

Neil Carrier. *Little Mogadishu. Eastleigh, Nairobi's Global Somali Hub.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016-4314. xx + 313 pp. Maps. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$31.95. Paper. ISBN: 9780190646202.

Neil Carrier describes his new book as a 'tale for our times'. I could not agree more. Packed into the pages of this compelling account of Nairobi's Eastleigh estate, a marginalized urban enclave of Kenya's capital city is the story of how migration and mobility - of people, capital, and trade goods - are transforming urban spaces in the twenty first century. At the same time, the book also tells the story of the tensions that lay behind these processes, as states and host populations attempt to come to terms with a world of movement and interconnectivity.

The ambivalence of globalization lies behind the book's title, *Little Mogadishu*. This is a common Kenyan nickname for Eastleigh. Its use reflects the large Somali population that resides in Eastleigh (a combination of Kenyan Somalis and Somalis who have fled insecurity elsewhere in the Horn of Africa), and the role that Somali capital and entrepreneurship have played in the estates transformation since the early 1990s. What was primarily a residential suburb is now a dynamic hub for global trade networks. However, use of the nickname 'Little Mogadishu' is also telling of the place that Eastleigh occupies in the Kenyan psyche. It suggests that the estate is more a part of the neighboring state of Somalia, and by extension has come to be regarded as a place of refugees and 'illegal' immigrants. Since the rise of Al-Shabaab, these negative stereotypes have intersected with security concerns, which leaves Somalis living in Kenya, many of whom are

actually Kenyan by birth and descent, facing negative stereotypes as interlopers and conduits for terrorism. One of the triumphs of this book is the way that it skillfully debunks these assumptions, paying careful attention to the nuances and complexities that define marginalized urban spaces.

The book begins with Eastleigh's history. Although Carrier covers some well-trodden ground in terms of African urban history, including the intersection of colonial ideas about race and sanitary science, the discussion is significant for highlighting the longevity of Somali urban settlement in Kenya. This is a direct challenge to the notion that Somalis are somehow an 'alien' presence in the country, and Carrier rightly points out that Kenya has always had an indigenous Somali population, some of whom were among the very first settlers in what became Eastleigh in 1921.

Nonetheless, Carrier also warns against defining Eastleigh simply by its 'Somaliness' (although for those that are familiar with the history of Somali marginality in Kenya, this book is important precisely because it *does* emphasize the Somali contribution to Kenya). Alongside Kenyan Somalis, and latterly Somalians, Carrier shows how many other Kenyan and non-Kenyan communities have played, and continue to play an important part in Eastleigh's development. Carrier therefore argues that Eastleigh should be understood as a place of 'super-diversity'. This is a term that has been used to describe other global cities such as London, but as Carrier demonstrates, also has relevance in the non-western context.

The second part of the book is concerned with the nature of Eastleigh's transformation over the past twenty years, especially the operation and reach of the 'refugee economy' that has played such an important role in this. Carrier's focus is the economic capacity of refugees and the opportunities that are created by the movement of people and commerce. Methodologically the approach is innovative. Rather than trace the trajectories of individual trade goods, as is common among transnational studies of commodities, Carrier shows how the flow of those goods, even cheap goods in the case of Eastleigh, can transform a single location. Carrier also effectively challenges the notion that Africa is somehow bypassed by globalization, as some recent well-known explanations of African underdevelopment have assumed. Instead, Carrier provides a vivid sense of how the cheap goods, small shops and petty traders that typify Eastleigh (and many other urban neighborhoods in Africa) are embedded in global trade circuits, albeit at the low-end, and how those operating at the low-end of globalization seek to benefit from capitalism.

Throughout the book, Carrier's experience and abundance of personal contacts within the estate helps to bring the analysis to life. Carrier understands Eastleigh not so much as a place of criminality and impropriety, but as a haven for those seeking to escape insecurity elsewhere. This works up to a point. At various moments we are also reminded of the fragility of the opportunities that are available to refugees and migrants, and no doubt Eastleigh's inexorable gentrification will gradually cause a new cycle of displacement, while the estate's integration within mainstream Kenya remains illusive. The book's celebration of

Eastleigh and the low-end of globalization should therefore be read against ongoing marginality and precariousness.

Nonetheless, what Carrier's account of Eastleigh demonstrates is that out of dislocation and the conditions created by conflict emerge spaces where refugees and citizens can coexist, to the benefit of both individuals and society more broadly. The book makes important contributions to urban anthropology, refugee and migration studies, development economics, and, in an ideal world, it would be read by all those that seek to entrench borders, restrict the movement of refugees, and create barriers to immigration.

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