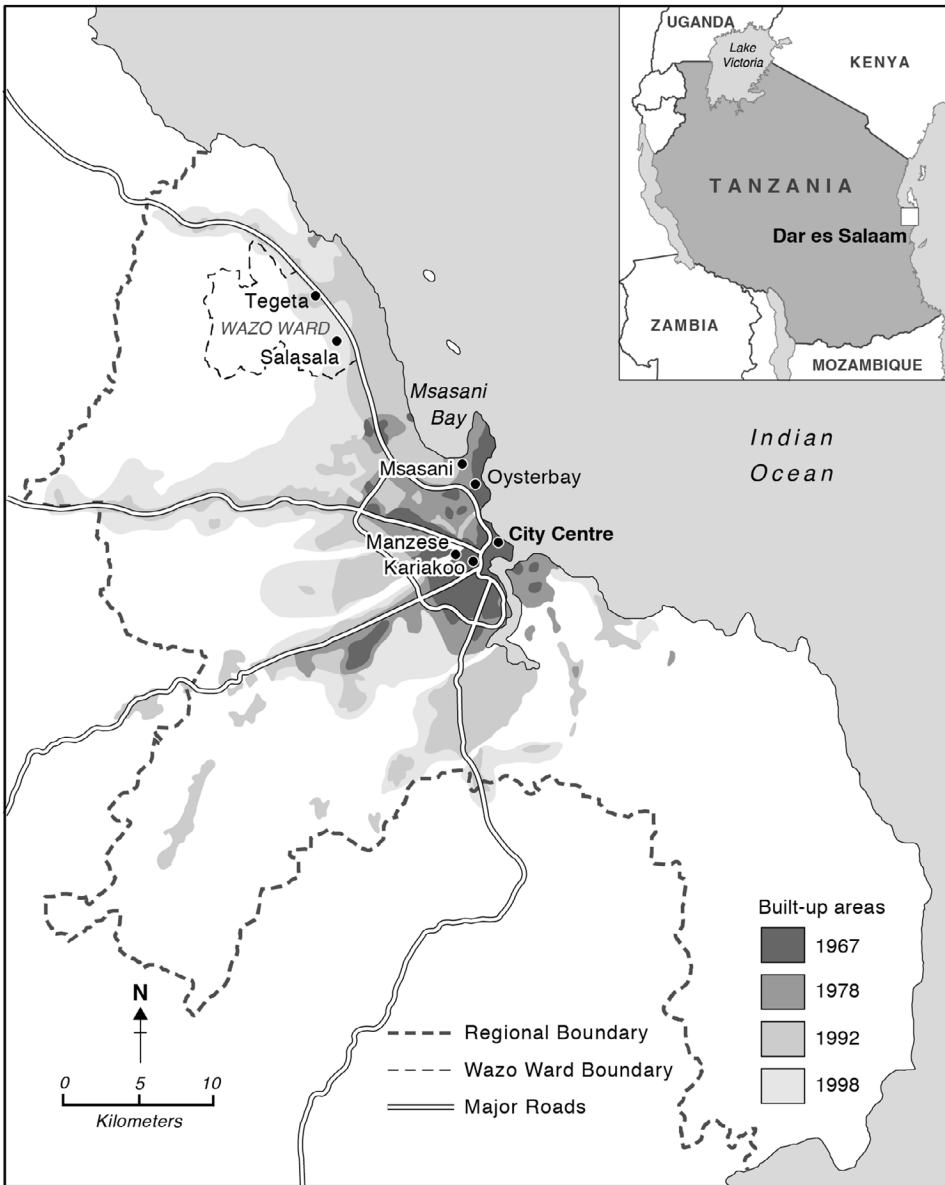
Figure 1: Dar es Salaam, showing growth of the city centre of time and the location of Wazo Ward and Salasala (drawn by Mina Moshkeri, 2018, based on Briggs and Mwamfupe [2000] and Andreasen [2013])

how middle-class suburban residents repeatedly draw attention to the aesthetic qualities of order and low density that distinguishes the suburban landscape—and them—from *uswahilini* and the urban poor. In the same way that the enframing of the colonial city needed the native town against which to define itself, so the representation of middle-class neighbourhoods relies on the presence of *uswahilini*. Middle-class suburban residents continue to enframe *uswahilini* as a chaotic, disorderly landscape, and to distance themselves from it. And yet this enframing

strategy, this projection of power, is only partial, as the suburban landscape falls between *uswahilini*, with its lack of formal urban planning and services, and *uzunguni*, with its 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 poor. It is difficult to maintain aesthetic authority over the landscape in the autoconstructed city.

Enframing Dar es Salaam

The foundations for the enframing of Dar es Salaam as a city divided into distinctive landscapes characterised by race, architecture, and land tenure were laid during the German (1885–1916) and then British (1919–1961) colonial periods. The Germans alienated all land in the territory. The native population was granted permissive rights of occupation in accordance with native law and custom, yet these rights were never considered equivalent to the private property rights afforded to settlers (United Republic of Tanzania 1994). Under British indirect rule a form of decentralised despotism developed in which European settlers were governed by, and had rights as citizens enshrined in, imported European law, while native subjects were administered according to customary law overseen by a native authority (Mamdani 1996). The dual system rested on the racial and spatial assumptions that Europeans belonged in towns while Africans were members of rural tribes (Iliffe 1979). These assumptions were coded in colonial land law and administrative practices. The British did not consider customary law applicable in townships (Fimbo 1992). Secure land tenure (a granted right of occupancy) was available in state-planned urban zones and on German-era freeholds, but Africans were granted only deemed rights of occupancy under customary law outside of the township boundaries. This apparently neat bifurcation of land rights into native/rural/customary and non-native/urban/statutory provided the parameters within which land could be legally occupied, but it could not fully contain the reality on the ground as the city grew. This was most apparent in Dar es Salaam's peri-urban and rural hinterland, which increasingly served to accommodate rural migrants and urban workers (Brennan and Burton 2007). After the 1940s the city expanded rapidly into its hinterland, yet residents there continued to access, occupy, and transact land according to customary practices (Kombe and Kriebich 2000). Although it is now possible to obtain a granted right of occupancy (i.e. secure tenure) on land outside of the city centre, in practice it is expensive and bureaucratic (Mercer 2024). In 2003, 80% of Dar es Salaam's residents lived in self-built unplanned settlements, the majority without secure title (Gastorn 2010). This is the hallmark of the coloniality of space. While it has facilitated the opportunity to access land, it has also fomented chronic ambiguity in land rights and tenure security as the city has expanded.

Urban space was also enframed through urban planning regulations. The 1891 German building ordinance demarcated three zones of building construction: one stretching from the east of the town along the harbour in which European style buildings could be constructed in permanent materials; one set back from the harbour around India Street in which buildings of permanent materials were
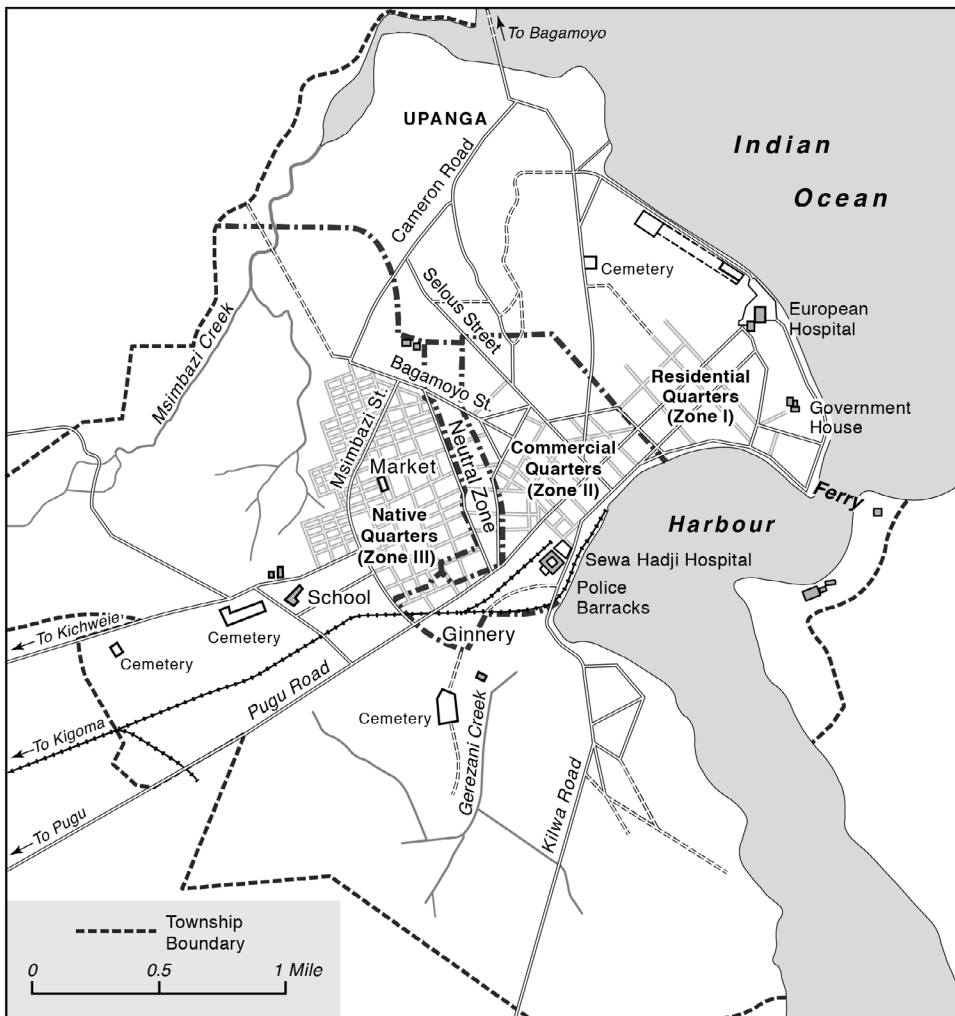
Figure 2: Dar es Salaam in the 1920s, showing urban planning Zones 1–3 (drawn by Mina Moshkeri, 2023, based on 1925 map of Land, Survey and Mines Department, TNA 12589/I, in Brennan [2012]; reproduced with permission of Ohio University Press)

permitted; and the rest of the town in which local building materials were permitted. The ordinance reflected the Germans' concern with control over space, property, and health. It regulated the construction of permanent buildings by Arabs, Indians, Swahilis, and Europeans; African constructions in local materials could always be removed at a later date. This blueprint for the town was consolidated with the publication in 1914 of the second building ordinance. These regulations were explicitly framed in terms of racial segregation, reserving Zone 1 for Europeans, Zone 2 for Indians, and Zone 3 for natives (Kironde 1994).

The enframing of Dar es Salaam as divided between and contained within these zones lived on in British urban planning (Figure 2). Although people and buildings often transgressed the zone boundaries (Brennan 2012), the enframing of the city

as comprised of three internally organised and racially distinct landscapes entered local parlance as *uzunguni*, *uhindini*, and *uswahilini*. As well as being racially inscribed, each zone was also understood as a distinctive, contained landscape within a hierarchy of landscapes. *Uzunguni* was the government area in the city centre housing official buildings and European residences, which extended northwards along the coast and incorporated the suburban development of Oysterbay from the 1930s. It was characterised by low-density, high-quality single- and two-storey buildings arranged regularly along wide, paved, lit streets. Houses built to European standards contained kitchens, bathrooms, and large glass-paned windows (Smiley 2010). The location of this zone along the coast also enabled Europeans to benefit from the sea breeze. Africans such as domestic workers were tolerated in *uzunguni* but were otherwise excluded (Brennan and Burton 2007). *Uhindini*, the commercial and residential area dominated by Dar es Salaam's Indian community, contained a mixture of two- and three-storey stone buildings and more temporary local constructions which doubled as home and shop. The area underwent a process of gentrification from the late 1920s and the resulting re-built environment reflected the relative wealth of the Indian community, with buildings constructed in architectural styles ranging from classical to Indian interspersed with religious buildings (Brennan and Burton 2007). *Uswahilini* began life as the "native quarter" and developed into the neighbourhood known as Kariakoo. From the 1920s Kariakoo became a densely populated African neighbourhood, characterised by rows of houses arranged in a grid pattern around the town's main fresh food market. Self-built Swahili houses constructed with mud, mangrove poles, and palm fronds contained rooms leading off a central corridor and a shared rear compound for cooking and washing facilities. A landlord occupied one room and rented the others out. Living conditions were poor and basic infrastructure was lacking, as investment was disproportionately directed at *uzunguni* (Kironde 1994).

The dividing and containing of Dar es Salaam into three racialised zones characterised by different standards of architecture, urban planning, and investment emerged over time in an ad hoc way, born of the colonial impulse to racially segregate and control urban space, and was subsequently shaped by a lack of commitment to comprehensive urban planning and the wilful neglect of African neighbourhoods (Njoh 2008). Yet the colonial enframing of the city provided a simple and powerful geographical imagination of the city's landscapes in which an "urban entitlement" to space, housing, and infrastructure was widely understood in terms of a racial hierarchy (Brennan 2012). The effect on Africans was to impose "a psychological atmosphere of African inferiority" (Kironde 1994:97–98) that lingered in to the postcolonial period. The *Nationalist* newspaper captured this when it noted in 1968 that "…we have failed to dismantle the myth of '*uhindini*', '*uzunguni*', and '*uswahilini*'. As a result, negative attitudes of judging people according to the 'racial zones' they live in still persist" (quoted in Brennan 2012:170).

In the post-colonial period, *uzunguni*, *uhindini*, and *uswahilini* became recognisable in urban areas across the country. These landscapes still carried their colonial racial connotations but now reflected distinctions of social class, not least because an emerging bureaucratic elite began to move into the formerly European

neighbourhoods in the post-colonial period (Ntapanta 2022). Beyond Oysterbay, formally planned *uzunguni* landscapes where the post-colonial elite resided could be found in Gangilonga (Iringa), Mlimani and Area D (Dodoma), Isamilo and Capri Point (Mwanza), Forest Hill (Morogoro), Loleza (Mbeya), Kijengi (Arusha), Shangani (Mtwara), and Shanty Town (Moshi) (Kelly 2018; Lugalla 1989). In these neighbourhoods—which were small relative to the town—the wide orderly streets, large plots, and public services laid down during the colonial period were matched by spacious houses, well-tended gardens, and car ports secured behind gates and walls. *Uhindini* continued to be associated with the areas of residence and business of Tanzanian Asians. By the 1990s, *uswahilini* areas housed the majority of the urban poor in unplanned settlements that had developed on marginal and sometimes environmentally hazardous lands. In Dar es Salaam *uswahilini* was synonymous with cramped conditions and state neglect. Water, sanitation, and electricity services, if they existed, were provided by individuals, as was housing, which was mostly accessed via rental rooms with shared facilities in Swahili houses that were densely and irregularly arranged (Limbumba 2010; Sheuya 2007). *Uswahilini* was navigable only on foot by those who knew the place well, and its impenetrable nature—to outsiders—lent it an air of refuge for residents. Daily life took place in public view on the verandas, in courtyards, and in-between spaces; homes provided business premises, particularly for women who conducted their tailoring, food preparation, and brewing businesses from a room, courtyard, or veranda; rooms and kiosks became small retail shops or vegetable stalls; and streets became impromptu performance spaces at night for local music artists, or spaces of celebration for weddings or Eid (Kerr 2018; Lekule 2004; Lewinson 2008). *Uswahilini* invited commentary in popular music by *Bongo Flava*[4] artists such as Professor Jay and Diamond Platnumz, who signposted it as the experience of the city from which they spoke, critiquing the uncollected rubbish, poor housing and roads, the lack of jobs and opportunities, and the random violence meted out to its residents by the city authorities and society at large (Perullo 2011).

Between *Uswahilini* and *Uzunguni*

In a discussion with the Councillor for Wazo Ward in Dar es Salaam's northern suburbs, I asked him to describe the area he represented. His response immediately mobilised the enframing of the city's colonial landscapes: "It's a middle-class area. If you compare it to Manzese—we can say people of the lower level live there; if you go to Masaki, Oysterbay, then high level people live there. Here … it's in the middle. But there is *uswahilini* inside."[5] His response captured the way many Salasala residents reflected on their community with a mixture of pride and anxiety. Salasala, like many of its residents, was in the middle: neither *uswahilini* nor *uzunguni*. Pockets of both could be found in Salasala (Figure 3). There was a small planned area that had begun life as a World Bank-funded resettlement scheme in the 2000s. It now approximated *uzunguni* with its sea views, well-ordered street layout, low density plots, community water scheme, and impressive houses standing behind tall gates. But it was unclear whether this

Figure 3: Different types of domestic architecture next to each other, Salasala, June 2018 (photo by author)

meant that Salasala and other suburban areas like it could therefore be understood as *uzunguni*. Residents who had built impressive houses in the planned area were unequivocal that it could. Discussing the benefits of living in Salasala with Richard and Peter, who both worked in banking and finance, Richard claimed that "we call it Salasala City! Here it is planned, World Bank-financed. This is *uzunguni*—well organised, no local beer stalls ... a well-planned area", and Peter added that "not like Manzese ... there it is highly populated and unplanned."[6] In a separate conversation with Rehema, who had moved from the inner-city informal settlement of Mwananyamala to Salasala in 2008, she said: "Ahh, here there is a breeze! But there it is too congested. There's no noise and disturbance here, it's like being in the village. There it is noisy, people are going to bars and nightclubs. But not here. Houses there are packed tightly together. Here there is no congestion. It's like *uzunguni*."[7]

Despite the claims of Richard, Peter, and Rehema, pockets of *uswahilini* could be found in Salasala in the marginal spaces of the old quarry and the original Salasala settlement surrounding the Radio Tanzania mast, where narrow paths wound between small, densely arranged houses. Even in the planned resettlement area not all of the streets were tarmacked, water did not run all of the time, and the provision of sanitation and electricity was down to the individual homeowner. Such conditions typified the rest of the Salasala landscape, populated by a mix of houses in terms of size, quality, and architectural distinction, built on irregularly

organised plots, and traversed by earth roads and paths except for two short tarmac roads that quickly petered out. Zacharia, who worked for an international mobile telecommunications company and had built a large house near Salasala, reflected that "there's no word to describe this place. There is *uswahilini* for the packed places downtown, and there is *uzunguni* for the planned places like Masaki and Mikocheni. But we don't have a word for places like Salasala. It's not *uswahilini* because it's not packed; but it's not *uzunguni* either because it's more mixed."[8] Located somewhere between *uzunguni* and *uswahilini*, there was unease among Salasala's middle-class residents about the landscape they had built, what it said about them, and how they might be able to protect it from slipping further from the ideal of *uzunguni* in the future.

One particular source of anxiety for middle-class residents was the state of the roads. The earth roads were a problem during the rainy season when they became hazardous or impassable. While residents complained about the damage this did to their cars, there was also concern about the slippage between residents' aesthetic aspirations and the material reality of their neighbourhood. The municipal council possessed a grader, but communities had to pay for the fuel, labour, and equipment hire, and few were willing to contribute. In April 2015 the subward government in Kinzudi, neighbouring Salasala, wrote to all residents to request contributions to a road fund which would be used to regrade the area's main roads. They were looking to raise around US$22,500. Showing me the letter, local resident Zacharia was unsure whether he would contribute anything. Some weeks later he admitted that he had not. Why should he pay, he argued, when he could not be sure that the money would be used to hire the graders? Residents were left to their own devices to do what they could with the roads that affected them. People found inventive solutions, filling holes and gullies with palm fronds, bits of broken-up masonry, and sand bags. Some even arranged for private rubbish collectors to fill large gullies that opened up in paths during the rainy season with truck-loads of collected rubbish. A more expensive solution was to hire the municipal grader privately. This was the preferred solution for a group of upper-middle-class neighbours who lived in and around the planned resettlement scheme in Salasala. Some among this group had connections with the municipal council; all of them owned expensive cars. While the private hire of the public grader temporarily resolved the issue of private mobility and damage to cars in their immediate neighbourhood, it did little to address the state of the roads in the wider area.

Fear of *Uswahilini*

The *uzunguni*/*uswahilini* enframing of urban space was a common refrain among middle-class residents and government administrators in Salasala.[9] Despite the fact that the newly constructed landscape did not quite fit this frame, the *uzunguni*/*uswahilini* framework had currency as a way of dividing and containing urban space that served middle-class residents' geographical imagination of the city. This is the coloniality of space at work: the landscapes of *uzunguni* were frequently described as elevated, breezy, low density, planned, ordered, and sedate;

the landscapes of *uswahilini* in contrast were described as congested, chaotic, disordered, threatening, and unpredictable. The representation of the orderly nature of the Salasala landscape relied on the simultaneous representation of the disorderly and dangerous landscapes that were seen by the middle classes as typical of *uswahilini*. Fear of *uswahilini*—the densification of buildings, the sub-division of plots into smaller and smaller parcels, the invasion of open land by squatters— threatened the aspirations that middle-class residents had for the future of Salasala by making small pieces of urban space accessible to the poor. The recognition that *uswahilini* might not be containable in the future was a source of considerable anxiety.

In a discussion at the Kilimahewa Juu subward office in Salasala the Executive Officer observed, in a matter-of-fact manner, that "there are two zones [here], Kwa Babu and Msiige. Kwa Babu—that place is like Manzese. But Msiige is planned."[10] Manzese featured regularly in middle-class residents' geographical imaginations of the city. As one of the oldest and largest informal settlements in Dar es Salaam, it signified a generic "*uswahilini*." Afterwards, as I walked through Kwa Babu with two members of the subward government, I asked them what the Executive Officer had meant. "When people come here", one explained, "they know their status. They look at the other buildings … they are squatters." His companion chimed in, "it is an area of poor housing, it is *uswahilini* … *uswahilini* is down at the bottom of the valley, *uzunguni* is at the top of the hill."

Middle-class residents were dismissive of *uswahilini* areas in Salasala. Residents of *uswahilini* were routinely referred to as "squatters" and considered impediments to the development of the area. Yet the definition of "squatter" is not clear on the edges of Dar es Salaam where the legal position of anyone occupying land under customary or quasi-customary[11] tenure is ambiguous (Gastorn 2010). Government officials at the subward offices worked on the widely accepted definition among planners that any land occupier in an urban area without a granted right of occupancy was a squatter, which constituted the majority of the Salasala (and city-wide) population. Middle-class suburban residents, on the other hand, most of whom did not have a granted right of occupancy, did not think of themselves as squatters. The fact that they had purchased their land and developed it in an aesthetically appropriate way, by building good quality houses and leaving space for paths, legitimised their presence. They viewed squatters as synonymous with *uswahilini*, an eyesore and a nuisance. They were illegitimate users of urban space, occupying land in a haphazard and unproductive manner (Figure 4). In Salasala, empty land earmarked by the municipal planning office for public goods such as a playing field, a secondary school, and a health centre had all been squatted on in recent years.

The order and density of housing was of particular concern to Salasala's middle-class residents. *Uswahilini* areas offended middle-class residents' aesthetic judgement about order in the landscape. People in *uswahilini* "settled randomly", as one resident complained, and they needed "to be educated about how to build their houses", as another opined. The smaller, irregularly arranged plots and more congested living conditions characteristic of *uswahilini* areas were a threat to be guarded against. I discussed this point with Elizabeth, a middle-aged nurse

Figure 4:   Unplanned houses built right up to the wayleave for power lines, Salasala, July 2018 (photo by author)

who had constructed a modest, well-built, and brightly decorated house on a large plot that she had inherited from her mother in Msiige, the zone described by the Executive Officer as "planned." In fact, Msiige was not formally planned by the municipal council, but the relative order and arrangement of the larger plots there approximated the landscapes of *uzunguni*. Picking up the Executive Officer's distinction between the zones in Kilimahewa, Elizabeth explained:

> Most of the people in Kwa Abarikiwe and Kwa Babu [nearby neighbourhoods], they didn't buy their plots. They were given their plots [by the government during the food production campaigns of the 1980s]. But here, people came from town to buy. There [Kwa Abarikiwe and Kwa Babu] is *uswahilini*, where people live like they do in Manzese. But those small, small plots you won't get here. 10×10—you can't get them. People come here for big plots, 30×30, 40×40, 70×70. People who want small plots go there. Here, people want to keep it like this, so they don't sell small plots.[12]

Elizabeth's descriptions of different types of urban landscape demonstrate the apparently benign ways in which the coloniality of space shapes everyday representations of urban space. Urban space is separated and contained—now by the land market—into areas of small and big plots between which people make an aesthetic choice. In this rendition of urban space, unequal access to land is simply a natural outcome of who belongs where. The disorderly and chaotic landscapes of *uswahilini* reflect the failures of its inhabitants who did not purchase their land,

chose small parcels, and built haphazardly. Yet despite Elizabeth's assertion that the exclusive landscape of Msiige could be maintained through residents' vigilance over land sales, the informal nature of land transactions and construction activities meant that controlling plot sizes—and the aesthetic appearance of the landscape—was difficult to achieve in practice.

Middle-Class Planning

Middle-class residents who had obtained land in Salasala from the 1970s onwards considered themselves pioneers who had brought order, improvement, and value to a landscape they considered previously empty (Owens 2010; see Figure 5). These residents often described the landscape as having been *pori* (wilderness or scrub) before they cleared it to farm or to construct a house, or to pay TANESCO[13] to put up the first electricity pole. Zacharia, who had been a relatively early settler when he bought land and started to build a house near Salasala in 2008, was proud of the way his area had changed from undeveloped land to a built environment. It suggested that he had made a shrewd move in buying the land, despite the reservations of his wife who had considered Salasala too far from the city centre. Having first visited him in 2012, on my return in 2015 I was astonished at the speed with which new, impressive buildings had gone up in his neighbourhood where there had previously been grass, shrubs, and trees. "Do

Figure 5: Orderly and well-maintained paths and walls between plots, Salasala July 2018 (photo by author)

you recognise the place now? Can you see how it has grown?", he exclaimed proudly as he gave me a quick tour of the neighbourhood.

The congregation of the middle classes on the suburban edge has brought with it various attempts to impress a new vision of urban order on the landscape by naming places and streets in a context where few individual streets are signposted.[14] Scattered across Dar es Salaam's northern suburbs were a small number of new street signs that signified global consumer culture ("Old Trafford Street", "Beverly Hills"), African political leaders ("Mwinyi Street", "Madiba Street"), Swahili words that conjured up histories of cooperation and neighbourliness ("*Amani* [peace] Street", "*Upendo* [love] Street"), and personal names where recent housebuilders had given their name to a path on their land. These new street signs declaring new place names contrasted with the pre-existing practice of referring to places by the name of a significant individual or group who had lived in an area, or which referred to a distinctive physical feature. For example, Kwa Babu was named after a famous medicine man who set up in Salasala in the early 2000s; Kwa Abarikiwe was named after the settler who enclosed a large area of land in the 1970s and gradually parcelled it out to in-comers; and Mbuyuni was named after the very large baobab tree that stood nearby on the Bagamoyo Road and was said by long-term residents to be a place of spirits which had caused many road traffic accidents. Such localised place names and histories were being overwritten by more recent settlers who wanted to recast the landscape in a less localised idiom, such as in Msiige where the area formerly known as *Kijiji cha Wagogo* (village of the Gogo people) was now commonly referred to as "Best One" after the name adorning the smart modest building that had been constructed in the vicinity by two recent arrivals. Localised names coincided in middle-class residents' geographical imaginations with spaces of *uswahilini*. Near Zacharia's house was *Usukumani*, a group of small, poor-quality houses and kiosks where a group of people from the Sukuma ethnic group had long lived. Looking at *Usukumani* from his walled, good-quality house across the valley, Richard, who had retired from working in a bank, commented that "my neighbourhood is good, it's not like those small shacks over there [pointing towards *Usukumani*]— over there it's like Manzese. That's *uswahilini*." When I asked Zacharia himself about the place, he shrugged and said that "they are just tenants", as if they were of little significance.

Those who had acquired land from the original inhabitants from the 1970s onwards and who had built large houses saw themselves as pioneers who had made the former scrub and farmland more productive. They had had a vision for the area, and that vision did not include *uswahilini* or squatters. Rajabu and his wife had bought their land in 1975 and had become prominent members of the Salasala "settler" community. Rajabu had been the secretary of the Salasala Community Development Association (SACODEA) in the early 1990s. SACODEA had brought together 15 early settlers to discuss the development of their neighbourhood. At that time, Rajabu explained, "we were really setting up on our own, there was no government here—the administration was coming from Mtongani. Back then this place was a village."[15] SACODEA had wanted to preserve the area as a green belt, which would have protected the members' farm plots. They

lobbied the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Dar es Salaam Municipal Council to no avail. "We couldn't get it", Rajabu said, "and then those stone quarries were squatted." He was referring to the incremental settlement of the former Kunduchi quarry in Salasala. The implication was that the squatters had effectively thwarted the SACODEA members' attempts to protect their land, as well as SACODEA's authority over the area's development. SACO-DEA ceased to function, because, Rajabu said, "people with different interests moved into the area." Describing the landscape which subsequently developed, Rajabu swept his arm from his plot towards the quarries: "when the quarries were finished, they were settled randomly. The area that is planned in Salasala starts here and goes inward [he gestured towards Goba]. The rest [gesturing the other way, towards the quarries] is squatters."

As Rajabu experienced, middle-class residents had limited power to protect the landscape they felt they had constructed. Some explicitly recognised this fact. Richard and Peter explained:

> Richard: This place will become congested. This area was all farms ten years ago. Now it is a town. We are predicting this place will be congested, and we will be *wazee* [elders] ... but we don't want to be disturbed with noise and traffic.
>
> Claire: Why will this place become congested?
>
> Peter: If the government was strong...
>
> Richard: Look at Masaki. It was very nice, it was executive, but now there are bars, it's noisy. So from this experience we think this area will go the same way. Here 100 houses are planned [in the resettlement scheme], around us the rest is not planned. People can settle, they can do whatever they want. It will be horrible. We are working with the government to make sure there are no unplanned houses. We don't have control.[16]

This lack of control sat uneasily alongside the sense of natural authority over suburban space that many middle-class residents felt.

Conclusion

Coloniality is inherently spatial. In this paper, I have developed this point by showing how socio-spatial inequality is reproduced in a postcolonial context where the bifurcation of land tenure and enframing of urban planning continues to reverberate in the urban landscape (Ghertner 2020; Mamdani 1996; Mitchell 1991). Dar es Salaam's northern suburbs are shaped by the everyday aesthetic politics of landscape through which middle-class residents defined themselves and the space they had built. They drew on the colonial enframing of the city according to a racialised hierarchy of urban landscapes to achieve class distinction. In defining the landscape they had constructed in opposition to *uswahilini*, many suburban residents considered their use of space to be more aesthetically pleasing, and therefore more legitimate, than poorer residents' use of urban space. They felt that their attention to maintaining neighbourhood roads and paths, plot

sizes, architectural design, and finishing; their acquisition of land through the market rather than by invasion or government grant in the 1970s; and their taming and development of the landscape, distinguished their suburban neighbourhoods from what they saw as the noise, congestion, and haphazardness of *uswahilini*. But as we have seen, *uswahilini* is not easily contained. *Uswahilini* is necessary to the enframing of middle-class suburban landscapes, but it also provokes anxiety as plots are sub-divided and areas become more densely populated.

In examining the history of Dar es Salaam's enframing and its contemporary manifestations, the paper has shown that paying attention to the aesthetic politics of landscape can help in grasping the in-between, unsettled nature of middle-class subjectivities in African cities. There is nothing inherently progressive about aesthetic politics, as geographers of landscape have long argued (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Jazeel 2013; Mitchell 1996). Richard and Peter identify the central tensions at the heart of middle-class suburban life—how to protect one's stake in the landscape? How to make the landscape fit the frame? How could *uswahilini* be kept at bay? Middle classness emerges as an unstable condition of being between *uzunguni* and *uswahilini*, rich and poor, property-owner and squatter. The material reproduction of the suburban landscape and the social reproduction of the middle classes is far from inevitable.

Data Availability Statement
Author elects to not share data.

Endnotes
[1] I do not attempt a schematic map of all social classes in Dar es Salaam: my focus here is on examining the middle classes. Analyses of Tanzania's political-economic history have focused on the elite, made up of top politicians in the *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (the ruling party) and government bureaucrats; their financial backers in the private sector, many of whom are Tanzanian Asians; and top military personnel; or they are the poor (Aminzade 2013; Coulson 2013; Gray 2015; Hydén 1980; Lofchie 2014; Shivji 1976, 1986). This

is understandable in a country which 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 socio-economic differentiation and social experience in Tanzania, as this paper tries to show (see Mercer 2020, 2024; Shule 2016).

[2] For example, Werner's (2011) reading of garment export industry restructuring in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Enns and Bersaglio's (2020) analysis of mega-infrastructure in East Africa, Distretti's (2021) examination of the Libyan coastal highway, and Ghertner's (2021) analysis of the coloniality of air pollution in Delhi.

[3] Interviews were carried out between 2012 and 2018 in three subwards of Wazo Ward: Salasala, Kilimahewa, and Kilimahewa Juu. The area has been progressively subdivided into smaller administrative units over time so for simplicity I refer to the three subwards as Salasala unless there is a specificity to note.

[4] A popular musical genre in Tanzania mixing rap, ragga, and R&B (Perullo 2011).

[5] Wazo Ward Councillor, 5 April 2018.

[6] Interview, Kilimahewa, 7 April 2016.

[7] Interview, Kilimahewa, 26 June 2018.

[8] Interview, 5 April 2015.

[9] People did not refer to *uhindini* in the suburbs since very few Tanzanian Asians lived there.

[10] Interview, 7 August 2017.

[11] Quasi-customary tenure refers to rights to land formerly held under customary tenure that has been transacted for cash. The market transaction expunges the land from customary tenure, so that the land can subsequently be used, sub-divided, sold, or gifted by the new owner without recourse to the wider social group (Kombe 1995; Lupala 2002).

[12] Interview, 10 August 2017.

[13] Tanzania Electric Supply Company.

[14] This was before the naming of all streets for the 2022 census.

[15] Interview, 12 April 2015. Mtongani was the site of a former *ujamaa* village located a few kilometres away.

[16] Interview, Kilimahewa, 7 April 2016.

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