

**Claire Mercer**

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## **Landscapes of extended ruralisation: postcolonial suburbs in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**

Claire Mercer, Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London School of Economics WC2A 2AE

[c.c.mercer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:c.c.mercer@lse.ac.uk)

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### **Abstract**

African cities are becoming increasingly suburban, yet we know little about suburban spaces, how they are historically produced, and by whom. This paper argues that African suburbs can be usefully understood as postcolonial suburbs. The postcolonial suburb de-centres the Anglo-American suburban model and pays attention to the historical co-constitution of suburban space across colony and metropole. It draws attention to the colonial and post-colonial policies on land and housing that make suburban development possible, but also attends to the everyday ways in which suburban spaces are built through the efforts of self-builders and their house-building projects. Using the case of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the paper shows how these low-density residential spaces towards the edge of the city are being shaped by the new middle classes with their appetite for large houses and private cars. But these are not copies of suburban forms from elsewhere. Architecturally they are dominated by bungalows and villas, but these buildings are self-built rather than part of large planned housing schemes. Socially the suburbs are dominated by the middle classes, but these middle classes are oriented towards the countryside rather than towards the city. Drawing on interviews with suburban residents in Dar es Salaam, I show how self-build housing projects straddle the suburban and the rural in terms of economic investments, land security and social relations. The paper concludes by arguing that the colonial and postcolonial making of the suburbs produces landscapes of ruralisation.

**Key words:** Postcolonial, suburbs, housing, urban-rural, Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

## Introduction

If Africa's future is urban (Pieterse and Parnell 2014) then the question arises: what will African cities look like in years to come? In Africa, as in much of the rest of the world, the majority already inhabit the city periphery (Holston 2008; Simone 2010; Roy 2011). It is therefore likely that African cities will become increasingly suburban. New residential zones of relatively low-density housing already populate the outskirts of cities from Accra to Maputo. In this paper I develop the concept of the postcolonial<sup>1</sup> suburb as a lens through which to examine these new residential neighbourhoods in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The concept of the postcolonial suburb de-centers the Anglo-American suburban model and provides a distinct vocabulary for capturing the processes shaping the city outskirts that have eluded familiar concepts deployed in analyses of urban Africa such as the slum and the peri-urban fringe. Thinking about the postcolonial suburb turns our attention to the colonial and post-colonial making of these new residential landscapes of low-density housing that arguably constitute the largest footprint of many African cities today.

The discussion that follows is concerned with the built landscape of the suburbs (Vaughan et al 2009) and in particular with the practice of house-building by suburban residents. Against the grain of recent arguments in urban studies that build on Lefebvre (1970/2003) to make claims about the urbanisation of the planet (Brenner and Schmid 2013; Merrifield 2013), I prefer to follow Krause (2013) in thinking of these suburbs as landscapes of extended ruralisation. For some the suburbs have always been defined by the rural such as through the "nostalgia for rural life" (Miele 1999, 31) reflected in the aesthetics of gardens and interiors, or the sense of the suburb as an escape from the city (Duncan and Duncan 2004; Fishman 1987). In contemporary African cities, urban-rural connections remain significant and suburban space must therefore be understood as shaped by social relations that connect city dwellers to the countryside (see also Gillen 2016; Tang 2014). In Tanzania, one of the ways this linkage is made is through house-building strategies that stretch across suburban and rural spaces. The result in Dar es Salaam is a suburban landscape built by people for whom the suburb is not necessarily a permanent home.

To insist that the rural and the urban exist as distinct yet unbounded spaces, characterised by specific governance and land tenure structures (Roy forthcoming), land uses, social imaginaries and cultural practices, does not inevitably entail reproducing an epistemological commitment to a rural-urban divide in which 'the rural' and 'the urban' are "taken for granted" (Brenner and Schmid 2015: 174). Rather to do so is to recognise the differentiated yet intertwined histories of making urban and rural space in formerly colonised parts of the world. In much of Africa colonial rulers asserted the absolute difference between the rural and the urban; post-colonial rulers, particularly of

the socialist variety, sometimes did the same if for different reasons. And yet, in practice the urban and the rural have long been connected in Africa (Potts 2012; Tacoli 2006), and were even characterised as a 'single social system' by anthropologists<sup>ii</sup> from as early as the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Gluckman 1958). During the period of colonial rule, rural dwellers across Africa migrated to plantations, mines, towns and cities. In British colonies for example, it was initially assumed (with alarm among colonial officials) that such movements would lead to Africans becoming 'detribalised' as they shed their 'traditional' rural way of life and adopted instead a set of 'modern', cosmopolitan urban habits (Molohan 1959). In African Studies such dichotomised models have been challenged by research that has documented how livelihoods are enabled and social worlds are shaped by the social, cultural, political and economic ties that urbanites maintained with rural places throughout the colonial period and beyond. Urban-rural straddling is multiply achieved through family, kin, hometown and ethnic group work (Geschiere and Gugler 1998; Hart 1971; Mercer et al 2008; Trager 2001) marriage and retirement patterns (Ferguson 1999), ritual and social life (de Boeck 2011a; Piot 1999) livelihoods (Trefon 2011) and house-building (Mercer 2014).

The paper proceeds by sketching the concept of the postcolonial suburb before turning to the historical growth of suburbs in Africa. It then outlines a postcolonial history of suburban growth in the city of Dar es Salaam, showing how suburban landscapes have been shaped by colonial and post-colonial government policies on land and housing. In the empirical section of the paper I draw on interviews conducted in 2012, 2015 and 2016 with a small group of suburban residents who migrated to Dar es Salaam from Machame, a cluster of villages in the coffee-banana belt of Mount Kilimanjaro inhabited mostly by the Chagga ethnic group. In 2012 I returned to my PhD fieldsite in Machame to discuss the implications of rural-urban migration with local residents. While there I collected contact details of family members who had moved to Dar es Salaam. These contacts became my main interlocutors in the suburbs and my familiarity with 'home' was useful in our discussions. By starting from the rural, the paper presents an unusual approach to understanding urban and rural change that is not delimited by imagined boundaries. Such a research design is necessarily limited in its reach, at least when conducted by a single researcher. But the processes I describe later in the paper, while particular to the Chagga, are nevertheless not unique to them, and I would argue that the research has produced novel insights for thinking about African cities that could be taken forward in other contexts. In the empirical section below I draw on my discussions with suburban house-builders to show how economic and social ties to a rural home place shape contemporary suburban landscapes. In the conclusion, I return to the concept of the postcolonial suburb and the continued importance of the rural for understanding contemporary urban Africa.

## **Postcolonial suburbs**

To speak of the postcolonial suburb is a potentially fraught move, as recent geographical scholarship on urban comparison reminds us (McFarlane 2011; Myers 2014; Robinson 2011). Taking another concept from the pantheon of Euro-American urban theory in order to declare the belated emergence of suburbs in Africa seems to go against the postcolonial imperative to decolonise knowledge (Jazeel 2014; Mignolo 2011; Robinson 2003). As the growing literature on 'global suburbs' demonstrates, a teleological tendency in thinking about suburbs at the global scale is already alive and well. Suburbs have been described as if progressing through a series of stages starting with the squatter settlements of Africa and Latin America, moving through the gated communities of China and India, and finally ending up as 'post-suburbia' in North America and Europe (Clapson and Hutchison 2010; Davis 2006; Ekers et al 2012; Hamel and Keil 2015; Phelps et al 2010; Teaford 1996, 2011). Not only are Africa's suburbs assumed to take slum form, but their growth is located temporally behind Europe and North America. A suburban norm is located in the West and becomes the benchmark against which suburbs in other places, always temporally behind and a poor replica of the original, are measured (Harris 2010). This dominant Anglophone narrative of the suburb originates in Britain and the USA in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Suburbs in cities such as London and Manchester grew in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the middle classes abandoned the city centre to seek sanctuary from the tumult of urban life (Dyos 1961; Fishman 1987). American suburban growth overtook Britain from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, developing by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century into a series of uniform residential spaces, characterised by single-story detached houses in their own plots, reliant first on the expanding rail system and, later on, the car (Bass Warner 1962; Jackson 1985; Teaford 1979). From these historically specific experiences, a dominant narrative emerged that characterised the suburb as the city's lesser counterpart (from the Latin etymology 'sub' to the 'urb'), a planned, monotonous, conservative space, predominantly residential, where the middle classes could retreat from the urban hubbub (Archer 1998; Duncan and Duncan 2004 Teaford 2007, 2011). This narrative caricatures the diversity of Anglo-American suburban experiences (Harris 1996; Mace 2013; Nayak 2010; Silverstone 1997), yet it has proven stubbornly popular.

The present paper is motivated by the postcolonial impulse to disturb teleological narratives that locate modernity in the West, which then becomes the centre from which theory, and history, emanates (Bhabha 1994, Chakrabarty 2000). I argue that the postcolonial suburb is a useful concept to work with because it both disrupts established Eurocentric ways of seeing and it connects the geographies of the present to those of the past. The postcolonial suburb, uncoupled from an imagined norm associated with specific types of urban development in Europe and America, challenges the assumption of Africa's

difference. From a postcolonial perspective the Anglo-American suburban model is neither unique nor particularly Anglo-American (Harris 2010; Harris and Larkham 1999), and African suburbs are neither exceptions nor recent variations on a Western universalised theme.

Indeed, across Africa, Asia and Latin America, the similarities in suburban landscapes and the processes driving them are striking. In Argentina and Mexico, for example, suburbs in cities such as Buenos Aires and Mexico City grew from the 1930s as the development of motorways and car ownership enabled affluent groups to move out of the city centre (Herzog 2014; Roitman 2010). In India and Singapore, new town developments were inspired by Ebenezer Howard's garden city model for suburban growth (Clapson and Hutchison 2010; Padawangi 2010). The middle classes are currently alive and well in suburbs characterised not by slums and squatter settlements, but by mixed communities including the poor, the middle class and the wealthy, from Beijing (Fleischer 2010) to Rio de Janeiro (Veloso 2010). Globally, suburbs include diverse architectural forms such as self-built homes (for low, middle and high income residents), planned housing estates (state-led, private-led or both), social housing projects and gated communities. The shift to a post-suburban landscape has also been identified in cities around the world in which urban fringe land use has changed from mostly residential to a mixture of industrial parks, office complexes and retail spaces as well as residential areas (Myers 2015; Phelps and Wu 2011; Teaford 2011).

The postcolonial suburb, then, is a global phenomenon that takes many different forms. But more than this, the postcolonial suburb has been co-constituted across colony and metropole through colonial and imperial encounters (Archer 1997; Driver and Gilbert 1998; Dwyer et al 2013; Gilbert and Driver 2000; King 1984, 2004; Nayak 2010; Roy 2015). This is not just a matter of the massive transfer of wealth from the former to the latter. Rather, as King (1984, 2004) has argued, suburbs in imperial Britain and its colonies were mutually shaped through the circulation of planning, administrative and architectural practices. Lusaka, for example, was planned by British town planners as the first garden city for Africa (Myers 2003a), and former colonial administrators managed new town developments in Britain (King 2004). Archer (1997) notes similar processes of suburbanisation at work in Richmond (London) and Madras in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the mercantile classes began to construct European suburban 'garden houses' close enough to the commercial city but far away enough to enjoy restorative weekend leisure pursuits. King (1984) provides fascinating genealogies of the global hybridisations of suburban architectural forms. The bungalow, for example, was adopted and adapted by British settlers in India, before travelling in the first half of the twentieth century to the suburbs of North America, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and South Africa where it became "the suburban home of choice" (King 2004, 102). In much of Africa the bungalow is now the dominant domestic architectural form among

concrete buildings, although it has received little attention to date from architects writing about African architecture (e.g. Elleh 1996; Folkers 2009; cf Jenkins 2013).

The concept of the postcolonial suburb also connects as well as disrupts, forcing us to ask how 'colonial space making' (Quayson 2012) lives on through visible and invisible 'postcolonial remains' (Young 2012). Of significance for urban geographies are the afterlives (Stoler 2008) of colonial land tenure regimes, which literally "saturate the subsoil of people's lives and persist, sometimes subadjacently, over a longer *durée*" (ibid 192). We cannot, then, understand the human geographies of postcolonial cities without reference to colonial and post-colonial land tenure regimes (Ghertner 2014, Home 2004; Roy forthcoming). The palimpsest of land policies pursued by German, British and post-colonial Tanzanian governments, in particular the bifurcation of land tenure between the customary and the non-customary (Mamdani 1996) and the vesting of radical title in the Governor, and later the President, has produced widespread insecurity of tenure in Tanzania, and is symptomatic of both the colonial and the post-colonial states' attempts to dissuade Tanzanians from settling in cities. Such efforts can also be traced in the failure of the state to provide sufficient housing for urban populations (Mabin et al 2013; Myers 2011; Pieterse and Parnell 2014), pervasive informality, and the continued importance of urban-rural relations to urban life. In Dar es Salaam, these colonial and post-colonial 'afterlives' have produced distinctive suburban spaces. These low-density residential spaces towards the edge of the city may be shaped by Tanzania's new middle classes with their appetite for large houses and private cars, but they are not copies of suburban forms from elsewhere. Architecturally they are dominated by bungalows and villas, but these buildings are self-built rather than part of large planned housing schemes. Socially the suburbs are dominated by the middle classes, but these middle classes are oriented towards the countryside rather than to the city.

### **African suburbs**

Suburbs have a long history on the African continent, yet they have rarely been the subject of sustained attention. The peri-urban has been the preferred lens through which changes taking place on the edge of the city have been analysed. The peri-urban is understood as an interstitial space that sits between, and links, the urban and the rural. It is characterised by social and physical mixity, land speculation, itinerant spreading settlements and urban farming (Gough and Yankson 2000; Trefon 2011). Arrivals must find space among longer-term inhabitants whose villages have been swallowed up by the expanding urban frontier. Environmental, livelihood and planning challenges emerge in these interstitial zones (Mbiba and Huchzermeyer 2002; McGregor et al 2006; Simon et al 2004), which some have characterised as "unstable and fertile ground" for

social and political change (Landau 2014, 361; de Boeck 2011b; Potts 2010). In the context of Dar es Salaam, many of the features of the peri-urban also exist in the suburbs, such as rural-urban and intra-urban migration. But the suburbs and the peri-urban are distinct spaces. In terms of governance, the suburbs are located well within the boundaries of the city. The city's peri-urban zone lies beyond the suburbs where the city meets surrounding countryside. Here is where mixed land use is to be found. By contrast, the suburbs are dominated by residential land use and the relative absence of agricultural production beyond the household level.

Across Africa the first suburbs were built by colonial urban planners attempting to segregate urban space along racial lines (Freund 2007; Myers 2003a, 2003b). In former British colonies such as Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, for example, suburbs were planned as exclusive residential enclaves for settlers and colonial officers away from the city centres and the 'African' sections of town. In the post-independence period many of these suburbs' exclusive residential character is based on class rather than race. In South Africa, where planned suburbanisation has been most extensive, the growth of suburbs was intertwined with apartheid. Suburbs grew as state-developed, owner-occupied, low density housing for the white population from the 1960s (Mabin 2005). From the 1980s rising house prices and heightened security concerns fuelled the development of the suburban gated compound, a "walled version of suburbia" constructed by private developers (Morange et al 2012, 898; Lemanski 2006).

Recent research on Africa's 'new suburbs' (Bloch 2015; Myers 2015) has drawn attention to contemporary forms of accumulation shaping urban space as city centres become host to economic, political and commercial functions that raise land prices and force housing and other commercial functions out (UN-Habitat 2010a). In Lusaka, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, for example, decentralisation from the city centres has driven the emergence of 'new central spaces' (Mabin 2005) for business, commercial, leisure and residential use, dominated by the private sector and, outside of South Africa, by foreign investment (Bloch 2015, Miller 2005, Myers 2015; Schroeder 2012). Satellite cities are planned to ease congestion in city centres (UN-Habitat 2014; Watson 2013). Contemporary research on suburban housing has also investigated the 'supply side' of planned residential suburbs and the role of national and local states, property developers, planners, landowners and foreign investors in driving large suburban housing schemes in Accra (Grant 2007), Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban (Mabin 2005, Todes 2014), Cape Town, Maputo and Windhoek (Morange et al 2012), Lagos (Sawyer 2014), Luanda (Buire 2014) and Lusaka (Bloch 2015). However, not all suburbs in Africa have been developed through state planning or the private sector. More common is the incremental growth of suburbs as documented by Peil (1981) in her study of *Cities and*



*suburbs* in Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria in the 1960s and 1970s. Peil describes the creeping development of suburbs and satellite towns as extensions of the main cities, constructed mostly by self-builders who had moved from the countryside looking for jobs. Yet the limited literature on suburbanisation in Africa has paid far less attention to the role of self-builders, despite the long-standing interest in self-built housing on the continent (e.g. Harris 1998; Parnell and Hart 1999; Yeboah 2005). In Dar es Salaam, suburbs have developed quietly over the last three decades as individual builders have acquired land on the outskirts of the city and turned them into new residential zones of low-density housing.

### **The growth of suburban Dar es Salaam**

Since the 1990s new suburbs have developed in Dar es Salaam located 20-30km from the city centre in areas such as Bunju, Goba, Kimara, Segerea and Wazo. These areas are suburban because they are dominated by residential land use at relatively low densities, and they are new because, prior to this building phase, these were peri-urban spaces dominated by villages, farmland and uncultivated bush (Owens 2004, 2010).

New and distinctive lifestyles are emerging in Dar es Salaam's suburbs characterised by the house as a site of display and consumption (Mercer 2014), a preference for English medium private schools and a reliance on the private car which partly explains the grinding daily commute of up to three hours (each way). Those who do not work in town can avoid the city centre altogether and conduct all of their shopping, banking and social activities locally. Daily groceries, baked goods, pharmaceutical products, livestock feed, building materials, clothes and homewares can all be purchased in the many small shops interspersed with the bars, hair salons, wrought-iron workshops, churches and mosques that line the roads winding through the suburbs.

The city's changing landscape can be read as a palimpsest of colonial and post-colonial government policy and practice on land and housing. The colonial legacy in the city centre has received most scholarly attention, where the commercial and residential spaces that were marked out for use by different racial groups by the German and British colonial governments are still evident today (Brennan 2012; Kironde 2007). In 1923 the British extended German building ordinances that were originally introduced in 1891, dividing the city into three zones according to construction style and thereby effectively segregating the city into European, Asian and African sectors. Buildings in Zone 1 were to be 'European style' residences of sturdy materials, which effectively barred Africans from the city centre (Smiley 2009). Kariakoo, in Zone 3, was the main residential area for Africans under German and British rule, and it remains the most important city centre commercial space for Africans. It was separated from Zone 1, the eastern part of the city still dominated by government, diplomatic, financial and

commercial activities, by Zone 2, a central commercial zone originally planned for, and still dominated by, the Indian community. In 1927 the British created Dar es Salaam's first residential suburb outside of the city centre when they extended Zone 1 north along the coast by 5km to include Msasani Peninsula and Oyster Bay. The area was developed as an exclusive planned suburb characterised by larger plot sizes and services. It remains Dar es Salaam's most prestigious suburb, although it is no longer exclusively European.

Colonial land legislation was as significant for the shaping of urban space as was colonial urban planning. Post-colonial Tanzanian land law and management remains fundamentally shaped by German and British colonial law and administrative practices (Dancer 2015; Shivji 1998; Sundet 1997). Outright ownership of land has not been recognised in law since the 1920s when the British declared all land 'public land' vested in the control of the Governor, with land use rights obtained through 'granted' (statutory) or 'deemed' (customary) rights of occupancy. The system of indirect rule developed by Lord Lugard in northern Nigeria and extended across British (and later French) colonial possessions reflected the belief that 'tribal' lands, which were understood by definition to be rural, were best governed by customary law (Mamdani 1996). There are two significant implications of the colonial land regime for the growth of Dar es Salaam. First, all land continues to be vested in the President and rights of occupancy remain the recognised form of land tenure. As I outline below, very few Tanzanians hold granted rights of occupancy. Informal practices are pervasive in the buying, selling and titling of land, and insecurity of tenure is widespread (Kombe and Kreibich 2000; Home 2014). Second, the bifurcation between statutory and customary rights of occupancy remains, and while it does not map neatly onto an urban-rural divide, nevertheless all village land is still governed by customary law under the Village Land Act 1999-2000. We will see the significance of this urban/rural distinction in land law for contemporary suburban space below.

The history of Dar es Salaam has been fundamentally shaped by colonial land law and management. Both colonial and post-colonial governments were distinctly anti-urban, unwilling to formally allocate urban space to rural migrants. Those not in formal employment were periodically rounded up and repatriated to the countryside and the provision of urban housing was limited lest it encourage further rural-urban migration (Kombe and Kreibich 2000, Burton 2005; Dill 2013). African suburbs emerged in Dar es Salaam after the Second World War, but construction never kept pace with demand. Until the 1940s only 2000 plots had been made available in the Kariakoo and Ilala areas (Kironde 2007), forcing most Africans to fend for themselves in unplanned informal settlements. By 1944 Dar es Salaam's African population was 40,000 (Brennan and Burton 2007).

From the 1940s the town expanded as a patchwork of limited planned suburban housing and larger unplanned, self-built neighbourhoods began to populate what are now Dar es Salaam's inner residential neighbourhoods. Between 1946 and 1950, 261 two-room houses were built by the first African Housing Scheme in Ilala as 'quarters' for government employees, but as demand continued to outstrip supply the government simply resorted to allocating plots for self-building. In the 1950s and 1960s planned schemes in Temeke, Sinza, Kijitonyama, Magomeni and Kinondoni provided a mix of government-built 'quarters', and self-built 'sites and services' projects (Brennan and Burton 2007; Kironde 1991, 2007).

The impact of the colonial land law which effectively prevented many rural-urban migrants from obtaining legal access to urban land is evident in the proportion of the city's population living in unplanned settlements, which grew from 30-39% in the 1960s, to 55% by 1975, to 70% by the mid-1990s (Kombe 2000), and to over 80% by 2010 (UN-Habitat 2010b). Much of the discussion on Dar es Salaam's unplanned settlements focuses on the squatter settlements where living conditions are particularly poor. However much of the older inner and newer outer suburbs are also unplanned settlements. Residents had no choice but to build on land for which they had no formal title and where the state has provided little in the way of services. Thus the suburbs have grown with the incremental advance of unplanned settlements characterised by relatively low population densities and houses set in their own plots, latterly with access to some basic state-provided infrastructure such as untarmacked roads.

Those who moved to the suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s could be considered a middle class 'suburban vanguard' who wanted "to recreate the 'garden suburbs' of their former colonial rulers" (Owens 2010, 250). For others, during the economically difficult years of the 1970s, moving out to the suburbs afforded room to raise livestock, to benefit from less polluted groundwater for crops, and to escape crime in the city (Owens 2004). Some of this movement to the suburbs was state-directed, as when the government allotted land to city-dwelling state employees in order to encourage farming, such as during the *Kufa na Kupona* (Death or Recovery) campaign of 1974 (*ibid.*). Others acquired land informally from individuals or village authorities (Kombe 2005; Owens 2010). The state has provided some formal planned land (i.e. with legal title) for housing, such as the 20,000 Plots scheme launched in 2002 that provided surveyed land for self-builders in suburban and peri-urban areas. By 2006 some 30,000 plots had been made available amid controversy over the distribution of plots and the limited compensation offered to landowners (Ally 2015; Kombe 2005; Msangi 2011). But the scheme simply could not meet the demand for formal land. Between 1978/9 and 1991/2 the Ministry of Lands and the Dar es Salaam City Council processed just 6.2% of the 216,668 applications for plots received (Kombe 2000). In the wider context of economic and political liberalisation unplanned

continued to grow. During the late 1980s and 1990s the former peri-urban fringes of the city were transformed into suburbs. As people moved there to build houses, they shifted from a “zone of survival....[to] a zone of investment” (Briggs and Mwamfupe, 2000, 804). By 1997, an estimated two-thirds of the houses under construction in the new suburbs were being built by middle-class state employees who were entitled to a Tsh100,000/=<sup>iii</sup> monthly housing allowance, while others built with “‘windfall’ cash from trade liberalization” (*ibid.* 806). The rush to acquire suburban land was also fuelled by land law reform (the Land Act 1999 and the Village Land Act 1999-2000). The Land Act 1999 overturned the Land Ordinance 1923, which had not recognised the value of undeveloped land. The 1999 Land Act commodified land and stimulated a land market in Tanzania (Kombe 2010). Speculation increased dramatically as land acquisition and house-building became significant investment strategies for the middle classes in the absence of mortgage financing. Only a minority of urban dwellers, however, hold legal title to their land, despite attempts at formalisation through programmes such as MKURABITA (*Mpango wa Kurasimisha Rasilimali na Biashara za Wanyonge*, the Property and Business Formalisation Programme, Briggs 2011; Campbell 2014), which issues residential licenses to people with informal rights in unplanned areas. Efforts to issue titles have fallen way behind applications (Kironde 2006). In unplanned suburbs residents are still most likely to hold customary or informal rights to land, in which their ownership is sanctioned by neighbours and the street government, the lowest level of urban local government.

These changes have meant that places that used to be regarded as the city’s peri-urban fringes have become popular residential neighbourhoods as more people seek relatively affordable land close to the city on which to build a house. In the past plots located 20 kilometres and beyond from the city centre would not have been desirable. But the ‘suburban vanguard’s’ (Owens 2010) efforts in providing infrastructure for their own houses, as well as the liberalisation of transport which saw the introduction of private buses serving the city’s many residential neighbourhoods (Rizzo 2017), and increasing car ownership, particularly among civil servants in receipt of car allowances, all served to draw other city dwellers to the suburbs (Briggs and Mwamfupe 2000).

### **Landscapes of extended ruralisation: building the postcolonial suburb**

At the outset of the paper I argued that Dar es Salaam’s suburbs can be understood as landscapes of extended ruralisation. Here I sketch this out by focussing on suburbanites’ house-building practices in the suburbs and in their rural community. That suburban residents demonstrate a rural orientation would seem to defy the Anglo-American suburban model, at the heart of which lies the dichotomy between the *city* and the suburb. Suburbs are understood in relation to the city, either as dichotomous to it (de Jong 2014), in tension with it

(Lefebvre 1970/2003; Walks 2013), or as the city's extension (Harris 2004). The suburb is defined by what it is not. It is spread out, low rise, residential, conservative and culturally stagnant. For some commentators, the move to suburbia indicated an explicit rejection of the city. However in much of Africa and elsewhere, the postcolonial suburb is also made through social relations with the countryside. While African suburbs are clearly shaped in relation to the city as the above discussion of colonial urban planning shows, the suburbs are also intertwined with rural spaces. In Dar es Salaam this is evident in the way that suburban residents are simultaneously building the very fabric of the suburbs and the countryside through multiple self-build projects. Houses are investments to secure livelihoods for the middle classes who command sufficient resources to purchase land and building materials. In a financial environment where affordable mortgages are unavailable to the majority and few people have pensions or savings, house-building is a good use of cash because the owner-occupier does not pay rent and could themselves benefit from rental income. House-building takes place in the suburb and in the village. While the practice of building 'at home' is partly cultural as I show below, it is also driven by the enduring legal distinction between village and other lands. In an inversion of much of the literature on the insecurity of rural land rights in Africa, many suburban house-builders see their claim to village land under customary law as more secure than their claim to urban land. Few suburban residents have formal title to their suburban land and most hold informal rights. Although all land in Tanzania is ultimately vested in the President, in practice suburban land in Dar es Salaam could be (and often is) more easily re-purposed by government than the densely populated patchwork of plots in the politically well-represented areas of Mount Kilimanjaro. Suburban residents therefore prefer to maintain their interests in both suburban and rural land by building houses. Among the Chagga house-builders I talked with, the typical middle class head of household (male or female) owns plots in Dar es Salaam's new suburbs, beyond the city's outskirts, on inherited land on Mount Kilimanjaro, and in the suburbs of other towns and cities such as Moshi, Arusha and Boma Ng'ombe. Discussions with suburban house-builders who had moved to Dar es Salaam from other parts of the country suggested that urban-rural straddling of land and property is widespread among the middle classes.<sup>iv</sup>

Eliaita, for example, had just finished building a house in Kilimanjaro on an inherited portion of his father's plot. A decade before that, he and his wife had built their house on the plot they owned informally in an unplanned part of the Dar es Salaam suburb of Segerea. Their plan for the future was to apply for a new house in one of the small planned suburbs built by the National Housing Corporation, the government's housing development agency. His wife's regular employment at a city accountancy firm would make them eligible for the loan, which he estimated they could pay off in 15 years. The family would move to the

new house, and the Segerea house would be rented out. As Eliaita said, his daughter (at the time 9 years old) wanted to go to university, and they needed to have a plan for her future.

Michael, a young bank employee, was renting three rooms in the inner suburb of Kijitonyama. He had inherited his parents' land on Kilimanjaro two years previously, and was keen to improve his parents' house before building his own on their plot. He would then build his house on a plot in the suburb of Tegeta in Dar es Salaam, for which he had just acquired the formal papers.

Ansila, a university lecturer, was building her house with her husband in the planned suburb of Boko Beach, 25 kms to the north of the city centre. They had owned the land since 1994, when her husband, a state employee, had obtained it from the government for a nominal fee. They started to build in 2003 and were expecting to move in by the end of 2015; during this time they lived in government quarters in the city centre near her husband's job. They had also bought a plot in the small town of Boma Ng'ombe, in Kilimanjaro, where they planned to build a house for rental.

All of these builders saw their houses as investments that were best spread across suburban and rural space, allowing them to balance economic and (land) security risks, as well as social expectations. This produces distinctive suburban and rural landscapes as houses are 'in process' for a long time or are delayed by other house-building projects. Michael, for example, recently acquired his plot in Dar es Salaam, but it will be several years before he can develop it if he builds the house in Kilimanjaro first. The result is not-yet-suburbs<sup>v</sup> characterised by finished and inhabited houses dotted among unfinished houses and empty plots. Some landowners place a small concrete room or row of shops on their plots for security. Other plots are walled in and undeveloped because the plot owner is either waiting for sufficient cash to build, or to sell the land when the price rises. The scramble for land in Dar es Salaam has fuelled a class of *madalali* (brokers) who have gained a reputation for fraudulence. It is not unusual to see the words '*nyumba hii haiuzwi*' ('this house is not for sale') painted on to half-built buildings and concrete walls in an attempt to stop such practices.

Dar es Salaam's suburban residents' social worlds also straddle urban and rural space. Houses and land are not simply financial investments, but are imbued with social meaning in relation to identity and belonging. On Kilimanjaro houses represent an investment in social relations. It is customary among the Chagga for the youngest born son to inherit his parents' house. He is expected to improve that house before building his own house on his inherited land, because, I was repeatedly told, 'you're not a person if you don't build at home'. Chagga men are expected to build a house before marriage. Despite the drain on time and resources, many Chagga men feel that building a house at home is an obligation

they must fulfill in order to maintain good relations with those at home, and a sense of belonging to the home village, even if they intend to live and work elsewhere. You would be scorned by your relatives and neighbours, people argued, if you were known to have the means to build in the village, yet you chose not to. The houses built in the village by Chagga migrants are rarely used, perhaps during visits home for Christmas or for burials, and the rest of the year they sit empty, overlooked by relatives.

The influence of the rural is also written into the use of space *within* suburban compounds in Dar es Salaam. Some people cultivated plants and trees from their home village. Others had livestock projects to supplement household income. This is different from urban farming, which is widespread in Dar es Salaam and usually carried out on larger plots that are intensively farmed, rather than in the homestead (McLees 2011). Domestic livestock projects are managed within the compound, as in Kilimanjaro, where zero-grazed cattle and poultry provide reliable income streams.

Mama Thomas, a retired civil servant and widow, lived with her son in Mbezi Beach on formal planned land that she and her husband had acquired through the state in the 1970s. She also kept a modest house in Kilimanjaro on her husband's inherited land. The land in Mbezi was originally farmland, and before moving there the family had lived in a government flat in the city centre. Mama Thomas started to build there in the 1980s. She was glad to move out to the suburbs as she found living in the city noisy and the neighbours irritating. Moving to the suburbs also enabled her to use the land around the house as the *kihamba* (home garden) would be used on Kilimanjaro. She had a poultry project with 1000 chickens in a small modern pen behind the house, as well as a patch of banana palms reminiscent of the coffee-banana groves of the Kilimanjaro *kihamba* belt.

Godwin, an accountant with a global car company, lived with his wife in an unplanned area of Kimara, 20 kms from the city centre, on a large informally held plot that contained a modest house and livestock rearing facilities. After moving to Dar following the completion of secondary school, Godwin had built first near the airport, before moving to the current plot about 10 years ago. His house in the village on inherited land is modest and is looked after by a relative. He and his wife have also invested in land in the neighbouring district of Kibaha which they currently use for farming, but on which they plan to build a house for retirement while renting out the Kimara house. At the time of our discussion, Godwin and his wife had just completed a large modern poultry house in their compound in Kimara. Their current stock of 1,500 chicks yielded Tsh1.2 million<sup>vi</sup> a month from selling to local businesses. The new poultry house would house 3,000 chicks. His wife, who had attended an NGO training course on poultry projects, managed the project full-time. They also had two zero-grazed milk cows

which together yielded 20 litres of milk a day which they sold to neighbours. The income earned was earmarked for school and university fees for their four children. Standing in their compound, the palm trees that swayed around the plot's edges were the only reminder that we were in Dar es Salaam and not the village.

## **Conclusion**

It is time to take the African suburb seriously. As African cities grow, much of that growth will be absorbed into different kinds of suburban residential neighbourhoods that are not usefully imagined as slums or squatter settlements. While some suburban developments are built through alliances of international capital, property developers, planners and landowners, the vast majority of suburban development in Africa is achieved through the incremental efforts of people building houses. The kinds of spaces they are making, and the implications of those spaces for Africa's urban future, cannot be read off from suburban models based on elsewhere.

African suburbs are postcolonial spaces in the sense that they have been shaped by colonial and post-colonial government policies on land and housing. Always confined to the edges, the urban majority has slowly pushed the city outwards in the search for a piece of land on which to make a life. In Tanzania, the introduction of a land market after 1999 accelerated this search as house-builders competed with speculators for access to land. Those who transformed their former farmland into residential suburban space are now repeating the process as they purchase farmland in Dar es Salaam's neighbouring regions such as Bagamoyo and Kibaha. These places may well become the new suburbs over the next few decades. However, the apparently relentless growth of Dar es Salaam's suburbs is not understood here as part of the process of the urbanisation of the planet, in which the distinction between urban and rural space is abandoned. Drawing on a long tradition of research in African Studies that demonstrates the continued significance of the rural for shaping contemporary urban life, I have used the practice of suburban house-building to demonstrate the ways in which urban expansion produces landscapes of extended ruralisation. Investments in houses and land are shaped by colonial and post-colonial legal and cultural practices which have produced differentiated, yet intertwined, rural and urban spaces. The contemporary implication in both suburb and village is a built landscape that is only partially finished and inhabited.

In this paper I have developed the idea of the postcolonial suburb as a way to think about contemporary urban growth in Africa that does not fit easily within the established frames of the Anglo-American suburb, the slum or the peri-urban fringe. Although the paper is empirically concerned with the city of Dar es



Salaam in Tanzania, the idea of the postcolonial suburb can travel more widely, including to the suburbs of the metropolises (Nayak 2010, Roy 2015). The postcolonial suburb can be useful at an empirical level because it refuses to be straightjacketed by definitions of the suburb based on a limited reading of suburban growth in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain and the USA. More broadly, thinking about the postcolonial suburb foregrounds the historical and contemporary relations that produce suburban spaces, and draws specific attention to the colonial and post-colonial making of suburban landscapes.

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<sup>i</sup> I use 'postcolonial' to indicate the theoretical term, and 'post-colonial' to indicate the period since independence.

<sup>ii</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

<sup>iii</sup> About £100 in 1997.

<sup>iv</sup> While urban-rural straddling is a common strategy among different classes and ethnic groups, it is also the case that the Chagga (also the Haya and Nyakyusa) are over-represented among the suburban middle classes (Owens 2004, 2010). This is because of the combination of coffee and tea cultivation, and early access to education, that colonisation brought to the upland territories of these ethnic groups, which afforded relative advantages in terms of cash incomes and employment opportunities.

<sup>v</sup> Similarly, see Melly (2010) on 'not-yet houses' built by migrants in Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>vi</sup> Approximately £440.