

LANDS OF LEISURE:
RECREATION, SPACE, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR URBAN KENYA, 1900-2000

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ABSTRACT

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The movement of people to cities has been a significant trend in the recent history of Africa; in the year 2000, the urban population in Africa superseded the rural. African cities are nonetheless underrepresented and misunderstood in historical scholarship. The predominant narrative of the city and urban life, particularly in the post-colonial context, has been one of impoverishment, social disjuncture, and state failure. My dissertation challenges this metanarrative, highlighting how non-elite Kenyan actors, through their struggles for public parks, playgrounds, and other spaces of leisure, had a stake in urban life and contributed to the production of the city.

This dissertation highlights the role of recreation as a governing and community interest that shaped the development of urban policy and land use in Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenya's two largest cities. Through allocation of land for clubs, the state affirmed its authority as an arbitrator of multiple interests and constituencies. During the 1940s and 1950s, the state, viewing African boredom as a cause of social delinquency, promoted the development of new spaces of leisure—social halls, playing fields, and public gardens. Rather than reaffirming the state's position as the paternalistic guardian of African interests, these spaces were sites of social and cultural negotiation between urban Kenyans and colonial welfare officers. By independence, Kenyans recognized playgrounds, parks, and other recreational amenities as fundamental requisites of city life, connecting them with ideas of propriety, legitimacy, and dignity. My dissertation chronicles the struggles of urban Kenyans for recreational spaces in the midst of competing demands for

urban space, extension of state authority, and the social effects of privatization and neoliberalism.

My dissertation makes at least three contributions to historical literature. First, it calls attention to the capacity of non-elite actors to shape the physical production of urban environments, challenging the presumed dominance of ruling-class interests and capital. While Africans' perspectives on land use and environmental practice have been prominent themes in African historiography, it is less understood how Africans contributed to the built environments of cities. I highlight how non-elite Africans' concerns, interests, and activities shaped the work of urban planners and contributed to the changing physical landscape of the city. Secondly, my work shows how recreation shaped state policy, calling attention to alternative governing concerns of African states, beyond control of capital and resources. Finally, this work calls attention to previously underexplored relationships between matters of leisure and cultural production and the history of built environments in Africa. Rather than distinguishing cultural concerns of sports, dances, and cinema from material struggles over land and housing, my dissertation integrates these issues, highlighting how Africans' pursuit of leisure shaped—and was shaped by—competing claims for land.

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This thesis is dedicated to Ronia Grace Owen

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This project has undergone many changes since I began fieldwork in July 2015. My original proposal was to study elite clubs and golf courses as sites of Africanization, cultural production, and nationalism. When this particular research stalled, I began having discussions with working class Kenyans, who expressed to me their perspectives and concerns regarding access to recreational space. While the types of spaces they enjoyed were of a substantially different form than the country clubs and golf courses I had intended to focus on, their perspectives highlighted that access to places to play was not a demand specific to Kenya's elite establishment, rather one that cut across distinctions of race, ethnicity, class, religion, and gender. My hope for this dissertation is to call attention to playgrounds, parks, and other lands of leisure as an integral part of Kenyans' experiences and expectations for city life.

Many people and organizations shaped the development of this project. I received funding for my research from a Department of Education, Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Grant, as well as additional financial support from Michigan State University's Graduate School and Department of History. In a period in which funding for area studies has been in steady decline, graduate students at Michigan State have continued to enjoy success in competitive grants through the expertise of Doctors David Wiley and Roger Bresnahan, as well as the university's vibrant Foreign Language and Area Studies programs.

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ideas of this study. My research and interpretations were also informed by my discussions with the faculty of the Department of History and Archeology at the University of Nairobi, particularly their department chairperson Doctor Ephraim Wahome. The kindness and professionalism of the staff of the Kenyan National Archives, National Museums of Kenya, and the Anglican Church of Kenya, made my work there both productive and enjoyable. I owe particular thanks to Mr. Richard Abani and Ms. Immelda Kithuka, who directly worked to accommodate my copious interests and requests.

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Michigan State University hosts one of the world's most thriving African Studies Centers, directed initially by Professor James Pritchett and currently by Professor Jamie Monson. Both have been steadfast advocates of graduate studies and have made the African Studies Center a focal point of intellectual life on campus. The success of African Studies at Michigan State University owes much to the energy of Doctors John Metzler, Ann Biersteker, and Ms. Lisa Frugé. Language study was also integral to my research and intellectual development; I have had

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS.....	xvi
INTRODUCTION: LAND AND LEISURE IN TWO AFRICAN CITIES: NAIROBI AND MOMBASA.....1	
LANDS, STATES, AND ENVIRONMENTS IN AFRICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	8
URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND SPACE.....	15
LEISURE, IDENTITY, AND THE CITY.....	20
METHODS.....	26
URBAN PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION IN NAIROBI AND MOMBASA.....	31
CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	41
CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITIES AND CLUBS: KENYA’S CLUBLAND.....46	
THE CLUB TRADITION.....	52
LEISURE AND LAND POLICY IN COLONIAL KENYA.....	66
RACE, RECREATION, AND EXPANDING CLAIMS TO THE CITY.....	82
CONCLUSION.....	97
CHAPTER 2: THE “LINKS” OF LAND AND POWER: GOLF, EUROPEAN LEISURE, AND LANDSCAPE MEANINGS IN KIBERA.....99	
KIBERA, LEISURE, AND NAIROBI’S EXPANDING MUNICIPALITY, 1906-1933.....	104
THE LAND CASE 1936-1937.....	119
GOLF AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN KIBERA, 1937-1963.....	128
CONCLUSION.....	139
CHAPTER 3: TURNING “SPIVS” INTO CITIZENS: AFRICAN LEISURE AND URBAN SPACE IN LATE COLONIAL KENYA.....142	
LEISURE AND THE HOUSING QUESTION.....	147
COUNTRY PASTIMES AND URBAN RECREATION.....	163
ADMINISTRATION AND NEGOTIATION OF STATE RECREATIONAL SPACES....	171
CLUBS AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF URBAN SPACE.....	184
CONCLUSION.....	196
CHAPTER 4: A PLACE TO PLAY OR A PLACE TO STAY? RECREATIONAL SPACE AND URBAN STRUGGLES POST-INDEPENDENCE.....199	
URBANIZATION AND MIDDLE-CLASS LEISURE POST INDEPENDENCE	204
HOUSING CRISES AND DECLINING RECREATIONAL SPACE	215

“BUYING UP NAIROBI”: RECREATION AND LANDUSE STRUGGLES	231
GENERATIONAL CONFLICT AND CHANGING CULTURAL SPACE	244
CONCLUSION.....	255
CHAPTER 5: MODERNIZING MAKADARA GARDENS:	
DEVELOPMENT AND THE SPATIAL CONFLICTS IN MOMBASA.....	258
SOCIAL DIVERSITY AND NEGOTATION OF URBAN SPACE	263
<i>IDD</i> FESTIVALS AND REGULATION OF PARK SPACE.....	274
MODERNIZATION AND DEBATES OVER ACCESS	281
CONCLUSION.....	293
CHAPTER 6: CUSTODIANS OF THE PARK: STRUGGLES FOR CITY PARKS IN	
NEOLIBERAL KENYA.....	295
PUTTING ON A SHOW: THE A.S.K. AND PRINCE’S PARK, MOMBASA.....	300
CONCRETE JUNGLES: DEVELOPMENT, SPACE, AND THE URBAN POOR.....	310
PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC PARKS: “LAND GRABS” TO CUSTODIANSHIP.....	331
CONCLUSION.....	350
EPILOUGE AND CONCLUSION: #OCCUPYPLAYGROUND.....	353
APPENDICES.....	359
APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVES CONSULTED.....	360
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWS.....	361
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	364

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Terms of Land Granted for Sports and Country Clubs.....	72
Table 4.1: Frequency of Social Hall Activities.....	174

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: A political map of Kenya, with Nairobi and Mombasa marked by author. Central Intelligence Agency, 1992.....	32
Figure 1.2: Map of Mombasa Municipality in 1927. <u>Report of the Local Government Commission</u> . London, Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1927.....	34
Figure 1.3: Map of Nairobi in 1905. W.T.W. Morgan, <u>Nairobi: City and Region</u> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.....	36
Figure 2.1: Muthaiga Country Club as portrayed in film, <u>Out of Africa</u> , director Sydney Pollack. Universal Pictures, 1985.....	46
Figure 2.2: City map of Nairobi with club land and private recreational spaces bordered in red. Survey of Kenya, 1959.....	54
Figure 2.3: City Map of Mombasa. Stars indicate location of a club. Survey of Kenya, 1959...55	55
Figure 2.4: A cartoon showing women's displeasure as a servant signals them to vacate the Mombasa Club. Edward Rodwell, <u>the Mombasa Club</u> . Mombasa: Mombasa Club, 1988.....	63
Figure 2.5: A map depicting the plan for Muthaiga, an "ideal residential area." The club and the golf course are positioned on the lower right corner of the map. <u>East African Standard</u> , August 17, 1912.....	70
Figure 2.6: The left map shows the area of Thika Road demarcated for playing fields in 1959. Survey of Kenya, 1959. The right map shows the same area subdivided into various plots for sports clubs. Survey of Kenya, 1968.....	81
Figure 3.1: Childhood photo of Adab Rajab at his family's shamba c. 1950s. Photo curtesy Adab Rajab.....	108
Figure 3.2: The fairways of the Nairobi Golf Club, c. 1933. National Museums of Kenya.....	110
Figure 3.3: Nairobi and its Environs 1927. <u>Report of the Local Government Commission</u> . London, Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1927.....	113
Figure 3.4: Nairobi Golf Club with KAR cemetery. The KAR cemetery is the triangular area in the center. Survey of Kenya, 1959.....	127
Figure 3.5: Map of Kibera and its surroundings shortly after independence. Survey of Kenya, 1968.....	130
Figure 3.6: Participants of competition between Nairobi Golf Club and Kibera team, c. 1961. Photo curtesy of Adab Rajab.....	134

Figure 3.7: Group of Nubian professional golfers at the Nairobi Golf Club, c1950s. Photo curtesy of Adab Rajab.....	134
Figure 4.1: A map of Municipal Estates 1957. R.W. Walmsley, <i>Nairobi: The Geography of a New City</i> . Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1957.....	155
Figure 4.2: A city map of Nairobi demarcating open spaces and recreational lands. L.W. Thornton White, L. Silberman, and P.R Anderson, <i>Nairobi-Masterplan for a Colonial Capital</i> . London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1948.....	160
Figure 4.3: African Olympic Games, Nairobi Police Grounds, 1931. National Museums of Kenya.....	166
Figure 4.4: A Tennis Tournament. National Museums of Kenya.....	166
Figure 4.5: United Kenya Club House in Nairobi, 1961. Kenya National Archives.....	188
Figure 4.6: A multiracial Parklands Sports Club. Wambui Wamunyu and Simuyu Barasa, eds., <i>Parklands Sports Club: Centennial Anniversary Edition</i> . Nairobi, Parklands Sports Club, 2006.....	195
Figure 5.1: Nairobi's Uhuru Park: Kenya History 101. https://www.facebook.com/search/photos/?q=kenya%20history%20101	211
Figure 5.2: State plan for the development of Kibera. Space is demarcated for a social center and open space. Kenya National Archives.....	214
Figure 5.3: Present day Karoleni Social Hall with football fields. Photo by Paul Abonyo Odhiambo.....	227
Figure 5.4: View of present day Kibera, taken March 8, 2014. Photo by author.....	236
Figure 6.1: Map of Old Town Mombasa with Makadara Gardens area outlined. Survey of Kenya, 1963.....	264
Figure 6.2: Group of children at the reopening of the Idd-ur-fitr festival at Makadara Gardens in 1980. East African Standard, August 20, 1980.....	292
Figure 6.3: Stilt performer at the 1980 Idd-ur-fitr celebration, 1980. East African Standard, August 20, 1980.....	292
Figure 7.1: A sketched map of Prince's Park, with location of ASK showground, across the channel from Mombasa's Old Town. Kenyan National Archives.....	301
Figure 7.2: A concept sketch of the front of the Kenya Times Media Trust Complex, with Moi statue fronting the building. <i>Kenya Weekly Review</i> , November 17, 1989.....	318
Figure 7.3: A map of southern area of Mombasa Island, with current Mama Ngina Drive Park marked with lines by author. Most of the current remaining golf club land is located to the right of the marked section. Survey of Kenya, 1963.....	332

Figure 7.4: A sketched map showing Mombasa’s Mama Ngina Drive, with reported subdivided plots. <i>Daily Nation</i> , May 16, 1996.....	334
Figure 7.5: A map of the proposed City Park rehabilitation scheme by zone. Government of Kenya, 2010.....	347
Figure 7.6: (bottom). A map of proposed new infrastructure and park’s amenities. Government of Kenya, 2010.....	347

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Aga Khan Trust for Culture	AKTC
Agricultural Society of Kenya	ASK
Central Business District	CBD
City Council of Nairobi	CCN
Coast Provincial Archives	CPA
Commissioner of Local Government, Lands and Settlement	CLGLS
Community Development Officer	CDO
District Commissioner	DC
East African Women's League	EAWL
Kenya Betting Control and Licensing Board	KBCLB
Kenya Land and Freedom Army	KLFA
Kenyan Schilling	KSH
Kenyan Tourist Development Organization	KTDO
Kings African Rifles	KAR
Member of Parliament	MP
Mombasa Golf Club	MoGC
Mombasa Municipal Board	MMB
Mombasa Sports Club	MSC
Municipal Council of Mombasa	MCM
Municipal Council of Nairobi	MCN
Muthaiga Golf Club	MGC

Muthaiga Country Club	MCC
Nairobi City Commission	NCC
Nairobi City Park	NCP
Nairobi City Park Service Company	NCPSC
Nairobi Golf Club	NGC
National Housing Corporation	NHC
National Land Commission	NLC
National Museums of Kenya	NMK
Parklands Sports Club	PSC
Provincial Commissioner	PC
Temporary Occupation License	TOL
Times Media Trust	TMT
United Kenyan Club	UKC
United States Dollar	USD

INTRODUCTION: LAND AND LEISURE IN TWO AFRICAN CITIES: NAIROBI AND MOMBASA

My brother told me we were rich
How Come? I ask!
The other day we were in ditch my brother,
He laughed and told me I was daft,
Father is now close to the Chairman he said,
We got a big plot at the City Park,
Which then sold for a pack
Twenty millions to be exact
What? I choked and gasped,
Yes True, Dad has millions in the Bank,
But, who needs so much money, I ask again.

It is because that is his idea of life
Yet he cannot even share all he has with his wife
My own cousins live in garbage
Yes, in garbage not even with the garbage
But, what I want is not even lots of baggage,

What I desire is a small place
For my hungry nephews and nieces.

Unless this is done now that there is peace
We may all end up choked and in pieces in the City.¹

This poem, composed by a primary school student named Stephen Mutiso, was the preamble to the report of a citywide convention held in Nairobi in July 1993. The convention, which followed Kenya's transition to multi-party elections, involved over 1,200 participants, including former municipal employees, representatives of NGOs and environmental organizations, World Bank officials, and ordinary residents. Nairobi's newly elected mayor, Steve Mwangi—who had earned the nickname “Magic Mwangi” for his efforts to reestablish transparency within municipal government—served as the convention's keynote speaker. The stated aim of the

¹ Stephen Mutiso, qtd. in *Actions Towards a Better Nairobi: Report and Recommendations of the Nairobi City Convention: the “Nairobi We Want”: City Hall, June 27-29, 1993*, ed. James G. Karuga (Nairobi: Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 1993).

convention was to allow residents to express their visions for the Nairobi “they wanted,” confronting decades of perceived inefficiency, corruption, cronyism, and decadence on the part of both the local and national administrations.² Delegates produced several reports recommending a wide range of goals to enhance urban life, including improvement of municipal services, development of new roads and bypasses, municipal housing upgrades, and restoration of public lands for green spaces and leisure.

The poem itself conveyed many of the struggles that underline this study. At independence, Nairobi fashioned itself as the “Green City in the Sun,” boasting various greenbelts, parks, and urban gardens for public leisure and aesthetic enjoyment.³ By the 1990s, however, many residents had come to see the city as a cold, socially detached concrete jungle. Mutiso’s poem pointed to a deeply segmented urban culture, defined by desperate poverty, on the one hand, and greed, crony capitalism, and impunity on the other. The city’s public parks, playgrounds, and gardens, where urban residents once went to find recreation and relaxation, had become easily dispensable commodities, making millionaires overnight. And yet this poem deviated from other popular narratives that emphasized emancipation from the oppression of the city through return to the countryside; if there was to be salvation in Nairobi, it would need to come from within the city itself. Mutiso’s poem underlined the aspirations of all Kenyans’, regardless of wealth or social position, for a respectable and dignified standard of urban life. As James G. Karuga, a leading organizer of the convention, declared in his preface to the report, “For many of the participants at the Convention, Nairobi was ‘home’.”⁴

² Steve Mwangi, forward to *Actions Towards a Better Nairobi*.

³ Public Relations Officer, City Council of Nairobi (CCN), *Nairobi: City in the Sun* (Nairobi: Nairobi City Council, 1962).

⁴ James G. Karuga, *Actions Towards a Better Nairobi*, iv.

The meaning of home was an issue that deeply informed my respondents' perspectives throughout our conversations, many of which occurred in their municipal cottages or self-constructed houses. While many of my respondents touted the benefits of rural life over that of the city, the vast majority of my interviewees had spent most—if not all—of their adult lives residing in the various estates, neighborhoods, or squatter settlements of Nairobi and Mombasa. The city was the place where they not only resided and earned their livings, but raised their children, attended churches and mosques, and developed friendships and social networks. While I am aware of the often fluid migratory connections between the city and the countryside, I have chosen to directly emphasize the experiences of Kenyans in the city, and their struggles to shape urban space according to their social and cultural aspirations.

Lands of Leisure makes two related claims concerning the relationship between leisure, urban development, and land use in Kenya. First, this work argues that Kenyans' interpretations of home and domesticity extended beyond their individual households, looking towards features, amenities, and spaces that would provide them with a semblance of community life. Urban Kenyans negotiated changing conceptions of domesticity and identity as they made their homes in the city. Recreational spaces in the form of clubs, parks, playgrounds, social halls, and other similar venues emerged as important features that gave urban dwellers a stake in the city and shaped their engagement with the state. My second argument connects leisure to expanding domains of state interest and governance. As cities grew overtime and new groups sought spaces for relaxation and entertainment, the state became an integral actor in the production of new recreational spaces. Leisure became a governing concern of Kenya's colonial and post-colonial states, which shaped their efforts to control urban planning and allocation of lands, as well as the parameters of acceptable urban culture. As was the case in other categories of governance, the

powers of the state to control the city broke down. Africans coopted these spaces according to their own social and cultural aspirations. While ordinary residents' uses of playgrounds, social halls, and other leisure spaces did not always deviate from the state's intentions, they created new zones for negotiation and conflict. By creating leisure spaces, moreover, the state contributed to the emergence of recreational amenities as an essential urban right, which ordinary residents referenced when they expressed objections to the state's alternative priorities and agendas concerning development and allocation of urban lands.

Land, as the title of this dissertation suggests, foregrounds these arguments. Following Roderick Neumann's influential study of the political and ecological conflicts over Tanzania's Arusha National Park, this work highlights the "struggles over landscape meanings among different social groups, and the confluence over meaning and struggles over land and resource access."⁵ Struggles over whether parks and playgrounds would continue to function as sites for relaxation and leisure, or for real-estate development, represented vastly different interpretations of land use and access. Like much of the rest of Africa, land has been a "key focus of economic and political struggle" in Kenya.⁶ During the 1990s, more than 300,000 people were displaced and some 1,500 killed in a series of violent conflicts over land rights across the country.⁷ The violent aftermath of Kenya's 2007 election once again brought the politics of land rights and reform into public and academic focus.⁸ Although much of 2007-2008 news coverage emphasized the conflicts in the Rift Valley, Nairobi's squatter settlements, Kibera and Mathare,

⁵ Roderick P. Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles Over Livelihood and Natural Preservation in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 9.

⁶ Sara Berry, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power, and the Past in Asante, 1896-1996* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000), xix.

⁷ Catherine Boone, *Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

⁸ See Peter Kagwanja and Roger Southall, eds., "Kenya's Uncertain Democracy: The Electoral Crisis of 2008," Special Issue, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 27, no 3 (2009).

were also epicenters of violence and displacement. Struggles over land were not exclusively rural phenomena, rather they extended into urban centers through contestations over property ownership, access to housing, squatting, and the outgrowth of real-estate speculation.

Yet *Lands of Leisure* is not a history of land tenure or private property; it rather highlights the multiple ways by which ordinary Kenyans and state officials saw and attributed value onto urban land, apart from questions of ownership, production of capital, and accumulation of wealth or political power. Parks, playgrounds, and gardens were publicly—not privately—held lands and contributed little in terms of economic value; they were, however, the places where residents remembered lively football scrimmages with their age mates, evening strolls, or watching their young children play. Recreational spaces contributed to the making of an urban “landscape,” which David William Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo defined as “encompassing the physical land, the people on it, and the culture through which people work out the possibilities of land.”⁹ By underscoring the multiplicity of perspectives of urban landscapes, we can connect urban planning and production of built environments with the political, as well as the cultural “struggles for the city.”¹⁰

By looking at ordinary Kenyans’ struggles for open spaces, this dissertation makes three significant contributions to historiography. First, this research broadens understanding of Africans’ engagement with the processes of urbanization and development, highlighting their contributions to the physical production of cities. Scholars have tended to regard cities as socially dysfunctional places devoid of the culturally nurturing structures of the countryside. My

⁹ David William Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), 9.

¹⁰ Frederick Cooper, “Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa,” in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa.*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Luise White (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 34.

dissertation offers an alternative to these presumptions, highlighting how urban Kenyans engaged with emerging ideals of family, propriety, and community within urban settings. Such engagements were certainly distinct, but no less important, than the processes of cultural production, identity-making, and community formation that occurred in the countryside. Rather than treating ordinary urban Kenya's as subjects to colonial and post-colonial urban planners and development agencies, this dissertation highlights how their aspirations for urban life shaped the production of urban space.

Secondly, my dissertation expands how scholars can view issues of state production and governance in Africa. Scholarship of African states has emphasized their role in resource distribution and capitalist production. The image of states as "gate keepers" of land and capital, while compelling, often reduces them to "faceless" and single-dimensional institutions.¹¹ While distributary politics are important to my own framing of Kenya's colonial and post-colonial states, officials' interests extended to other categories of governance, aside from accumulation and distribution of capital. State officials were themselves cultural actors who recognized the potential pleasures of football, golf, dancing, picnics, and other avenues of leisure. Such interests contributed to how they exercised politics of land dispensation and determined the priorities of urban development.

Finally, my dissertation paves the way for a closer examination of the relationships between matters of consumption and leisure with material concerns of land-use, environment, and urbanization. Historical scholarship of Africa has both a rich tradition of land-use and environmental scholarship, as well as a burgeoning literature of leisure, cultural production, and

¹¹ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For a similar presentation of this critique, see Kara Moskowitz, "'Are You Planting Trees or Harvesting People?': Squatter Resistance and International Development in the Making of the Postcolonial Order (c.1963-78)," *Journal of African History* 56, no. 1 (2015): 101.

identity. Rarely, however, have historians connected these two frameworks. If football scrimmages were sites where Africans negotiated meanings of identity or circumnavigated the regimentation of industrial capitalism, then what does it mean when the playgrounds, pitches, and stadiums where such activities took place were lost to housing and other infrastructural development? Rather than treating processes of cultural production and urban identity as phenomena discrete from the physical production of urban environments, this dissertation examines how Kenyans' aspirations for playgrounds, social halls, and other venues where they could find relaxation, sport, or social engagement were entangled in the politics and material dilemmas of urban planning and the commodification of land.

The issues of this study are hardly unique to Kenya, or even to Africa. A September 23, 2015 article in the *New York Times* highlighted a controversy concerning plans to develop subsidized housing for senior citizens on the site of a small public garden in Manhattan, New York. David Dunlap, the article's author, pondered, "Is it too much to hope that a city of limitless imagination can do better than force an either-or choice between desperately needed housing and imaginative open space?"¹² A variety of scholars, including, Mike Davis, Michael Sorkin, Don Mitchell, and Setha Low, Dana Taplin, and Suzanne Scheld have each ruminated on the effects of the "destruction of accessible public space" in North American cities, particularly in the era of neoliberal privatization and commodification of once public amenities.¹³ These

¹² David W. Dunlap, "Tumult in a Manhattan Oasis Over an Affordable Housing Plan," *New York Times*, September 23, 2015, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/24/nyregion/tumult-in-a-manhattan-oasis-over-an-affordable-housing-plan.html>.

¹³ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990), 226. Also see also Michael Sorkin, "Introduction," in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), xi–xv; Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Right to Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003); Setha Low, Dana Taplin, and Suzanne Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

perspectives linked the sustainability of urban open spaces to the cultural vitality, creativity, and diversity of cities. This dissertation hopes to contribute to these important discussions, highlighting that aspirations, demands, and struggles for accessible recreational venues were commonly shared concerns, which cut across the often presumed distinctions between the cities of North America and Europe and the burgeoning metropolises of Africa and the global south.

LANDS, STATES, AND ENVIRONMENTS IN AFRICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Debates over land and property rights dominated scholarship on Kenya during the 1970s and 1980s. The large scale alienation of the country's highlands and the post-colonial state's uneven efforts at land reform, left an enduring legacy of social and economic stratification. During the 1980s, eighty percent of Kenyans inhabited under twenty-percent of the nation's territory.¹⁴ A number of scholars attributed the growth of Nairobi, Mombasa, and other cities to the crises of land hunger in Kenya's rural areas.¹⁵ The scholarly works of the 1970s and 1980s emphasized land in terms of economic development and class formation.¹⁶ In particular, the resilience of peasant modes of production perplexed scholars who predicted the gradual proletarianization of African societies.¹⁷ Christopher Leo, in his classic economic study, *Land and Class in Kenya*, concluded that Kenyan capitalism was built, "not upon the rubble of a

¹⁴ Norman Miller and Rodger Yeager, *Kenya: the Quest for Prosperity* (Boulder: Westview, 1984), 2.

¹⁵ Donald B. Freeman, *A City of Farmers: Informal Urban Agriculture in the Open Spaces of Nairobi, Kenya* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1991), 13.

¹⁶ William J. Barber, "Land Reform and Economic Change Among African Farmers in Kenya," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 19, no. 1 (1970): 6-24. Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neocolonialism, 1964-1971* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Gavin Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Christopher Leo, *Land and Class in Kenya* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

¹⁷ For a good discussion and critique of this literature, albeit in contexts outside of Kenya, see Göran Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Frederick Cooper, "Africa in the World Economy," *African Studies Review* 24, no. 2/3 (1981): 1-86.

disintegrating peasant society, but upon the firm and well-established foundation of a peasant mode of production that is still developing and expanding.”¹⁸

By the 1990s, scholars’ emphasis had shifted away from its previous reliance on economic theory and Marxist teleology in favor of a more cultural and ethnographic approach to issues of land tenure. Sara Berry in her seminal work, *No Condition is Permanent*, underscored the multiplicity of social practices and customs that determined land access, mobilization of labor, and economic production in colonial and post-colonial agrarian societies. Her work highlighted that property rights and land tenure were inseverable from local social relations and political spheres of authority, both of which “remained contested and flexible—despite registration of land titles and the stabilization of administrative boundaries.”¹⁹ Colonial states often lacked the power to enforce the totalizing capitalistic transformations they aspired; European hegemony instead operated “on a shoe string,” relying on the cooperation of African agents and the incorporation of African forms of economic production. John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman posed a similar argument in their influential case study of labor and agrarian practice in the Kenyan highlands. Berman and Lonsdale contended that Kenya’s colonial state had to negotiate its interests in growing capital with establishing a legitimate form of authority that could be acceptable to Africans.²⁰ Officials balanced these conflicting goals by coopting indigenous political traditions, land use systems, and modes of production into both their

¹⁸ Leo, *Land and Class in Kenya*, 7.

¹⁹ Sara Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 7; Also see Berry’s worthy successor to this study, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries*. While the first work is comparative and the latter a more focused discussion on Asante land politics in Ghana, both works provided informative discussions of literature on land tenure and rights in Africa.

²⁰ Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, vol. 1 (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992), 81.

governing and economic strategies.²¹ On the East African coast, the state found its efforts to transform emancipated slaves into a stable rural working class hampered by former slaves' willingness to enter into squatter relationships with their former Arab and Swahili masters.²²

The central theme of these studies is the embeddedness of systems of land tenure within culture, tradition, and political patronage. Among the key precepts of the private property regime was the commodification of land, i.e. its separation from social relationships and customary meanings. These works instead highlighted a terrain of multiple social and economic possibilities in Africa. As Sara Berry argued, "by viewing property as a social process rather than a set of initial conditions, we may be better able to address both the general reality that property rights (like markets) are never "complete."²³ Another core theme of this literature was the importance of land to state production. Even prior to European colonialism, African rulers dispensed lands to inspire loyalty and expand their political allegiances.²⁴ European states coopted these strategies, as they attempted to arbitrate the multiple interests of colonial society.²⁵ A number of observers have criticized the continuity of these practices in post-colonial Africa, viewing the "inability or unwillingness of post-colonial regimes to separate the production and appropriation of wealth from the pursuit and exercise of power" as a significant detriment to economic growth.²⁶ Frederick Cooper, Jean-François Bayart, and others, have characterized African states as gate

²¹ Ibid., 95.

²² Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor & Agriculture in Zanzibar & Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1980).

²³ Berry, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries*, xxii.

²⁴ Holly Elisabeth Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003); Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002).

²⁵ Ibid.; Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*.

²⁶ Berry, *Chiefs Know their Boundaries*, xxiii.

keepers—or a version like it—carefully maintaining their legitimacy through selective dispensation of lands and resources.²⁷

Much of the scholarly work on land tenure in Africa, however, built on the epistemologically interrelated traditions of economic history and political economy. Even as scholars integrated cultural and ethnographic approaches into their research, they have rarely departed from the framing questions of production, class formation, and articulation. What is missing from this literature is attention to the multiplicity of meanings and uses of land itself. How did African societies determine the utilization of lands for cultivation, as opposed to religious worship, burial grounds, community gatherings, or leisure? How did colonial and post-colonial African societies negotiate the often fluid divisions of public lands and private property?

The growing subfield of environmental history has been conceptually informative in responding to these questions, particularly through its emphasis on the multiple ways by which societies attributed meaning onto physical landscapes. While historians were initially reluctant to use the term “landscape,” fearing it would perpetuate a “particular European tradition of seeing,” the “notion of landscape has provided a valuable means of bringing together discussion of material changes in the environment, with imaginative interpretation.”²⁸ Terrance Ranger, Kairn Klieman, Sandra Greene, for example, have each underscored the importance of religious shrines and practices as “a vision of landscape and an ideology of land use.”²⁹ The notion of

²⁷ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*; For a similar version of his argument, see Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: Politics of the Belly* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²⁸ William Beinart and JoAnn McGregor, “Introduction,” in *Social History and African Environments*, ed. William Beinart and JoAnn McGregor (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 2003), 4.

²⁹ Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 25; Kairn Klieman, *the Pygmies Were Our Compass: Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003); Sandra Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: a History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

landscape was also important to the rational of the imperial project and “constructions of settler identity.”³⁰ As Diana Davis illustrated, the mythology of North Africa as a once “bountiful granary of Rome,” provided French settlers and officials with an emotively compelling justification for their incorporation of the region.³¹ European settlers rationalized their rights to Kenya’s highlands by propagating a myth of the region as a once empty, unexploited landscape, of which Africans did not have the knowledge or impetus to harness.³² By the interwar period settlers and officials developed new imperial mandates through a global discourse emphasizing environmental conservation and the preservation of nature.³³ “The global conservationist view of the landscape,” Jan Bender Shetler delineated, “developed in Europe and the colonies as a critique of the destructive impact of industrialization and the colonial economic view of the landscape.”³⁴ The creation of parks and nature reserves, however, was ultimately no less alienating to African communities who used these lands for herding and grazing, cultivation, religious rituals, and homes.³⁵

Environmental history offers a useful framework to underline the variable and conflicting priorities concerning utilization of land, which included both economic and cultural rationalities. The popularity of the conservationist viewpoint in Africa underscored the broadening of colonial

³⁰ Beinart and McGregor, “Introduction,” 5.

³¹ Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 2007), 5. A corollary to her argument was that the land had since fallen into “subsequent ruin and deforestation due to Arab invasion” and ecological mismanagement.

³² Fiona Mackenzie, *Land, Ecology and Resistance in Kenya, 1880-1952* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998). For examples of this narrative see Elspeth Huxley, *White Man’s Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*, vol. 1 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935), 106; J.F. Lipscomb, *White Africans* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), 17.

³³ David Bunn, “An Unnatural State: Tourism, Water, and Wildlife Photography in the Early Kruger National Park,” in *Social History and African Environments*, ed. William Beinart and JoAnn McGregor (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 2003), 199–218.

³⁴ Jan Bender Shetler, *Imagining Serengeti: A History of Landscape Memory in Tanzania from Earliest Times to the Present* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 202.

³⁵ Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness*, 111.

and post-colonial African states to encompass new categories of governance and imperial intervention. Leisure was another significant standpoint by which European settlers in Kenya saw the landscape. Bertram Francis Gurdon, Second Baron of Cranworth, promised prospective settlers that Kenya was a land where even an industrial laborer could experience an aristocratic lifestyle of “gain and sport.”³⁶ Gurdon crafted an enticing image of farms adjoining expansive golf courses, polo grounds, cricket pitches, and other amenities attractive to the European sportsman. The ability of sports and other recreational interests to influence landscape perspectives expanded overtime, as multiple actors, including non-Europeans, came to regard recreational space as an essential feature of the environment. While environmental history has tended to frame landscapes in terms of conflicts between European and African ways of seeing, leisure spaces were constructs of environment that also resonated with the aspirations of Africans who were themselves negotiating the boundaries of identity and meanings of community within Kenyan cities.

The fact that many of these described negotiations occurred in Kenya’s urban centers is also significant. Environmental history, like economic history, has been predominantly rural-focused. This absence has the unintended implication of reinforcing many of the conventional tropes of Africa as a distinctively rural landscape, with cities existing outside of nature. William Cronon, in his seminal study of Chicago, offered a persuasive caution against partitioning landscapes into “urban places, rural places, and wilderness.”³⁷ More recently, Catherine McNeur illustrated how environmental conflicts shaped the development of New York City through debates about raising swine, development of open spaces, and the disposal of garbage. Long

³⁶ Bertram Francis Gurdon, 2nd Baron of Cranworth, *Colony in the Making: Sport and Profit in British East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1912).

³⁷ William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), xvi.

before Manhattan became a global symbol of capital and elite privilege, the city's poor built livelihoods from small-scale farming or raising hogs, which roamed the streets freely, foraging on heaps of garbage.³⁸

“Before the city,” William Cronon tells us, “there was the land.”³⁹ Despite its popular designation as, “the green city in the sun,” Nairobi, at its origin, was a brackish swamp where groups of Maasai occasionally sojourned as they allowed their cattle to drink. In 1899, when the British administration moved its capital from Machakos to Nairobi, many settlers ardently protested on the grounds that the location was physically unsuitable for a colonial capital.⁴⁰ Until the late nineteenth century, Mombasa never exceeded a half of a mile of the island's total area of around five square miles; most of the island through the 1890s consisted of farms and dense forests of palm and citrus trees.⁴¹ Charles Hobley, who was Mombasa's Provincial Commissioner, commented that “once outside the narrow lanes of the native town no roads, other than footpaths existed; even the path leading to Kilindi was only about four-foot-wide and passed through the jungle the whole way.”⁴² These examples underline that the skyscrapers, roads, churches and mosques, and open air markets that we identify with African cities today were constructs that emerged from human intervention and creation of once hardly distinguishable boundaries between city and country. As various human actors left their imprint on the physical landscape, the establishment of open, green spaces became a part of the production of the city.

³⁸ Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1-6.

³⁹ Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 23.

⁴⁰ See Mervyn Hill, *Permanent Way: The Story of the Kenya Uganda Railway* (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbors, 1950), 221.

⁴¹ Harm J. De Blij, *Mombasa an African City* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 29.

⁴² Charles William Hobley, *Kenya from Chartered Company to Crowned Colony* (London H.F.G Witherby, 1929), 25.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND SPACE

Although the movement of people from the countryside to the city has been a significant trend in Africa during the past fifty years, there has been relatively little historical scholarship on African cities post-independence.⁴³ When post-colonial cities are discussed in scholarship, they are done so through the lens of development, which emphasizes African urban centers as sites of “alienation and oppression.”⁴⁴ Africa’s post-colonial cities have come to symbolize the social and economic failures of African states, visible through crime, lack of social services, poor sanitation, and the outgrowth of slums. Thus Africa’s “sprawling metropolises” have been represented as “exemplary expressions of failed, distorted, or stalled urbanism—lacking the basic requirements and attributes of genuine urbanity that mark the urbanization process elsewhere.”⁴⁵ As one respected scholar, writing in 1994, declared, “the truth of the matter is that African cities are part of the cause and major symptom of the economic crisis that has enveloped the continent. Their inability to serve as veritable engines of growth and structural transformations as cities in other societies is certainly a serious element in the present equation.”⁴⁶

These narratives are problematic, not only in their perpetuation of popular denigrations of Africa as the “hopeless continent,” but also in their failure to properly interrogate the meaning of

⁴³ There are of a course a number of important recent exceptions. Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Bill Freund, *The African City: a History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), vii; for a similar appraisal of the literature, see Paul Jenkins, *Urbanization, Urbanism, and Urbanity in an African City: Home Spaces and House Cultures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁴⁵ Martin J. Murray and Garth Myers, “Introduction: Situating Contemporary Cities in Africa,” in *Cities in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Martin J. Murray and Garth Myers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 6.

⁴⁶ Akin Mabongunje, “Introduction: Cities and Africa’s Economic Recovery,” in *Urbanization in Africa: a Handbook*, ed. James D. Tarver (Westport, Greenwood, 1994), xxi.

decline itself, measuring cities according to the standards of Western metropolises. At the same time, it is not necessarily useful to throw out development as a useful category of analysis. As Frederick Cooper pondered, “Can we build networks of piped water and electricity and work out an epistemological critique of ‘development’ at the same time?”⁴⁷ The “myth of modernization,” as James Ferguson highlighted in his ethnography of the Zambian Cooperbelt, was a lived experience to urban migrants, who came to the city for the promises of better jobs and superior social services; the authenticity of these promises made the disappointments all the more harrowing.⁴⁸ What is needed is scholarship that highlights African urban residents’ stake in the condition of the city and the standards they used to weigh progress and decline. Historical scholarship has provided numerous portraits of Africans’ experiences as dockworkers, miners, and prostitutes, as they navigated the constraints of their respective capitalist societies.⁴⁹ Rarely do we see them as mothers and fathers, neighbors, friends, and fellow community members who sought to make the city their homes. By treating Africans as active stakeholders in urban development, rather than as bystanders, scholars can better interpret meanings of development and decline in the context of African cities.

The question of who controls the city and the processes of urban planning has framed the work of urban scholars of Africa, as well as the rest of the world. Space has been a methodological blind spot for historians; while studying the effects of change overtime, they

⁴⁷ Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of African Studies* 49, no. 2 (2008): 186.

⁴⁸ James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Cooperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁴⁹ For examples of some of the more seminal works, see Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, vol. 1 New Babylon (New York: Longman, 1982); Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

have tended to regard space itself as static and presumed.⁵⁰ Henri Lefebvre, who was at the forefront of spatial theory, conceptualized two main forms of space: “representations of space,” meaning the space conceived by the state and urban planners, and “representational spaces,” which he defined as the lived experiences where people ascribed meaning and significance onto spaces.⁵¹ He described a third plank, “spatial practice,” which referred to the activities, conventions, and uses concerning spaces that contribute to their social meaning.⁵² The presumed neutrality of space, he argued, masked that it is “produced and reproduced, and is a site of social, political, and economic struggle.”⁵³ Lefebvre, emerging from a Marxist tradition, emphasized the capacity of power—particularly expressed through capital—to influence the production of spaces. He argued, “the spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it.”⁵⁴ Under a capitalist system, as follows, the city would adopt the form best suited to the interests of capital. The created space of the city, as influential urban theorist David Harvey postulated, at least in part “reflects the prevailing ideology of the ruling groups and institutions.”⁵⁵ Timothy Mitchell and, more recently, Garth Myers and Martin Murray have examined the influence of both colonial and neo-colonial institutions of power on the production of African cities.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ For a similar critique see, Edward Soja, *The Geography of Modernization in Kenya* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), 6.

⁵¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 33.

⁵² Ibid., 38.

⁵³ Ibid., 26; Setha Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 30.

⁵⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 9-11.

⁵⁵ David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 310.

⁵⁶ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Garth Myers, *Verandas of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003); Martin Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg After Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

Responding to capital's domination over urban processes and forms, scholars have advocated alternative frameworks for the city that emphasize inclusivity and democratic participation. Lefebvre boldly envisioned an urban society that granted its inhabitants "the right to the city," which he defined as the "right of freedom to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit."⁵⁷ For Lefebvre, the "right to the city" was the means to an urban revolution, in which underclass populations would assume control over urban practices and spatial production.⁵⁸ Such a city, for instance, would recognize the legality of informal settlements, or the ability of street vendors to freely sell their goods without fear of harassment from authorities.⁵⁹ Urban theorists embraced this principle, viewing it as an alternative framework in which cities would support the needs and values of their underclass populations.⁶⁰ Adopting a similar framework, Rem Koolhaas, AbdouMalik Simone, and others have alternatively advocated for a bottom up approach to understanding built environments in Africa, emphasizing the contributions of ordinary urban dwellers over those of elites and state planners.⁶¹ As Simone writes, "No matter how hard analysts and policy makers try, practices of

⁵⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 73.

⁵⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁵⁹ See Edward Murphy, *For a Proper Home: Housing Rights in the Margins of Urban Chile, 1960-2010* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2014); Ayona Datta, *The Illegal City. Space, Law and Gender in a Delhi Squatter Settlement* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012); John C. Cross, *Informal Politics: Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁶⁰ Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*; Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

⁶¹ Rem Koolhaas, "Fragments of a Lecture on Lagos," in *Under Siege: Four African Cities: Freetown, Kinshasha, Lagos (Documenta 11, Platform 4)*, ed. Owui Enwezor et. al. (Osfieldern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002); AbdouMalik Simone, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Garth Myers, *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2011); Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall, *Johannesburg: the Elusive Metropolis* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2008).

inhabiting the city are so diverse and change so quickly that they cannot easily be channeled into clearly designed uses of space and resources or patterns of social change.”⁶²

While this latter approach has been certainly helpful to dislodging the presumed domination of state and capital over urban space, it also establishes a clear duality between the interests of policymakers, urban planners, and capitalist interests, and those of working class urban dwellers.⁶³ We see little of the varied forms, apart from resistance, by which ordinary Africans engaged with the state. Nor does this approach fully convey the multitude of agendas, claims, and priorities that shaped the production of urban space overtime, presenting the urban grassroots as a unified and homogenous movement. My work addresses these issues by underlining the importance of negotiation and struggle to the production of built environments, as multiple constituencies, interests, and institutions sought to influence the space of the city. Frederick Cooper noted that “struggles for the city” were “cultural as well as political.”⁶⁴ While Cooper’s own scholarship emphasized these struggles in terms of the state’s tenuous control over labor and processes of urban class formation, scholars have quite recently begun to more fully integrate cultural politics as an important category to assessing the trajectory of urbanization in Africa.⁶⁵ Debates about the utilization of open spaces reflected competing rationalities and conflicting priorities concerning land use and the direction of urban planning.⁶⁶ Whether land

⁶² AbdouMaliq Simone, *City Life from Jakarta to Dakar: Movements at the Crossroads* (London Routledge, 2009), 3.

⁶³ For a version of this critique, see Ato Quayson, *Oxford Street Accra: City Life and the Itineraries of Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 8.

⁶⁴ Cooper, “Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa,” 34.

⁶⁵ There has been substantial work on cultural politics in Dar es Salaam. See Andrew Burton, *African Underclass: Urbanisation, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar Es Salaam* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005); Ivaska, *Cultured States*; James R Brennan, *Taifa*. For examples outside of East Africa see Marissa J. Moorman, *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, from 1945 to Recent Times* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008); Nate Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night: Popular Music and Social Change in Urban Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

⁶⁶ See Garth Myers, *Urban Environments in Africa: a Critical Analysis of Environmental Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 8.

would be used for housing, for a church, or for a soccer pitch constituted not only a negotiation between the interests of state planners and city dwellers, but among ordinary inhabitants themselves.

Subjectivities such as gender and generational difference also profoundly defined the tensions concerning recreational spaces overtime. As Phyllis Martin contended, colonial interest in leisure most often focused on the activities of men, whom administrators regarded as the most vulnerable to delinquency and the corrupting influences of the city.⁶⁷ I would add to this by highlighting the importance of youths as a group that shaped official discourses concerning leisure. Women, on the other hand, significantly struggled for a stake in urban leisure space, with their pastimes presumed to operate within the private domains of homes and churches. Examining tensions of gender and generation, alongside conventional concerns of race, ethnicity, and class, highlight alternative mechanisms that produced urban environments and add nuance to the neat binary between states and ordinary residents.

LEISURE, IDENTITY, AND THE CITY

Ethnicity and community are issues that have particular resonance in Kenya's historical scholarship. Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president, wrote one of the most influential works in early Kenyan scholarship, *Facing Mount Kenya*. Kenyatta, a student of anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, embraced the theory of structural functionalism to affirm a particular set of mores, traditions, and values, that he saw as contributing to a sustainable social system.⁶⁸ Kenyatta, through his vigorous defense of female circumcision, male initiation rituals, and gerontocracy articulated a specific brand of cultural authenticity that emerged from contested interpretations of

⁶⁷ Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152-53.

⁶⁸ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Heinemann, 1938), 120.

Kikuyu identity.⁶⁹ Kenyatta was hardly alone in this endeavor. In 1938, the same publication year as *Facing Mount Kenya*, Paul Mboya published his encyclopedic Luo history entitled *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* (Luo Customs and Traditions).⁷⁰ Mboya's work, significantly influenced Bethwell Ogot, one of Kenya's most towering intellectual figures. Ogot's inaugural work described the emergence of a cohesive Luo identity amidst processes of cultural and economic change, and absorption of "Bantu and Nilo-Hamitic elements."⁷¹

The work of these scholars significantly shaped the trajectory of Kenyan historiography. Since the 1980s, historians' primary focus has been to challenge the supposed cultural and social unity within Kenya's various ethnic communities, that underline ethnicity as "the unfinished process of coming to be" rather than deriving from timeless and perpetually self-reproducing institutions.⁷² Indeed through historians' embrace of ethnic constructionism, as well as the enduring debates of the 1980s concerning whether Mau Mau was a Kikuyu or a nationalist struggle, the project of ethnic creation became the answer to the question of the identity—or lack thereof—of the Kenyan nation.⁷³ As John Lonsdale persuasively contended, "All states are made

⁶⁹ See John Lonsdale, "Contests of Time: Kikuyu Historiographies, Old and New," in *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South Asia*, ed. Axel Harneit-Sievers (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 201–54. Lonsdale contended that Kenyatta's harmonious depiction of Kikuyu political structure, economy, and age-grade system was a culmination of a longer and contested locally-grounded project regarding the use of history to lay the groundwork for a Kikuyu community. Kenyatta himself identified with the *athomi*, a class of literate, mission-educated, cultural nationalists, who saw history as a way to reconcile Kikuyu tradition with colonial modernity (206).

⁷⁰ Paul Mboya, *Luo Kitgi Gi Timbegi: a Handbook of Luo Customs*, trans. Jane Achieng, (Kisumu: Anyange Press, 1938).

⁷¹ Bethwell A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), 223.

⁷² John Lonsdale, "When Did Gusii (Or Any Other Group) Become a Tribe?" *Kenyan Historical Review* 5, (1977): 123-33; Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*, 15 & 36. During the 1980s and 1990s there were a myriad of books on various ethnic communities across Kenya. See Thomas Spear, "Introduction," in *Being Massai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, ed. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 1-19; Bill Bravman, *Making Ethnic Ways: Communities and Their Transformations in Taita, Kenya 1800-1950* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998); Derek Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2004).

⁷³ John Lonsdale, "The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: The Problem," in *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity*, ed. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (Athens: Ohio

up of diverse nationalities. Short of the barbarous simplifications of genocide, they each have to express their shared, generally disputed, ideas in different regional tongues. It is not a defect peculiar to Africa. It is not a defect.”⁷⁴

This literature collectively presents a problem of segmenting Kenya into several rural and ethnic enclaves. While Kenyan scholarship has benefited from ethnographically rich illustrations of the experiences of “Gikuyu squatters, Gusii litigants, Kalenjin politicians, Kamba soldiers, Maasai murrans, or Maragoli widows,” the literature, as Paul Ocobock argued, has produced a history of Kenya “as a sum of its ethnic parts, rather than a history of the whole.”⁷⁵ Even the more ethnically heterogeneous settings of the city, often appear as distinct and disconnected estates, districts, and neighborhoods, which function as self-enclosed containers of ethnicity. Cohen and Odiambo write of Kaloleni, one of Nairobi’s municipal estates, as landscapes where Siaya migrants reproduced Luo identity through football, popular songs, and elite business clubs.⁷⁶ Even Luise White’s magnificently crafted labor history of Nairobi prostitutes, closely intertwined urban class production with Kikuyu debates over gender.⁷⁷ While such distinctions have been very informative and in some cases necessary to understanding Kenya’s intricate social and political history, it is also necessary to explore the interconnections of Kenyans’ experiences with colonial and post-colonial rule, rather than segmenting them into ethnically

University Press, 1992). For a later advancement of this argument see Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, C. 1935 to 1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁷⁴ Lonsdale, “The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: The Problem,” 266.

⁷⁵ Paul Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age: Making Manhood, Maturity, and the Elder State in Kenya* (Forthcoming, Ohio University Press), 11. Special thanks to Paul Ocobock for sharing this manuscript with me in advance of its publication. A noteworthy exception to this claim is Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-50* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

⁷⁶ Cohen and Odiambo, *Siaya*, 43-47.

⁷⁷ White, *Comforts of Home*.

discrete communities.⁷⁸ Urban Kenyans' aspirations for parks and playgrounds, as well as other expectations of urban life, cut across the boundaries of Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba, Luhya, Giriama, and Swahili.

My own emphasis on parks, playing fields, clubs, and other venues of recreation builds on a growing body of scholarship on leisure in Africa. Emmanuel Akyeampong and Charles Ambler defined leisure as an "important sphere of activity and reflexivity, where people affirm what is socially valuable."⁷⁹ The activities that fell into this definition ranged widely and included, "time spent with family and friends, community activities that confirm one's membership in a social group, activities considered fun or pleasurable, rest and renewal from the demands and routine of work, and a relatively autonomous space, where individuals can flesh out their social identities."⁸⁰ Peter Burke, describing leisure in the context of early Europe, called on scholars to evaluate leisure as a "conceptual package," rather than a list of recreational activities.⁸¹ In Kiswahili the word that most closely translates to leisure is "*starehe*." *Starehe*, however, itself has multiple connotations, ranging from time for relaxation to a particular condition of life where people are able to have fun, relax, and engage in the frivolities (as opposed to hardships) of everyday life. Leisure, in this regard, falls into a broader sphere of class identification, cultural production, and moral debates concerning individuals' use of time, money, space, and community resources.

⁷⁸ Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age*, 11.

⁷⁹ Emmanuel Akyeampong and Charles Ambler, "Leisure in African History: An Introduction," *the International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 1 (2002), 3.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Peter Burke, "The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe: Reply," *Past & Present*, no. 156 (1997): 192.

Phyllis Martin was among the first historians to treat leisure as an important social concern, underlying its role in shaping Africans and Europeans' negotiations over urban space and the imposition of industrial time.⁸² Building on this approach, Laura Fair stressed that leisure and politics were "not discrete categories of experience," as she highlighted how Zanzibaris, through their participation in football, music, and fashion, negotiated meanings of ethnicity, class, and community.⁸³ While historians who emphasize African leisure have done so primarily to make innovations in their own regional historiographies, a number of important themes have emerged from their collective scholarship. Foremost, the capacity of Africans' pastimes as vehicles for social mobilization and popular politics have been central to historians' study of leisure. From footballers' flaunting challenge to the legitimacy of South Africa's racist regimes to urban Angolans' incorporation of popular music into their national struggle, leisure has provided an alternative avenue to explore African mobilization and collective action, apart—yet not disconnected—from scholars' past emphases on national movements, political parties, and trade unions.⁸⁴ Music, football, and other pastimes pulled Africans together, creating new categories of identity that transcended colonialists' agenda of divide and conquer.

A second important thread that has emerged in historical literature, has been to connect African leisure with changing patterns of consumption and urban styles.⁸⁵ As Charles Ambler

⁸² Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville*.

⁸³ Laura Fair, *Past Times and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post Abolition Zanzibar, 1890-1945*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 9.

⁸⁴ Peter Alegi, *Laduma!: Soccer, Politics, and Society in South Africa, from Its Origins to 2010* (Scottsville: KwaZulu-Natal University Press, 2010); Moorman, *Intonations*.

⁸⁵ There has been growing literature connecting cinema and media to popular consumption. See Brian Larkin, "Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 67, no. 3 (1997): 406-40; Charles Ambler, "Mass Media and Leisure in Africa," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no 1, (2002), 119-131; James Burns, *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), Laura Fair, "Making Love in the Indian Ocean: Hindi Films, Zanibari Audiences, and the Construction of Romance in the 1950s and 1960s," in *Love in Africa*, ed. Jennifer Cole and Lynn Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 58-82.

and Emmanuel Akyeampong argued, “leisure and popular culture fused in significant ways, as workers or commoners forged an alternative vision of society, of time and space, and an ideology that sought to comprehend the structures of colonial and capitalist exploitation.”⁸⁶ As African men—and women—came to the city, they grappled with the possibilities and constraints of living in a capitalist system, bent on wage earnings and consumption. In turn, urban Africans explored new boundaries of identity and competing ideas of gender and masculinity.⁸⁷ Nate Plageman, in his study of highlife in late colonial Accra, highlighted that, “separated from lineage structures and elders’ control,” young urban migrants “fashioned new social networks based on shared experiences, common aspirations, or mutual benefit.”⁸⁸ He added that “Popular music and theater, games and sports, reading and debate, stylish dress, and social drinking were all activities that allowed urban residents to engage in fun and gaiety, articulate emergent forms of consciousness, and take part in larger struggles over space, resources, and the allocation of power.”⁸⁹

In Kenya, the idea of Africans becoming townsmen frightened European settlers and officials during the 1900s through the 1930s, yet became an integral component of imperial developmentalism during the 1940s and 1950s. In their effort to reassert their control over urban space and harness the energies of a growing African urban class, colonial social engineers established playgrounds, stadiums, and social halls that would affirm the ideals of middle class

⁸⁶ Akyeampong and Ambler, “Leisure in African History,” 9.

⁸⁷ For a useful conceptual definition of masculinity see Stephan A. Miescher and Lisa A. Lindsay, “Introduction: Men: And Masculinities in Modern African History,” in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, ed. Stephan F. Miescher and Lisa A. Lindsay (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 4. They define masculinity as a “cluster of norms, values, and behavior patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others.”

⁸⁸ Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night*, 6.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

respectability, stability, and family life. These venues became important sites of African cultural production in the city, as they weighed both the possibilities of urban leisure, as well as new forms of social networks and expressions of identity. By the decades following independence, urban residents, of various social classes, came to regard access to a park, social hall, or a public garden, as an expected feature of life in the city, connecting the absence of such facilities to decline and marginalization. Urban Kenyans' demand for such facilities espoused the development of a community distinct from ethnicity, one that derived from shared pastimes, aspirations, and struggles concerning urban life.

METHODS

In my efforts to show how engagements between multiple state and ordinary actors and institutions shaped urban environments, I relied on multiple forms of sources and methodological approaches. I pursued a methodology that would illustrate how social planners and elites determined urban priorities and demarcated land for particular uses, while also illuminating how different non-state agents both perceived and utilized these spaces overtime.

I interviewed approximately eighty-five individuals at various locations in Nairobi and Mombasa. These interviews took place over the course of a year, beginning in November 2013, continuing through the end of 2014. Most interviews occurred in respondents' homes. While most interviews took place between myself and a single individual—often with a research assistant providing help with translations, clarification of questions, and recordings—a number of discussions involved multiple people at once.⁹⁰ I attempted to arrange interviews, as much as

⁹⁰ In Kenya, both English and Kiswahili are national languages, commonly taught in primary and secondary schools. If respondents knew English proficiently, I conducted interviews in English; otherwise, I conducted interviews in Kiswahili, with my research assistant Paul Abonyo Odhiambo assisting me with translations or clarification of statements.

possible, in such a way that they would be one-one-one, with myself and the respondent; I quickly learned, however, that interview settings were often outside of my control and a number of respondents preferred to speak with me in pairs or in small groups. These group interviews were resourceful in their own right; interviewees often built on the experiences of their friends, family members, or neighbors to corroborate or debate particular details, provide supplementary information, or to delve into their own experiences. While I had to occasionally moderate discussions—trying to avoid one person dominating a conversation—group interviews ultimately enhanced my understanding of the diverse ways people remembered the past, as well as how mechanisms of social interaction contribute to the production of memories.

In recent years, a number of scholars have taken a critical stance towards the prominence of oral evidence in African history. One of the most forceful critiques came from Jonathon Glassman, who declared, “It has become almost an unthinking fashion for historians of colonial Africa to privilege oral sources and to question any account that omits them. We must remember, however, that oral accounts are understandings of the past, not records of them, even personal memories are tidied up to fit the narrator’s latter-day perceptions of himself and the community to which he presently feels attached.”⁹¹ While I am certainly mindful of such cautions, Glassman overstates the power of written sources to provide more authentic reflections of the past, while underestimating historians’ efforts to corroborate and informatively connect respondents’ experiences to the various ruptures and shifts in historical trajectories. Paul Thompson, in his manifesto to oral historians, observed that while the nature of memory certainly carries “many traps for the unwary,” it is also rewarding “to a historian who is prepared to appreciate the

⁹¹ Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 2011), xi. A number of other scholars have expressed similar critiques. See Ivaska, *Cultured States*, 29; Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 12.

complexity with which reality and myth, ‘objective’ and ‘subjective,’ are inextricably mixed in all human perception of the world, both individual and collective.”⁹² Oral interviews, while at times divergent, contradictory, and even informed by latter-day contexts, underlined the often ambiguous and fluid quality of urban spaces, as elites and diverse ordinary actors negotiated multiple visions of the city. They, moreover, underlined issues and nuances often absent from the records of the Kenyan National Archives (KNA). While it is important to treat all sources with a critical eye to their veracity, the efforts of historians should not be to dismiss one form of research in favor of another, rather to highlight, when possible, how multiple avenues of information and discourse came together, as well as the frictions between them.

Throughout this work, I have sought to put my oral interviews into discussion with a range of written sources. Kenya’s archival system is generally centralized, with most documents housed within the headquarters of the KNA in Nairobi. The KNA sorts its holdings by ministry. Two repositories were particularly helpful to my research. First, the Ministry of Local Government contained most records related to municipal administration of Nairobi and Mombasa, including city council proceedings, district commissioner reports, African affairs reports, and documents pertaining to housing development and urban planning. Although matters of recreation were rarely the central focus of these records, officials often included provisions for parks, playgrounds, and other recreational venues when they outlined new housing developments or planning strategies. The records of the Ministry of Lands also contained useful files regarding the relationship between leisure space and land use, particularly during the colonial era. The lands administration demarcated particular areas for recreational use, often by allocating territory to private membership clubs. These records offered glimpses of the correspondences and

⁹² Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 157.

negotiations between land officials and representatives of these clubs. Their exchanges illustrate some of the processes by which leisure, through the lands administration, became a category of governance in early colonial Kenya.

In addition to the KNA, I found useful records scattered across multiple institutional and local archives in Nairobi and Mombasa. In addition to the state, religious organizations were important actors in efforts to produce “healthy” forms of diversions for young men and women in Kenya. The Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) has a small repository in Nairobi which held informative records of the church’s activities regarding youth groups and welfare projects. Since the 1990s, the National Museums of Kenya (MOK) has managed many of the country’s major urban parks, particularly Nairobi’s City Park and Mama Ngina Drive Park in Mombasa. I was able to examine, albeit with tightly controlled access, some of the records pertaining to administration and development of these parks in recent years. While there were fewer archives in Mombasa, both the KNA and MOK have local repositories with records pertaining to the coast.⁹³

A number of historians in recent years, particularly James Brennan and Andrew Ivaska, have highlighted the role of the press in shaping popular discourses and debates over culture and urban society.⁹⁴ Two English-language daily publications have dominated the press landscape in Kenya since independence. The *East African Standard* (presently called the *Standard*) was the primary daily in Kenya before independence. The publication was founded in 1902 by a prominent Parsee entrepreneur, A. M. Jeevanjee who eventually sold his stake to a pair of

⁹³ The actual name of this repository is the Coast Provincial Archives (CPA). Most of the records are from the 1970s and 1980s onward and are items that have not yet been sent to Nairobi. The records, however, are accessible with appropriate research credentials. The MOK repository is located at the library of the Research Institute of Swahili Studies of East Africa (RISSEA) and is accessible with a small daily fee.

⁹⁴ Ivaska, *Cultured States*, 29; Brennan, *Taifa*.

Europeans.⁹⁵ Kenya's other major newspaper, the *Daily Nation*, began in 1958 as a weekly Kiswahili publication called *Taifa* before the Aga Khan purchased the paper in 1959, turning it into an English language daily. The paper was the first to adopt a policy of Africanization of its reporting and editorial staff and circulation soared after independence.⁹⁶ The *Daily Nation*, still owned by the Aga Khan, has been the largest paper in Kenya based on circulation since at least the 1980s. Both the *East African Standard* and the *Daily Nation* had a section that published the opinions of readers. These letters to the editor collectively provided me with a vibrant source that illustrated ordinary Kenyans' engagements with state planners and officials over the direction of the city, as well as their own visions and aspirations regarding urban life. Both newspapers featured both editorials and readers' opinions decrying the loss of public parks and playgrounds in Kenyan cities.

Finally, there is an expansive terrain of memoirs, novels, and other forms of popular literature related to life in Kenya. This literature offered sometimes striking details of city life at various points in time, further supplementing my oral interviews and archival research. William Robert Foran's memoir *a Cuckoo in Kenya*, for example, offered not only vivid physical descriptions of Nairobi and Mombasa, but also humorous accounts of his experiences navigating the cultural intricacies of Nairobi and Mombasa's various sport and social clubs. Early in my research, I approached various clubs for access to their past meeting minutes, rulebooks, and old membership records; most institutions denied me access to their records. A number of helpful managers, however, did share with me guidebooks and internal histories, which were often composed by local historians. These works spoke candidly about their respective clubs'

⁹⁵ William A. Hachten, *Muffled Drums: the News Media in Africa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971), 201.

⁹⁶ John Baptist Abuoga and Absalom Mutere, *the History of the Press in Kenya* (Nairobi: African Council on Communication Education, 1988), 29-32.

development, engagements with the government, internal debates, changes in membership, and even their legacies of racial exclusion. In addition to their nicely composed accounts of urban life in Nairobi and Mombasa, these various literary sources provided me with glimpses into how various individuals and groups were creating social and cultural spaces within Kenya's urban centers.

URBAN PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION IN NAIROBI AND MOMBASA

Issues of place, setting, and locality have been integral to the work of historians of urban Africa, as well as the rest of the world. Most urban scholars, with some notable exceptions, have tended to focus on individual cities, even honing their attention on specific neighborhoods or districts.⁹⁷ My work deviates from this approach by examining the historical processes of urbanization and city life in two distinct urban centers in Kenya. While Nairobi and Mombasa are Kenya's two largest urban centers and share a common nation state, there were clear differences between the cities concerning demography, geography and physical environment.

Nairobi is the capital and the largest population center in Kenya. The city is located on a plateau near Kenya's highlands about halfway between the Indian Ocean and Lake Victoria (see figure 1.1). Aidan Southall characterized Nairobi as a "Type B town," which entailed "rapid urban development, the domination of foreigners, careful control of African settlements, and the development of a pattern of segregation and stratification along racial lines."⁹⁸ Today, many of these stratifications continue to exist, albeit in a somewhat different form. Upper-hill and the

⁹⁷ For an example of a comparative approach to urbanization in Africa, see Garth Myers, particularly *Garth Myers, Verandas of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003) and *Urban Environments in Africa*.

⁹⁸ "Introductory Summary," Aidan Southall, ed. *Social Change in Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Herbert Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study in Nairobi* (New York: Africana Publishing House, 1974), 2.



Figure 1.1: A political map of Kenya, with Nairobi and Mombasa marked by author. Central Intelligence Agency, 1992.

western suburbs of Nairobi, the former enclaves of the European population, are now home to upper class Kenyans, as well as the city's Asian and European expatriate communities.⁹⁹ My research primarily emphasized the estates of Eastlands that developed as a predominantly

⁹⁹ The term "Asian" is popularly used in East Africa to describe Indian decedents. A number of recent scholars have argued for the use of the term South Asian to describe these communities, contending it is more inclusive of the variety of ethnicities that fell into this category. I choose to use "Asians" for multiple reasons. The term South Asian is overly broad, and only superficially reflective of the actual racial categories that people in East Africa used. The British administration, moreover, often distinguished "Arab," which the term South Asian intends to incorporate, as an entirely separate racial category. The use of the term South Asian to describe policies, practices, censuses, and other observations pertaining specifically to the Indian community is therefore methodologically problematic, as it effectively changes the meaning of racial categories from their historical use. The term Indian is itself also problematic, because it refers to a specific national identity that had less bearing to early migrants and their progeny in East Africa. In the absence of a universally accepted term, I attempt to highlight, whenever possible, the plurality of Kenya's Asian communities throughout the text. At times I may use the terms South Asian or Indian when commenting on the works or sources that use those specific terms.

middleclass zone of housing in Kenya during the 1950s and the decades after independence. I also looked at two “squatter settlements,” Mathare and Kibera. These sites allowed me to explore a range of perspectives across multiple ethnicities, as well as consider other subjectivities, such as class, gender, race, and generation that shaped Nairobi overtime.

Mombasa, Kenya’s second largest urban center, was a major Swahili port city, centuries prior to arrival of Europeans. The city represented what Southall described as a “Type A” town, characterized by “long histories” and precolonial patterns of urbanization and settlement.¹⁰⁰ The original settlement of Mombasa was located on a small, approximately five-square mile island on Kenya’s southern coast (see figure 1.1). The town oscillated between Arab, Portuguese, and Omani control before the British incorporated the island into its East African Protectorate in 1895.¹⁰¹ Unlike Nairobi, which developed as a frontier town across the Athi Plains, the Indian Ocean was a geographical barrier to Mombasa’s expansion; much of Mombasa’s development, particularly on the island, occurred within a much more compressed area.¹⁰² In addition to the island, several newer neighborhoods and estates have developed on the mainland north, south, and west of the island. The majority of Mombasa’s residents are Muslim, however, in the decades after independence, there has been substantial migration to the city from up-country Christian groups.¹⁰³ Mombasa never had a significant settler population; the major cultural groups in the city have been Africans, Asian communities, groups of Arab decent, and Swahili.¹⁰⁴ My research looked at the city’s Swahili district, popularly known as “Old Town,” as

¹⁰⁰ “Introductory Summary,” Southall.

¹⁰¹ John Jewell, *Mombasa, the Friendly Town* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1977) 4-12. Through the end of World War I, The East African Protectorate (EAP) was a separate administrative zone apart from the Kenyan colony. The EAP included the Kenyan coast and Zanzibar.

¹⁰² De Blij, *Mombasa an African City*.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Jewell, *Mombasa the Friendly Town*, 21. In 1897, there were an estimated one-hundred Europeans residing in Mombasa, out of a total population of 24,700. In 1930 the European population was 870 out of

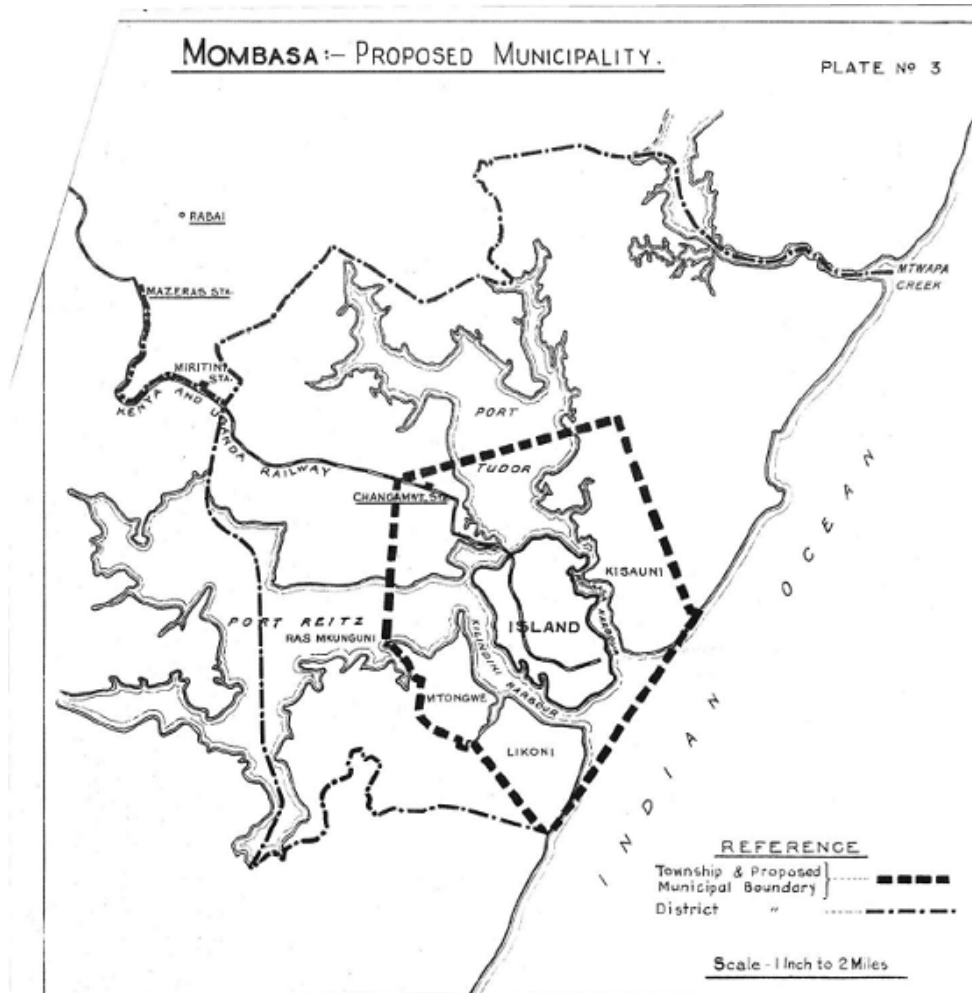


Figure 1.2: Map of Mombasa Municipality in 1927. Report of the Local Government Commission. London, Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1927.

well as two mainland estates, Changamwe and Hamisi. I also conducted a number of interviews in Frere Town, which was a small missionary settlement of emancipated slaves located on Mombasa's northern mainland. The Mombasa municipality incorporated Frere Town in 1927 and has administered the area since (See figure 1.2).

Despite the social, demographic, and geographical distinctions between Nairobi and

a total population of 42,000. For discussion of Mombasa's cultural communities, see Richard E. Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa: Policy, Politics and Bureaucracy in Mombasa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 17. The African popular was itself heterogeneous, with the majority descended from coastal ethnic groups. There, however, has been significant migration from Kenya's interior, with the most common groups, Kamba, Luo, Luhya, Kikuyu, and Taita.

Mombasa, the two cities shared similarities and convergences in terms of the policies, concerns and discourses that shaped their historical trajectories. The tendency of urban scholarship to treat cities as unique and individual units, elides areas of commonality and comparison. Residents, whether from Nairobi or Mombasa, had much to say about the inadequacies of state management, their struggles for housing and social amenities, and their aspirations for domesticity and the promises of urban life. While a two site project certainly posed challenges, this approach invites urban scholars to adopt a more comparative understanding of the issues driving urban development and experiences of urban life.

The development of the railway contributed to the expansion of Nairobi and Mombasa. By 1906, Nairobi had become a major hub of economic, administrative, and commercial activity, boasting a healthy population of around eleven-thousand inhabitants, which included a permanent European population of around six-hundred.¹⁰⁵ The town's boundaries extended beyond the railway and administrative offices on Victoria Street to include new residential suburbs in Parklands and government quarters on the town's upper hill (see figure 1.3). The growth of subsidiary trading centers in the Highlands, moreover, made Nairobi a center "for wholesale supply," as well as the location where highland farmers could easily get their products and produce out to market.¹⁰⁶ The township also became the primary base camp for white settlers as they awaited titles to their farms.¹⁰⁷ In Mombasa, which was the end point of the Kenyan-Ugandan Railway, the growing economic and political importance of the railway necessitated the creation of a new major port and harbor at Kilindi, which was completed in 1913. The

¹⁰⁵Walter Elkan and Roger Van Zwanenberg, "How People Came to Live in Towns," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, ed. Peter Duignan and Lewis Gann, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 658.

¹⁰⁶ Ronald Wesley Walmsley, *Nairobi, the Geography of a New City* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1957), 20.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

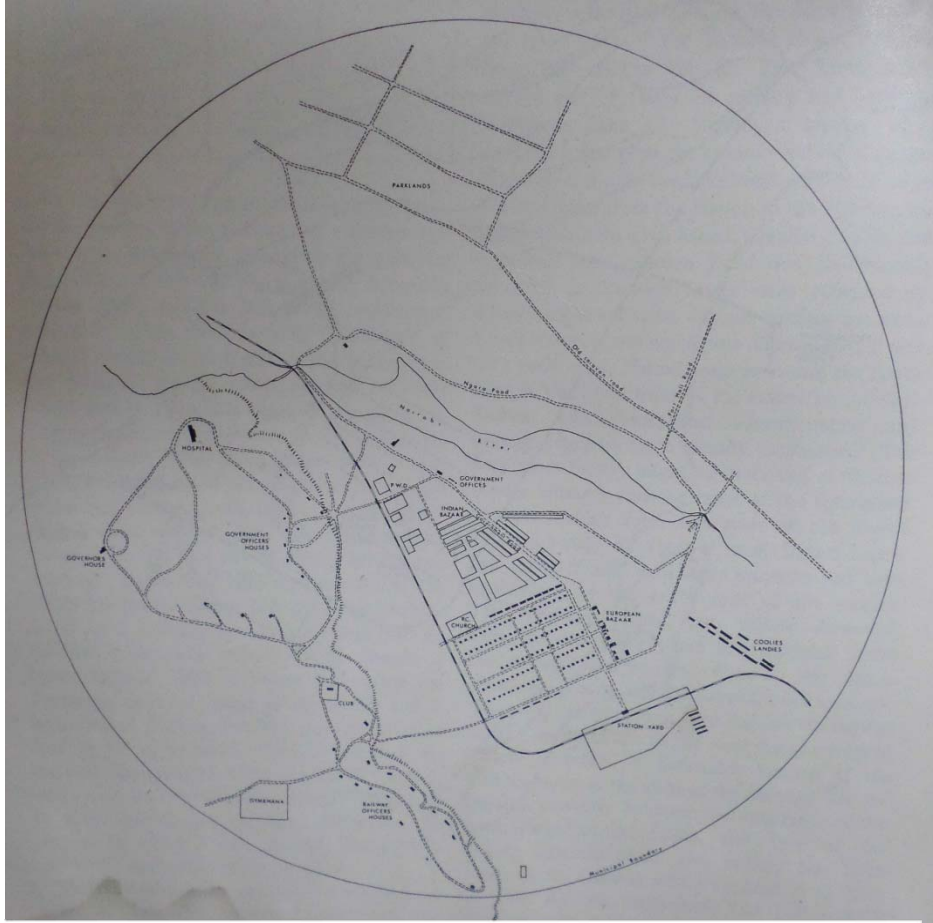


Figure 1.3: Map of Nairobi in 1905. W.T.W. Morgan, Nairobi: City and Region. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

development of Kilindi Harbor moved the physical development of Mombasa westward, culminating in the establishment of a new Central Business District (CBD).¹⁰⁸

As was the case with Durbin and Cape Town, South Africa, Kenyan medical officials and other authorities used sanitation laws to rigidly enforce the racial segregation of urban space.¹⁰⁹

In its early years, the majority of Nairobi's occupants were Asian migrants, who resided in the town's "Indian Bizarre." The Imperial British East African company relied heavily on contract,

¹⁰⁸ Harm J. De Blij, *Mombasa an African City*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ Maynard Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909," *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977), 387; Godwin R. Murunga, "Inherently Unhygienic Races: Plague and the Origins of Settler Dominance in Nairobi, 1899-1907," in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, ed. Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 113.

“coolie” labor from Punjabi, Gujarat, and Sindh regions of northern India. Scholars approximated 35,000 of these laborers arrived in Mombasa between 1895 and 1901, with most settling in Nairobi.¹¹⁰ Prior to 1902, the town’s European population lived in close proximity to Asian and African occupants.¹¹¹ After a series of plague epidemics, the town’s European population burned down the Indian Bizarre and relocated it further away from the town. European settlers and officials blamed the city’s poor sanitary conditions and congestion on the unhygienic practices of non-European groups, particularly the Asians. Another epidemic in 1907 resulted in the colony’s sanitation officer recommending to close the Indian Bizarre and to further relocate Indian and African populations away from European areas.¹¹² The position of Nairobi’s African population was even more precarious. European officials considered the city’s African laborers as only a temporary presence in the city and made no meaningful gestures to provide them with housing until the 1920s. Segregation was less of a factor in Mombasa. The city’s small European population initially boarded in the various Swahili and Asian houses of present day Old Town. By the early 1900s, as sanitation anxieties pervaded the colony, Europeans sought to set themselves apart from the city’s Swahili district. They established a neighborhood, Ras Serani, on the island’s southern side.¹¹³

W.J. Simpson’s 1913 report on sanitation in East African cities reinforced racial segregation as an integral concept of town planning. Simpson sternly condemned Nairobi’s “haphazard method of urban planning,” recommending “well defined and separate quarters” for

¹¹⁰ Elkan and Van Zwanenberg, “How People Came to Live in Towns,” 662.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Because the British primarily relied on Asian, not African, labor for the construction of the railway, the African population was initially small and slow growing. By 1921, however, Africans had established a presence in eight separate ‘villages’ in Nairobi,” with an estimated total population of twelve-thousand.

¹¹² Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna, *Interpreting Nairobi: The Cultural Study of Built Forms* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen, 1996), 115.

¹¹³ Jewell, *Mombasa, the Friendly Town*, 18.

the city's European, Asian, and African communities.¹¹⁴ In his evaluation of Mombasa, Simpson, categorized the island's "stone quarter" as a "huge insanitary area," comparing it to the "plague infested areas of Bombay."¹¹⁵ He proposed the division of the island into separate districts "occupied by those communities whose customs and habits are more or less similar."¹¹⁶ In both cities, he recommended the establishment of green, undeveloped lands, which he postulated would establish an hygienic buffer zone between the European and non-European areas, as well as create spaces useful for "recreational purposes by all races."¹¹⁷

Simpson's proposal of green belts and recreational spaces emerged out of the urban planning ideologies of mid-nineteenth century industrial capitals in Europe. Parks and gardens had been long-established features of the palaces and villas of Europe's aristocracy. Nineteenth century urban planners advocated for the creation of parks and open spaces that would be available to the public, without fees or restrictions, believing these spaces would provide a remedy to the social ills of industrial pollution, congestion, and working class boredom.¹¹⁸ Simpson incorporated these concepts into his vision of a colonial urban society, envisioning them as a response to the problems of Nairobi and Mombasa's congestion, as well as management of different races. The spaces would establish geographical markers to clearly distinguish the racial zones of the city, removing ambiguities over urban space. At the same time, Simpson quite surprisingly presented these recreational amenities as racially neutral spaces;

¹¹⁴ W.J. Simpson, *Report on Sanitary Matters in the East Africa Protectorate, Uganda and Zanzibar* (African. no. 1025) (London: Government Press, 1915), 9-10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁸ See Dorceta E. Taylor, *the Environment and the People in American Cities, 1600s-1900s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 228. The conceptualization of leisure as time apart from work was itself an important development of the industrial political economy in Europe. See E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present*, no. 38 (1967): 95.

while residents of different races would necessarily reside in different sections of the cities, they could still, in theory, play side-by-side.

Both Nairobi and Mombasa have had a long trajectory of changing municipal authority since the early colonial era. According to Richard Stren, the first local governing authority in Kenya was the Municipal Council of Nairobi, established in 1904, predating the formation of a similar committee in Mombasa in 1920.¹¹⁹ In 1928, the colony's Legislative Council adopted the findings of the Local Government Commission. The Commission, chaired by Justice R. Feetham of South Africa, standardized the planning of townships and urban centers in Kenya. The report's most significant contribution was the extension and formalization of municipal boundaries in Nairobi and Mombasa, with powers of independent financing and the ability to collect rates. The commission established municipal councils in both cities, comprised of both elected and appointed representatives, as well as created a local "Native Affairs" authority to manage the concerns of Africans.¹²⁰ By 1928, Nairobi and Mombasa were, broadly speaking, following a similar trajectory of urban planning, with state emphasis on zoning and the production of aesthetically modern and efficient cities.

The convergence of multiple representations of state authority, local and national, influenced urban development and the allocation of land in Nairobi and Mombasa. In Kenya, most lands were under the public domain, with the central government maintaining control over their dispensation to individuals and groups, including municipal governments. The central

¹¹⁹ Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa*, 42.

¹²⁰ Government of Kenya Colony, *Report of the Local Government Commission* (London, Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1927), ivii. In both cities the Commission gave Europeans control over the municipal council. In Nairobi, the proposed council consisted of nine elected Europeans, five selected Indians, one nominated Goan, one government representative, and one representative each for the railway and District Council. Even in Mombasa where there was a much smaller permanent European population, the proposed council gave Europeans thirteen seats (including three officials), with Indians receiving four seats, and one representative each for the city's Goan and Arab populations (47& 264).

government's authority to dispense lands gave it significant power over municipal councils.¹²¹ The Department (later Ministry) of Local Government maintained direct oversight of municipal governing bodies—including allocation of both lands and funds—and even had power to dissolve councils.¹²² The domination of the Kenyan African National Union (KANU) Party over municipal council elections further diminished the independence of local governments from the national apparatus. From 1966 onward, Kenya operated as a de facto one-party rule under the Kenyan African National Union (KANU), with President Daniel arap Moi formally banning opposition parties in 1983.¹²³ The national party handpicked candidates for local office, making affiliation with KANU a requisite for municipal office. Between the years 1983 and 1989, Nairobi operated without an independent mayor or municipal council, after Moi, citing corruption and poor governance, dissolved the institutions in favor of a hand-picked city commission. Over its relatively short and tumultuous duration, the Nairobi City Commission (NCC) saw five separate chairmen, each a political ally of the president.¹²⁴ On the other hand, township councils occasionally presented alternative domains of state activity.¹²⁵ Nairobi and Mombasa, moreover, each had strong civil societies, consisting of clubs, civic groups, NGOs, and businesses and developers that each sought to influence the production of urban space

¹²¹For a useful explanation of the relationship between municipal and central government authorities see Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 23. He characterizes this form of relationship between the local and national administrations as the “inelasticity of control.”

¹²² Ibid., 254-77.

¹²³ See Charles Hornsby, *Kenya a History Since Independence* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2012), 156-219 & 399-401.

¹²⁴ Winnie V. Mitullah, “Local Political System in Nairobi,” in *Nairobi Today: The Paradox of a Fragmented City*, ed. Hélène Charton-Bigot and Deyssi Rodriguez-Torres (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2006), 328.

¹²⁵ The names of municipal councils in both Nairobi and Mombasa have changed at various points in time. From 1927 through 1949, the municipal authority of Nairobi was called the Municipal Council of Nairobi (MCN). In 1950, the institution changed its name to the City Council of Nairobi (CCN). From 1927 to Kenya's independence in 1963, Mombasa operated under the Mombasa Municipal Board (MMB), before changing to the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) after independence.

overtime. Many of these institutions were instrumental to both the creation and contestation of areas of leisure.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The chapters of this work, although written thematically, follow a chronological order. My first chapter highlights the contributions of social and sports clubs to the early development of Nairobi and Mombasa. When European officials, settlers, and railway administrators came to Nairobi and Mombasa, they sought places where they could find sport, relaxation, or companionship. The spaces they created took the form of private social and sports clubs, with access contingent on membership. While race was the primary basis for “clubability” in colonial Kenya, the proliferation of clubs in Nairobi and Mombasa was itself a response to the needs of diverse constituencies occupying the space of the city, which also included non-European populations. A second, but related, thread to this chapter was the relationship between clubs and colonial land policy. Clubs relied on government land grants for their expansive sport grounds and golf courses. Through its engagement with these private institutions, the early Kenyan state came to recognize recreation as a governing concern and a viable utilization of urban land; by allocating land to clubs, the state laid the groundwork for a public sphere of recreation and social life, reaffirming its role as the paternalistic arbitrator of multiple interests and constituencies.

My second chapter brings the social and political negotiations concerning expanding European leisure spaces into fuller focus, highlighting the evolving relationship between the Nubian community of Kibera and the Nairobi Golf Club (NGC). The chapter examines a legal dispute between the NGC and former Nubian veterans of the Kings African Rifles (KAR), after the government’s land administration allocated the NGC territory in Kibera for the expansion of its golf course. The conflict pitted the interests of European consumption and leisure against the

needs of several Nubian plot holders who were using the land for their homes and farms. The Nubian community and the NGC, however, later developed an amicable relationship based on their shared enjoyment of golf. Many Nubians became caddies at the NGC and eventually became talented golfers in their own right. The chapter highlights the fluidity and negotiated nature of urban boundaries in colonial Kenya. While the government had envisioned the extension of the golf course as the first step to removing Africans from the area, it instead provided a medium for Africans to transgress into European domains of recreational space.

The extension of Africans' physical presence in Nairobi and Mombasa during the 1940s and the 1950s provides the context for the third chapter. One of the important philosophical shifts within the colonial administration after the Second World War was recognition that Africans were an integral part the city.¹²⁶ In addition to constructing new housing estates for Africans, state and local authorities increased the amount of land and financial resources available for playing fields, social halls, beer gardens, clubs, and other outlets of recreation. This chapter outlines the ideology and implementation of state recreational initiatives. These projects reflected the state's prevailing anxieties regarding urban Africans' expressions of leisure and socialization. Urban planners identified boredom as a root cause of delinquency, hooliganism, and subversive political activity. By sanctioning "morally uplifting" forms of leisure, administrators, social engineers, and urban planners believed they could foster an African urban class that was built around a moral vision of stable, middle class, family life.¹²⁷ Conflicting priorities for land and finances, internal bureaucratic conflicts, and Africans' own ideologies regarding leisure, however, challenged the state's efforts to control leisure spaces. Social halls,

¹²⁶ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹²⁷ Luise White, *The Comforts of Home*.

playgrounds, and other state recreational venues rather became the spaces where Africans negotiated meanings of identity and gender in the city, as they explored new possibilities for consumption, socialization, and leisure. As the state worked to transform Africans into a thriving urban middle class, Africans sought access to the racially exclusive domains of European clubs. This chapter concludes with a discussion of Africans' challenges to color bars, as they demanded integration into the European enclaves of leisure.

Nairobi and Mombasa both experienced a period of rapid expansion during the decades after independence, which resulted in a multitude of interests, exigencies, and competing claims on the spaces of the city. These conflicts are the focus of my fourth chapter, which examines land use struggles for recreational space in the decades after independence. Local governments, faced with housing and financial crises, lacked the land and resources to create and maintain new playgrounds, parks, and open spaces. Such spaces, moreover, became attractive targets for real-estate speculators or urban newcomers looking for sites to establish houses, businesses, or places of worship. These changes occurred as ordinary Kenyans, embracing new ideals of domesticity, regarded access to recreational venues as an essential feature of urban life. Kenyans connected their access to playgrounds, social halls, and parks with propriety, legitimacy, and dignity and demanded such facilities from the state. The loss of public recreational amenities coincided with the growth of a private, commercial sphere of leisure, which took the form of hired halls and self-constructed recreational centers that provided billiards, football screenings, and alcohol to paying customers. The production of these new outlets of recreation contributed to gender, generational, and cultural conflicts among urban residents.

Kenyans' continued struggles for recreational spaces are the focus of this dissertation's final two chapters, which turn to specific case studies of land use debates concerning parks,

gardens, and community open spaces. In 1968, President Jomo Kenyatta ordered the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MMC) to undertake an expensive beautification project of a park outside of Mombasa's Old Town district. The project called for new trees, flowers, fountains, and a ceremonial stage. The government's plans to redesign the park built on prevailing local debates over whether the area would function as a garden space for relaxation, or as a multi-purpose recreational amenity catering to games and football. The government's efforts to "beautify" this space, however, encountered protests of local Muslim residents who saw the park's development as a threat to the community's access to this space. Residents feared that, after the development of the park, they would no longer be able to use the space for their Idd celebrations. Such fears came to pass when the MMC began denying the Muslim community use of the park for these celebrations, citing concerns that they would damage the new trees and plantings. This conflict, the subject of my fifth chapter, illustrates how development and the aesthetics of modernization underlined struggles between the state and ordinary city dwellers over the access and identity of urban open spaces.

The final chapter of this dissertation examines conflicts over major urban parks during the 1980s and 1990s. During these decades, many of Kenya's prominent urban parks were threatened by land grabs and large scale development schemes, such as the proposed construction of a sixty floor skyscraper in the heart of Nairobi's CBD. For Kenya's urban poor, these projects constituted a threat to already depleted places for community members to relax, socialize, or take their children to play. This chapter highlights interethnic, intergenerational, and cross gender struggles to protect Kenya's public parks from these land grabs and development schemes. Activists, such as Wangari Maathai, alongside ordinary urban residents, wrote letters to Kenyan newspapers, decrying the loss of these popular venues. I also examine the efforts of

local, non-state (or parastatal) organizations working to restore, conserve, and develop many of these major parks. These projects emerged as a direct response to the public outcry over the land grabs of the 1980s and 1990s. Neoliberal models of private management and revenue generation have informed the work and goals of these institutions. Private organizations' efforts to commercialize and privately administer these parks has raised concerns and debates about continued public access.

Taken together these chapters highlight the changing conceptions of urban space and urban leisure at various points in time, from settler colonialism to the era of neoliberal privatization. These changes underline both the expansion as well as the gradual contraction of Kenya's public sphere, as states and ordinary actors responded to both changing economic and social conditions, as well as a series of prevailing ideologies concerning "proper" urban planning and the requisites of city life. Underlying these developments, were changing ideas of identity and gender, as Kenyans embraced new conceptions of domesticity and community suited to life in the city. These chapters also underline urban spaces as a production of social and political struggles, involving a range of actors including national and local agents of the state, clubs and civic organizations, NGOs, and ordinary urban dwellers. The efforts of these actors to imprint their expectations and aspirations for urban life were at the heart of these struggles.

CHAPTER 1
COMMUNITIES AND CLUBS:
KENYA'S CLUBLAND AND COLONIAL LAND POLICY



Figure 2.1: Muthaiga Country Club as portrayed in film, *Out of Africa*, director Sydney Pollack. Universal Pictures, 1985.

Beryl Markham, in her memoir, *West with the Night*, nostalgically recounted evenings of merriment and fraternity at Nairobi's famous Muthaiga Country Club (MCC):

Muthaiga Club may nowadays be changed. 'Na Kupa Hati M'zuri' (I Bring You Good Fortune) was, in my time, engraved in the stone of its great fireplace. Its broad lounge, its bar, its dining-room—none so elaborately furnished as to make a rough-handed hunter pause at its door, nor yet so dowdy as to make a diamond pendant swing ill at ease—were rooms in which the people who made the Africa I knew danced and talked and laughed, hour after hour.¹

With its lavish “golf course, squash courts, croquet lawns and ballroom,” the MCC exemplified the decadence of Kenya's settler community (see figure 2.1).² Markham described a club that was surprising unpretentious, providing its patrons with a welcoming and accessible atmosphere. “Not every night was a gay night at Muthaiga,” he continued, “not many of its members or

¹ Beryl Markham, *West with the Night* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), 157.

² James Fox, *White Mischief* (London: Vintage, 1998), 25. For a comprehensive history of the Muthaiga Club see Stephen Mills, *Muthaiga, Volume 1, 1913-1963* (London: Mills Publishing, 2010).

habitués were idle people.”³ The membership was a laboring type, those who worked on the farms, led safaris, or tended horses. The identity of Muthaiga, as a club for hardy upcountry farmers, determined the constitution of its membership. James Fox characterized Muthaiga as an exclusively “up country farmers’ club,” adding, “Though women were allowed in of necessity, Jews were not: once the club’s piano was set alight with paraffin in protest against the suggestion, quickly withdrawn, that they might henceforth be admitted.”⁴ The title of Fox’s work, *White Mischief*, conveyed the racial character of the club; Muthaiga, like most clubs, was exclusively European, with bye-laws that explicitly barred membership of non-European races. The MCC exemplified the contradictions of European colonial society. The club’s lavish parties, weekend golf tournaments, and sundowners, were arenas where habitués reinforced notions of cultural chauvinism and colonial solidarity. On the other hand, Muthaiga—and clubs like it—was an exclusionary space that embodied the stratifications of colonial society.

Through allocation of land to private clubs, Kenya’s colonial state demarcated a sphere of recreation to provide for the needs of growing urban populations and diversifying constituencies. By 1910, clubs were a fixture of social life across Kenya’s various townships. Clubs, although exclusive and private, were important institutions within the colonial “public sphere,” functioning as the primary places where Europeans found recreation and fellowship.⁵ An examination of the state’s relationship with clubs delineates the early processes by which leisure became a governing concern of the state. The colonial administration was unwilling to dedicate

³ Ibid.

⁴ Fox, *White Mischief*, 25.

⁵ Mrinalini Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India,” *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 489–521.; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

considerable financial resources to promote amenities for leisure, but had a cache of land that it dispensed to private clubs, associations, and communities, with the expectation that these institutions would develop recreational amenities to serve Kenya's urban population. Through the provision of space for clubs, the state rendered recreation a legitimate form of land use.⁶

The history of clubs in Kenya, moreover, elucidates burgeoning urban interests that staked a claim to the city. Access to sports fields and other recreational amenities, gave members of clubs permanence and legitimacy as an urban presence.⁷ The term “club”—which derived from the word “cleave,” meaning both to split apart and to adhere—was a predictable form of leisure within a colonial society that was extensively concerned with maintaining its racial, ethnic, and cultural stratifications.⁸ The government's provision of recreational space initially centered on the leisure activities of Europeans, through their various clubs; by the 1930s, however, Africans and Indians were successfully translating their presence in the city to claims for recreational spaces of their own. The Kenyan state strived for political legitimacy by promoting itself as a neutral and paternalistic arbitrator of diverse interests and constituencies.⁹ While Kenya's settler population dominated urban policy during the 1910s and 1920s, the state came to recognize non-European's spatial permanence in the city, and the necessity for accommodating their social and cultural requirements, including recreational spaces.

⁶ See Dolores Hayden, “Building the American Way: Public Subsidy, Private Space,” in *the Politics of Public Space*, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35–48. Hayden explores the implications of government subsidization of private interests for the purpose of achieving public ends.

⁷ I draw from the terminology and theory of Henri Lefebvre, particularly his discussion of the “right to the city.” See *Writings on Cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 63–184.

⁸ Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere,” 504.

⁹ Bruce Berman, *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London: James Currey, 1990), 23.

Scholars of colonialism have stressed the significance of cultural performance to Europeans' claims to power over colonized peoples.¹⁰ "Colonial order," as Catherine Hall contended, was a "cultural order in which subjects were constituted, selves made."¹¹ The study of culture also calls attention to the fractures and rifts within colonial society itself. In Kenya, there were deep political rifts between the colony's administration and settler population. By examining how European settlers and administrators grappled with their external, as well as internal differences, scholars have challenged presumptions of colonialism as a "supremely confident and ruthlessly efficient" enterprise.¹² Although European settlers in Kenya won numerous political concessions from the state—particularly during the 1910s, 1920s—their social legitimacy in East Africa was arguably the most tenuous, requiring conspicuous performances of power to reinforce their position.¹³

Scholars have shown leisure, particularly through participation in sports and social clubs, as one avenue in which European settlers performed power. According to J.A. Mangan, sports fashioned "a cultural bond of white fraternity."¹⁴ Phyllis Martin, in her groundbreaking study of leisure in Brazzaville, delineated the significance of European leisure to the reinforcement of urban boundaries between colonizers and their colonized subjects. "Having distanced themselves physically and socially from the rest of the town's population," she argued, "Europeans then tried consciously to protect their image, defend their prestige and affirm their

¹⁰ Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 7; Dane Kennedy, *Islands of the White. Settlers Society in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 5; Brett Lindsay Shadle, *The Souls of White Folk: White Settlers in Kenya, 1900s-1920s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹² *Ibid.*, 187. See also Ann Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (1989): 134–61.

¹³ Kennedy, *Islands of White*.

¹⁴ J.A. Mangan, *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 6.

status through conspicuous consumption and social ritual.”¹⁵ European clubs in India were a significant part of the “imperial public sphere” that both shaped and tested ideas of whiteness and European solidarity.¹⁶ Even in post-colonial Kenya, African elites appropriated clubs to cultivate ontologies of political and economic power.¹⁷ This chapter expands on this literature by connecting the history of clubs with claims and struggles for space in early urban Kenya. Clubs, despite catering to the interests of power, were neither the stable or presumed fixtures in the colonial landscape that scholars have tended to suppose; clubs and their members, rather, were themselves participants in dynamic processes of political claim making and negotiation for space. “The world of the gentlemen’s club,” Amy Milne-Smith argued, “was connected to the social, cultural, and gendered spaces of the city.”¹⁸ The racist and classist development of Nairobi and Mombasa fostered demands for exclusive space where people met their recreational needs within their own racial, professional, or cultural communities. The state, as the primary holder and distributor of land, determined groups’ access to such spaces. Clubs, despite their private allure, were themselves entangled in public processes of claim-making, as they depended on access to state land.

The history of clubs thus requires attention to processes of state production and spatialization. Scholars emphasized the state’s function as “gate keepers,” consumed with questions of accumulation and distribution of capital.¹⁹ States, moreover, suffered crises of

¹⁵ Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 197.

¹⁶ Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere.”

¹⁷ Dominique Connan, “La Décolonisation Des Clubs Kényans”: Sociabilité Exclusive et Constitution Morale Des Elites Africaines Dans Le Kenya Contemporain” (PHD, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2014).

¹⁸ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 167.

¹⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5; Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: Politics of the Belly* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

management that challenged their political legitimacy. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale emphasized two contradictory mandates of accumulation of capital and political legitimacy that drove the actions of the colonial Kenyan state; if the state acted too coercively in its efforts to extract capital, it would jeopardize its ability to maintain production.²⁰ The state consequentially legitimized its influence by promoting itself as the paternalistic guardian of its subjects' interests.²¹ The state's interest necessarily extended to concerns of culture and leisure. Historians' emphasis on matters of capital and political economy, elide other values and interests that shaped the production of the state. When scholars have discussed land, for instance, they have almost exclusively evaluated its relationship to agrarian production or labor.²² While these interests were unquestionably important facets of colonial policy, they were not the only concerns that motivated state action. The provision of space for recreation to multiple groups and constituencies was a form of distribution, by which the state sought to accommodate the interests of multiple constituencies. Examination of clubs' negotiations for recreational space, moreover, calls attention to alternative forms by which individuals and the colonial government benefited

²⁰ Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, vol. 1 (Heinemann, 1992), 7 & 117. Berman builds on this argument elsewhere. See Bruce Berman, *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London: James Currey, 1990) and Bruce Berman, "Structure and Process in the Bureaucratic States of Colonial Africa," *Development and Change* 15, no. 1 (1984): 161–201.

²¹ Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 199; Berman, "Structure and Process in the Bureaucratic States of Colonial Africa," 182; Robert Maxon extended this argument in his examination of the state's engagement with a politically demanding settler population, while Robert Gregory examined South Asian mobilization and agitation for political rights. Robert Maxon, *Struggle for Kenya: The Loss and Reassertion of Imperial Initiative, 1912-1923* (Rutherford NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993); Robert G. Gregory, *Quest for Equality: Asian Politics in East Africa, 1900-1967* (Hyderabad, A.P: Orient Longman, 1993).

²² Stanley Trapido, "Reflections on Land, Office, and Wealth in the South African Republic, 1850-1900," in *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (New York: Longman, 1981); Christopher Leo, *Land and Class in Kenya* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor & Agriculture in Zanzibar & Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1980).

from land.²³ The state's interest in the promotion of leisure was not isolated from its concern for capitalistic production; land officials and urban planners weighed the social importance of recreation against needs for housing, industry, and other requisites of urban development.

Clubs, with their sprawling acreage, were a paradoxical presence within an urban system that was driven by the state's desire to promote effective land use, profits, and urban development.²⁴ Clubs' justified acquisition of government land, often at nominal rates, by emphasizing their contribution to providing recreational amenities for the community. Clubs were, by definition, exclusive institutions, thereby limiting access to specific populations. The state, however, saw them as fulfilling a purpose of meeting the social and cultural interests of the colony as a whole. Clubs developed land into playing fields and golf courses, providing viable amenities for community leisure. Clubs' access to low-cost land, however, came with stipulations; leases restricted club's use of their land for narrow recreational purposes, constraining the ability of club trustees and proprietors to improve their property as they wished. By allowing clubs access to land on favorable terms, the state integrated these institutions into a broader—and public—political sphere, subjecting private leisure activity to government oversight, regulation, and protection.

THE CLUB TRADITION

By the 1910s, Nairobi and Mombasa had developed into important centers for European cultural and social life. Bertram Francis Gurdon, second Baron of Cranworth, promised potential settlers both “sport and profit” in the Kenyan colony.²⁵ While most settlers did not achieve the profits

²³ See Donald Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 130.

²⁴ Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 34-36.

²⁵ Bertram Francis Gurdon, 2nd Baron of Cranworth, *Colony in the Making: Sport and Profit in British East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1912).

that Gurdon promised, they nonetheless found a vibrant culture of sport and entertainment.²⁶ The growth of the railway attracted a significant population of administrators and laborers whom sought entertainment in Kenya's cities and townships. A.E. Cruickshank, a railway traffic manager, expounding on the importance of clubs, explained that "as a district develops, the desire among Europeans, particularly Britons, for a closer bond of association than that obtained through commercial or official relations becomes general."²⁷ As the town's European population grew, it also began to cleave, forming smaller cliques and sub-communities that socialized and played in their own exclusive spaces. By 1930, several clubs occupied the space of Nairobi including, the Railway Institute, Muthaiga Country Club, (MCC) Parklands Sports Club (PSC), and the Nairobi Golf Club (NGC). Mombasa, although having a much smaller European population, boasted the exclusive Mombasa Club, as well as the Mombasa Sports Club, Yaht Club, and a golf course.²⁸ A map of the various clubs, gymkhanas, and sporting grounds explicates the multiple constituencies that claimed recreational space in Nairobi and Mombasa by 1959 (see figures 2.2 and 2.3). Clubs were the primary spaces where the European population came together for drinks, sports, and celebration of holidays. Clubs, in this regard, had a dualistic position within Kenyan colonial society—on one hand constituting spaces where patrons reinforced the bonds of European solidarity and fraternity, while, on the other hand, reaffirming divisions within the community.

²⁶ For discussion on settlers' economic difficulties see Kennedy, *Islands of the White*; John Lonsdale, "Kenya: Home Country and African Frontier," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas*, ed. Robert A Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 74–111.

Nicholas Best, *Happy Valley: The Story of the English in Kenya* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979).

²⁷ Qtd. in David Round-Turner, *Nairobi Club: The Story of 100 Years, a Celebration of the Club Centenary* (Nairobi: Nairobi Club, 2001), 8.

²⁸ John Jewell, *Mombasa the Friendly Town* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1977), 54-57.

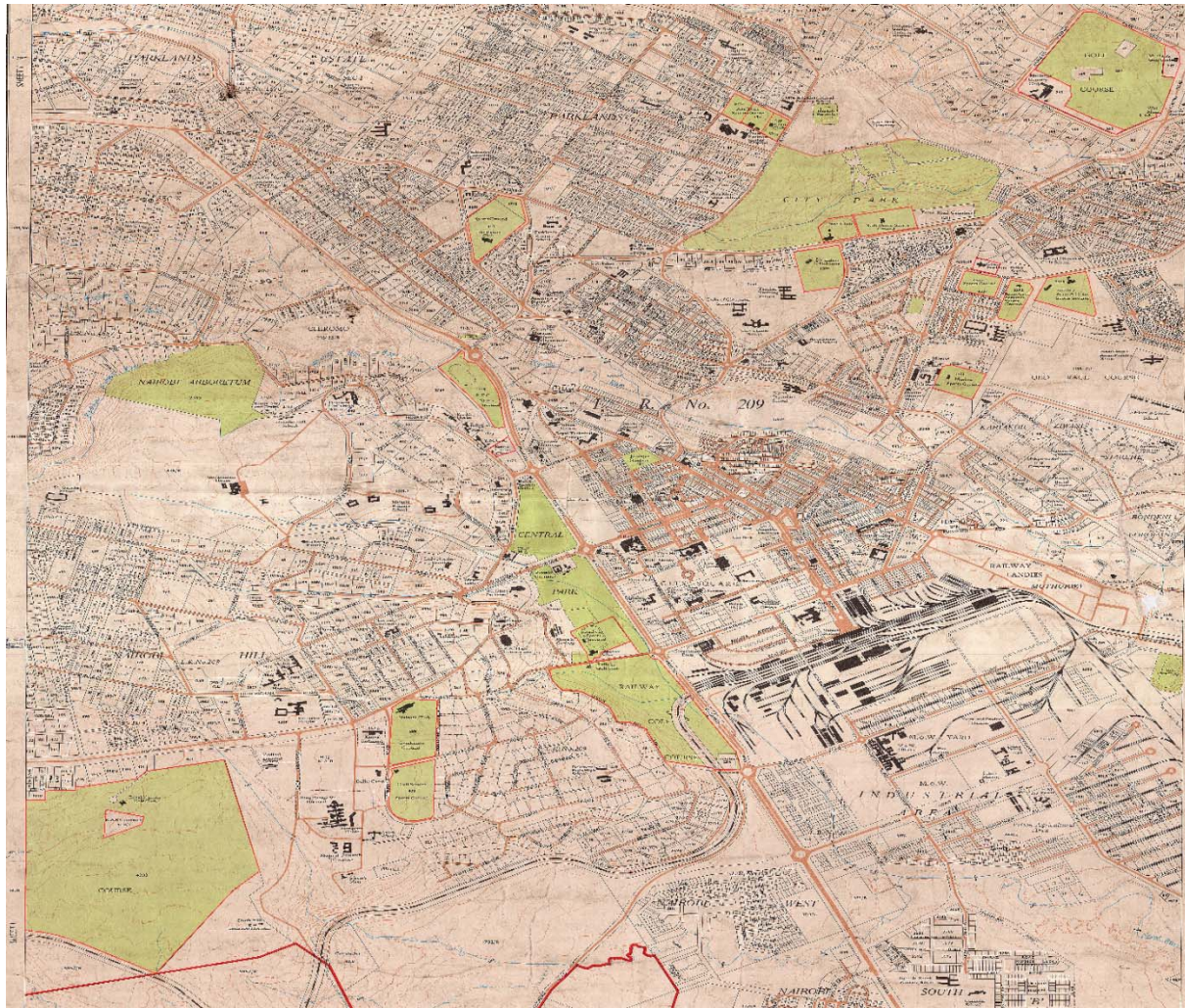


Figure 2.2: City map of Nairobi with club land and private recreational spaces bordered in red. Survey of Kenya, 1959.

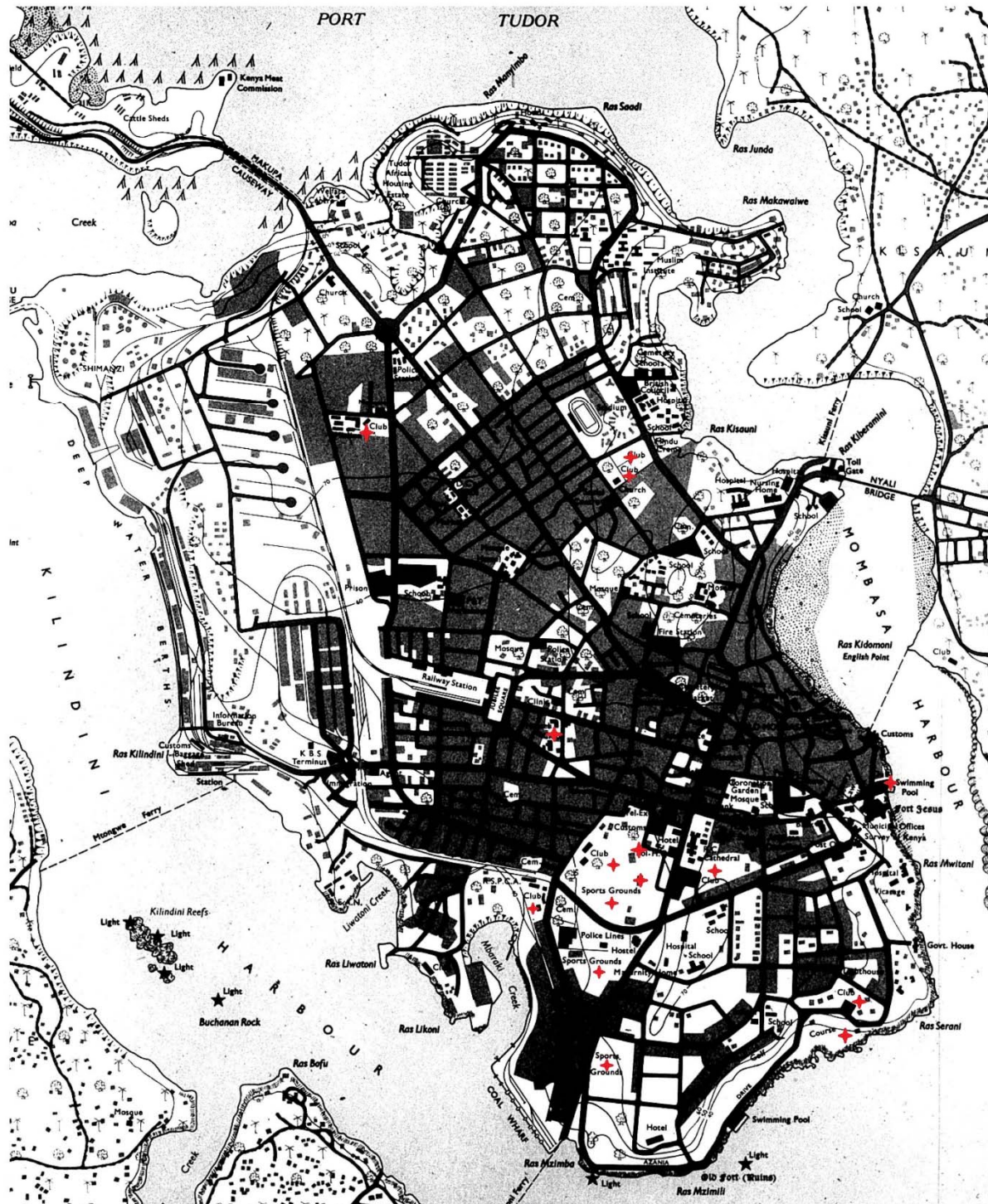


Figure 2.3: City Map of Mombasa. Stars indicate location of a club. Survey of Kenya, 1959.

“Descended from the political coffeehouses of the seventeenth century,” gentlemen's clubs were “an indispensable part” of the lives of elite men in eighteenth and nineteenth century London.²⁹ By 1760, there were over one-thousand clubs across London, catering to men of all social backgrounds.³⁰ Soldiers, returning from the Napoleonic Wars, and businessman, arriving back from “the Far East or distant postings,” found in clubs a “safe and comfortable place” to exchange news and to reminisce.³¹ Clubs offered an “alternative domestic life for men,” providing a sense of privacy, intimacy, and autonomy that was unattainable even in the home.³² A profile of London’s club scene noted that, “a hundred years ago, it was common for a gentleman to spend nearly every evening at his club, playing cards, drinking, shooting billiards, and smoking cigars. Wives felt helpless to combat this tradition and suffered countless lonely nights at home.”³³ Clubs provided both sociability and privacy depending on members’ desires and offered a scenic retreat that brought qualities of the countryside to city life.³⁴ While not initially exclusive, the “influx of vast industrial wealth” transformed clubs into bastions for London’s economic elite.³⁵ Scholars have argued that the elitism of clubs was a response to the

²⁹ Milne-Smith, *London Clubland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2; see also Anthony Lejuene, *The Gentlemen’s Clubs of London* (London: Parkgate Books, 1979); Winsoar Churchill and Alan Klehr, “London’s Gentlemen’s Clubs,” *British Heritage* 21, no. 3 (2000): 50–57. Robert J. Morris, “Clubs, Societies and Associations,” in *Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950. Social Agencies and Institutions*, ed. F.M.L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 396.

³⁰ Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, 22; See also John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London; with Anecdotes of Its Famous Coffee Houses, Hostelries, and Taverns, from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Time* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908).

³¹ Churchill and Klehr, “London’s Gentlemen Clubs,” 52.

³² Amy Milne-Smith, “A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen’s Clubs of London, 1880-1914,” *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 4 (2006), 798. Milne-Smith contends that for nineteenth century British men, the home operated as only a semi private space, which they shared not only with their wife and nuclear families, but also with servants, visiting relatives, and flow of visitors and callers. Newspapers reported family dinner, teas, or other at home gatherings as ‘public events’ (795 & 809).

³³ Churchill and Klehr, “London’s Gentlemen Clubs,” 54.

³⁴ Milne-Smith, “Flight to Domesticity,” 809; James Mayo, *The American Country Club: Its Origins and Development* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 33.

³⁵ Churchill and Klehr, “London’s Gentlemen Clubs,” 53.

social upheaval of the industrial revolution; aristocratic elites, responding to new forms of urban wealth, coalesced among individuals of similar social station.³⁶ The conception of “clubability” was tantamount to achievement of gentlemanly status, with the term “clubmen” becoming a stand-in for the “older, more exclusive version of ‘gentleman’.”³⁷ Club membership, in other words, both required and signaled achievement of an elite, gentlemanly social station. Members of the traditional aristocratic elite negotiated, or restrained, the upward mobility of social climbers by requiring them to submit to election for membership to their clubs, often blackballing their entry.

Kenya clubs, through their architecture, decor, and symbols, underscored their locality within a colonial landscape. Landscape, as Donald Moore, argued referred both to the “visual perspective and to the geographical territories seized by it”; landscapes articulate both culture and nature, “seer and scene.”³⁸ Europeans in Kenya sought to produce their own cultural brand, defined by images of bucolic settings, outdoor recreation, and adventure.³⁹ Settlers and administrators alike, saw themselves as bold pioneers, living a spirited existence in an exotic frontier.⁴⁰ Kenyan clubs and their members appropriated selectively chosen images and motifs that would stand out as distinctively colonial in character.⁴¹ The Muthaiga Club’s expansive

³⁶ Morris, “Clubs, Societies and Associations,” 419-420; Mayo, *The American Country Club*, 8.

³⁷ Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, 62.

³⁸ Donald Moore, *Suffering for Territory*, 22.

³⁹ Will Jackson, “White Man’s Country: Kenya Colony and the Making of a Myth,” *Journal of East African Studies* 5, no. 2 (2011): 344–68.

⁴⁰ For an administrator’s perspective see Charles William Hobley, *Kenya, from Chartered Company to Crown Colony: Thirty Years of Exploration and Administration in British East Africa* (London: H.F & G. Witherby, 1929); There is a copious selection of settler literature and memoirs. For a few examples see J.F Lipscomb, *White Africans* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955); Elspeth Huxley, *Out in the Midday Sun: My Kenya* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

⁴¹ This was not dissimilar to the appropriation of spas by French settlers in Northern Algeria. See Douglas P. Mackaman, *Leisure Settings: Bourgeois Culture, Medicine, and the Spa in Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Mackaman delineated the emergence of spas in Northern Africa, which derived from local Muslim bathhouses. Europeans, delving upon orientalist images, recreated these

veranda, as a 1913 profile in the *East African Standard* described, was itself a “modification imposed by the outdoor climate of the BEA.”⁴² The club house of the MCG, with its coral walls, outdoor verandas, safari motifs, and African waiters dressed in khanzus, was conspicuously colonial, representing the club’s position as a leisure hideaway for Europeans in the East African landscape (See Figure 2.1). The Mombasa Club was built to blend in with the style of the nearby Swahili patrician stone houses on the oceanfront of the city’s Old Town district.

While social station was the basis for “clubability” in London, race was the primary qualifier for membership within the British colonies.⁴³ C.L.R. James observed the role of race in determining accessibility to various cricket clubs in West Indian Society, surmising that social station mattered less to a sportsman’s entry to a club than his skin color.⁴⁴ Clubs firmly demarcated the boundaries of colonizers and colonized. The constitution of the Mombasa Club firmly decreed that, “No natives, except for servants of the club, or servants of the members, shall be admitted into the club.”⁴⁵ Despite the explicit exclusion of Africans and South Asian communities, William Robert Foran, extolled the club’s diversity, proclaiming, “The membership of the Club comprised many different nationalities and represented every walk in life. There was a strictly enforced color bar. No Indians, Goanese or Eurasians were eligible for election; though the latter could join if holding a government post of the officer grade.”⁴⁶ Foran

spaces for experiences of leisure, while at the same reproduced colonial discourses of hygiene and sanitation.

⁴² “Building Notes,” *East African Standard*, October 25, 1913.

⁴³ Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere,” 489.

⁴⁴ C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1963). James, describing the predominant role of race in shaping access to particular clubs, argued, “Class did not matter so much to them as color. They had founded themselves on the principle that they didn’t want any dark people in their club. A lawyer or a doctor with a distinctly dark skin would have been blackballed, though light-skinned department-store clerks of uncertain income and still more uncertain lineage were admitted as a matter of course” (56).

⁴⁵ J.L. Frankl, “The Early Years of the Mombasa Club: A Home Away from Home for European Christians,” *History in Africa* 28 (2001): 73 & 77.

⁴⁶ William Robert Foran, *A Cuckoo in Kenya: The Reminiscences of a Pioneer Police Officer in British East Africa* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1936), 224.

normalized the racial exclusivity within European social settings. The Mombasa Club was cosmopolitan precisely because it drew membership from various European nationalities; the inclusion of non-European races was not a requisite for diversity.⁴⁷ Members, recognized the fragility of their racial boundaries and had to vigorously defend their clubs from the incursion of non-European races. Officers of the Nairobi Club frequently denied members' requests to host private dinners on the basis that "non-Europeans would be present."⁴⁸ When Africans converged on the Western end of Nairobi's Government Road to protest the arrest of Henry Thuku and urban segregation, settlers bunkered themselves inside the Norfolk Hotel and fired bullets into the amassing crowd.⁴⁹ These examples illustrate that the preservation of clubs as exclusively European enclaves was more tenuous and contested than habitués, such as Foran, would have liked to admit.

While race was the most basic qualifier for clubability in Kenya, clubs also reinforced internal social divisions within European society. Ann Stoler challenged presumptions of homogeneity within colonial culture, which assumed "a shared European mentality, the sentiments of a unified, conquering elite."⁵⁰ Nairobi hosted a diverse population of railway employees, government officials, and prospective farmers. Upper-level railway and government administrators founded the Nairobi Club after determining that the existing Railway Institute was "too cosmopolitan and insufficiently exclusive to provide the dignity and respect to which senior officers and officials believed they were entitled."⁵¹ The Nairobi Club was "basically for civil

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Round-Turner, *Nairobi Club*, 84.

⁴⁹ Kenda Mutongi, "The Thuku Riots in Early Colonial Nairobi" (unpublished manuscript, Williams University, 2015).

⁵⁰ Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 23. For an alternative presentation of this argument see Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule."

⁵¹ Round-Turner, *Nairobi Club*, 8.

servants,” Ted Ayers explained, “You could only join it if you reached a certain level of the civil service. As a police officer you could not join it unless you were an assistant superintendent.”⁵² Foran, who was an officer in the police corps, provided a colorful recollection of his own rejection from Nairobi Club, recounting “an air of frigidity” upon his entrance to the club.⁵³ The club secretary pulled him aside to inform him that he was “no longer eligible to enjoy the privileges of the Club—as an ordinary, honorary or temporary member.”⁵⁴ Although he was an officer of the British East African Police, the club’s members regarded Foran as a “subordinate grade official,” ineligible to mix with the senior officers and their “women folk.”⁵⁵ While Foran attempted to pass off his rejection in good humor, his recollection betrayed his bitterness towards the official class who saw the Nairobi Club and the adjoining “upper hill” neighborhood as their exclusive domain. “There was nothing honestly colonial about the atmosphere in British East Africa,” Foran lamented, “none of the cheery comraderies found in southern Africa, where a white man was accepted at face value.”⁵⁶ Foran, expecting to find European solidarity, encountered a Kenyan colonial society that was socially stratified and factionalist.

Groups and professional classes responded to their exclusion from elite clubs by forming their own institutions. Stratification of clubs occurred whenever there was a sufficient settler population.⁵⁷ Despite the prevailing narrative of colonial Kenya as an aristocratic society, urban centers attracted a substantial number of settlers “who might properly be defined as middle class.”⁵⁸ In addition to doctors, shop keepers, artisans and mechanics, Kenya’s European middle

⁵² Ted Ayers, interview by author, Nairobi, April 1, 2014.

⁵³ Foran, *Cuckoo in Kenya*, 116.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Connan, “La Décolonisation Des Clubs Kényans,” 59.

⁵⁸ Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 93.

class also included lower level managers, clerks, and police officers— among others—who sought places to socialize and find entertainment.⁵⁹ Foran after his rejection from the Nairobi Club, found “social relaxation” within “the more hospitable and cosmopolitan Railway Institute on the ‘plain’.”⁶⁰ When Ted Ayers, a retired British engineer, moved to Nairobi he initially frequented the Public Service Club, which catered to lower-level administrators, before eventually joining the Nairobi Club around 1965.⁶¹ Settlers formed the MCC to protest the snobbery of officials at the Nairobi Club; middle-level managers and business men, meanwhile, frequented the Parklands Sports Club (PSC).⁶² Membership in a club signified more than belonging to a particular group or community; clubs gave their members access to recreational facilities and entertainment. Ted Ayers, for instance, described his climb from the Public Service Club to the Nairobi Club in terms of the quality of amenities. The Nairobi Club, he explained, had significantly more tennis courts. The Public Service Club, moreover, “wasn’t (sic) a club you could go to for a good meal.”⁶³ Clubs offered their members varying degrees of access to sports amenities and other entertainments, with the most exclusive institutions providing the best. At the same, the proliferation of clubs presented a solution to the tensions of “clubability” by establishing multiple outlets for leisure within increasingly stratified cities.

Clubs were predominantly masculine spaces. Although women eventually joined clubs through their husbands, traditions and byelaws excluded women from membership on their own merits.⁶⁴ Clubs, moreover, restricted women to specific areas of the premises. The Nairobi Club,

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Foran, *Cuckoo in Kenya*, 117.

⁶¹ Ted Ayers, interview by author.

⁶² Mills, *Muthaiga*, 57; Wambui Wamunyu and Simuyu Barasa, eds., *Parklands Sports Club: Centennial Anniversary Edition* (Nairobi: Parklands Sports Club, 2006), 42.

⁶³ Ted Ayers, interview by author.

⁶⁴ Frankl, “The Early Years of the Mombasa Club,” 73 & 77. Women were allowed to be introduced by their husbands, or men, as guests of the club but membership was accorded to “gentlemen.”

for example, initially limited women's entry to the library; women eventually won admittance to the tennis courts and the verandah, but continued to be prohibited from using the bar or the dining room until 1938.⁶⁵ A longstanding byelaw of the Mombasa Club required women to vacate the premises by seven in the evening; a servant walked around the club with a bell to signal women to exit (Figure 2.4).⁶⁶ Women increasingly pushed for and secured more access to clubs, eventually gaining full rights of membership.⁶⁷ Despite these gains, men dominated the space of the club, with women's access negotiated and tenuous.

European women found alternative outlets for socialization through institutions like the East African Women League (EAWL). The EAWL had a headquarters in Nairobi, as well as multiple affiliate branches scattered around townships and areas of European settlement. The organization was explicitly European until 1963, when members acrimoniously adopted a constitutional amendment to open membership to "women of any race."⁶⁸ The EAWL operated like a club; women gained membership through nomination by a fellow member and payment of subscription fees. While charity was the primary function of the EAWL, members of the League had memories of afternoon tea hours, talks, and dramas hosted at the organization's central headquarters in Nairobi, or at various local branches throughout Kenya.⁶⁹ While Ingrid Ayers recounted her days at the sports clubs with her husband, she was particularly proud of her membership to the EAWL.⁷⁰ For European women, the EAWL was an organization they could join, and assume positions of leadership on their own merits.

⁶⁵ Round Turner, *Nairobi Club*, 31-33. Even today the Nairobi Club has a male-only gentleman's lounge.

⁶⁶ Edward Rodwell, *the Mombasa Club* (Mombasa: Mombasa Club, 1988), 17; Judith Aldrick, "Mombasa Club," *Kenya Past and Present* 30 (1998), 13.

⁶⁷ Connan, "La Décolonisation Des Clubs Kényans," 66-68.

⁶⁸ Richard Frost, *Race against Time: Human Relations and Politics in Kenya Before Independence* (London: Collings, 1978), 199.

⁶⁹ Ingrid Ayers, interview by author, Nairobi, April 18, 2014.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

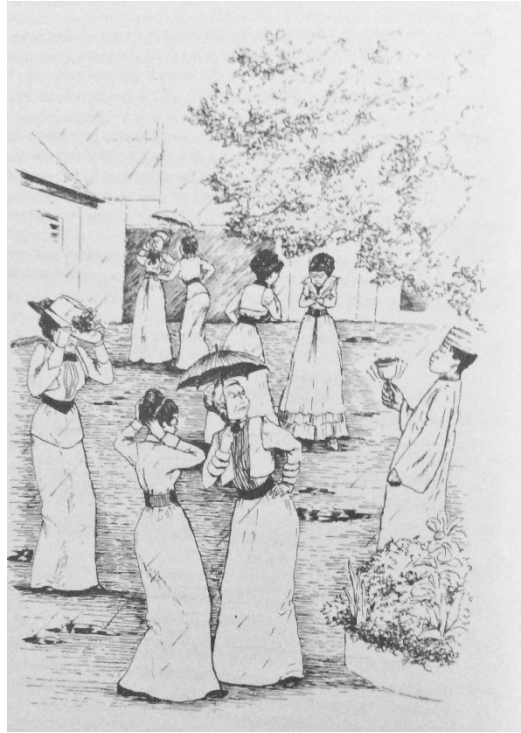


Figure 2.4: A cartoon showing women's displeasure as a servant signals them to vacate the Mombasa Club. Edward Rodwell, the Mombasa Club. Mombasa: Mombasa Club 1988.

While clubs stratified Kenya's towns across class, gender, and professional lines, recreation also reinforced the bonds of the European community. The Norfolk Hotel, was a popular retreat for Europeans visiting the city.⁷¹ "If you were in any way adventurous, eccentric, uninhibited, or simply interested in big game hunting," Kenda Mutongi argued, "the palm-draped rooms and shaded verandas of the Norfolk had all the trappings."⁷² Elspeth Huxley recounted the visits of big-game hunters to the hotel, who "did much to brighten the life of Nairobi" in between their safaris.⁷³ "Here also, came the gayer of the colonists, twice a year, to the Christmas and

⁷¹ Kenda Mutongi, "The Thuku Riots in Early Colonial Nairobi," 7; See also Stephen Mills, *The Norfolk, the Hotel that Built a Nation* (London Mills Publishing, 2012).

⁷² Kenda Mutongi, "The Thuku Riots in Early Colonial Nairobi," 7.

⁷³ Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country: Lord Delemere and the Making of Kenya*, vol. 1 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935), 251.

July races,” she expounded, adding that “during these race weeks a good night's sleep was the most difficult thing to obtain at the Norfolk.”⁷⁴ Race weeks temporarily suspended divisions between settlers and officials. Nicholas Best proclaimed, “All was forgotten during race week, when settlers and bureaucrats drowned their sorrows together and every unsuspecting carthorse, providing it could muster four legs in working order, became for a brief and glorious moment a racehorse.”⁷⁵ During these occasion settlers and officials literally played out their political differences at the Nairobi Club during an annual event, which became known as the “Settlers vs. Officials Cricket Match.”⁷⁶

Despite their exclusive culture, clubs also maintained an important public function as the primary outlet for sport, recreation, and social frivolity of Kenya’s urban population. Frederic de Janze a French traveler to Kenya lauded the joviality of the MCC:

WHY do we all belong to Muthaiga Club?
 Why do we go out five miles for a cocktail?
 Why do we have to fight for a room during Race Week?
 Why do we have to put up with our things being stolen and our laundries mixed?
 Why do we drink champagne at 35 shillings a bottle?
 Why are we told to go to bed at one, like naughty boys?
 Why do we live in rooms without mosquito netting?
 Why do we put up with our “boys” being ruined?
 Why do we stand the Committee's smile?
 Why does our money keep Muthaiga going?⁷⁷

Muthaiga, was the place a settler or a foreign visitor could go to find a good time. Janze, answering his series of questions, proclaimed “twice a year, swamping the ‘regular member’ in our numbers, all together, once more delighted, hearts beating, throats drinking; from Moyale,

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Nicholas Best, *Happy Valley: The Story of the English in Kenya* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979), 68.

⁷⁶ Bruce Berman, *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London: James Currey, 1990), 109.

⁷⁷ Frederic de Janze, *Vertical Land* (London Benediction Classics, 2010), 41.

from London, from Rhadjputna, from Queenstown, from New York and Tyrone. We can bang the bar, break the glasses and on the morrow in numberless 'prairie oysters' repent."⁷⁸ Rosemary Hardwood expounded on the importance of the Mombasa Sports Club (MSC) to the social life of Mombasa, declaring, "For those of us who were brought up in Mombasa, the Sports Club was the recognized gathering place from childhood to marriage, parenthood and beyond. When we were young and unattached, there was squash and tennis to play, cricket, rugby and soccer to watch, dances and general merrymaking."⁷⁹ The MSC, Hardwood argued, was the place where "many a romance began," and adults went to meet with friends, negotiate business, and watch their children play.⁸⁰

Members celebrated public events and holidays within their clubs. Phyllida Cockell recalled walking to the MSC from Loreto Convent, wearing white dresses and red waist sashes, to attend the Empire Day celebrations at the club's upper field.⁸¹ During the club's annual Christmas parties Father Christmas majestically arrived in a cart that was pulled across the club's cricket fields by a donkey or rickshaw.⁸² Such events reaffirmed ideas of European community. Jürgen Habermas defined the public sphere as a space—between the state and the private realm—where private people came together as a public.⁸³ He located the origins of the modern public sphere within European coffee houses, salons, and public squares where people met to exchange news and information.⁸⁴ Although private institutions, with carefully guarded

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Rosemary Harwood, "Memories of the Club 'A Happy Rendezvous'," Judy Aldrick, ed., *Mombasa Sports Club: Souvenir Magazine* (Mombasa Sports Club, 1996), 34.

⁸⁰ Aldrick, "Mombasa Club," 11.

⁸¹ Phyllida Cockell, "Father Christmas Visits the Sports Club," Judy Aldrick, ed., "Mombasa Sports Club: Souvenir Magazine" (Mombasa Sports Club, 1996), 31.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Habermas, *the Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 27-56.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

memberships, clubs contributed to the “public sphere” of Kenyan colonial society, where Europeans fortified their social bonds, through sports, friendships and marriages.⁸⁵

As the site of public holidays, community rituals, as well as sports and recreation, clubs significantly contributed to the leisure and socialization of Kenya’s European community. Clubs, however, were also exclusive institutions that restricted access of their amenities to members and their guests. Race certainly set the European community apart from African and South Asian communities and was the primary qualifier for club membership. But Kenya, like colonial societies elsewhere, was far from cohesive; class, professional, and gender distinctions divided Kenya’s European community. Clubs were spaces where members performed and negotiated these differences. The formation of new clubs to accommodate diverse groups and constituencies was a way in which Europeans assuaged tensions concerning access to clubs and “clubability.” The proliferation of clubs, however, was contingent on groups’ access to limited urban space. The state, in this capacity, directly influenced the establishment of clubs.

LEISURE AND LAND POLICY IN COLONIAL KENYA

Clubs required a setting—a physical and permanent place within the urban landscape where they could establish clubhouses and sport facilities. Members relied on grants from the government to meet these requirements. Land for recreation purposes was not immediately congruous with state goals of economic production and efficient land use; clubs, with their sprawling sports grounds, vast verandas, and golf courses, required substantial territory, yet neither promised agricultural or industrial production nor contributed significant revenue to the state. Through its allocation of land to various constituencies for use as clubs and sports fields,

⁸⁵ See Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere,” 491-92.

the state acknowledged interests beyond the accumulation of capital.⁸⁶ By making recreation a state interest, however, the government asserted a supervisory role over clubs and other social institutions. The state allocated land to clubs on restricted leases, rather than as freehold, which gave it enhanced control over these institutions. Clubs never entirely maintained the institutional privacy they aspired to; their reliance on the government for land brought them into interaction and negotiation with the state.

Kenya's first clubs benefited from the availability of urban land. Mombasa Club attained its present site when Rex Bousted, who eventually became the club's proprietor, spotted "an empty space on the waterfront just opposite his shop, where there was a rocky coral ridge next to the Fort [Jesus] and the land slopped steeply down to sea."⁸⁷ The plot belonged to the wealthy Lilwali Ali bin Salim, who—eager to gain favor with the British administration, relinquished the land to the government, which in turn leased the property to Bousted's club.⁸⁸ The local government enthusiastically supported the establishment of a club; prior to 1897, a small Goan establishment was the only place on the predominantly Muslim island where local officials and railway administrators could get a beer.⁸⁹ The Nairobi Club encountered no resistance when it sought a plot at Nairobi's prestigious upper-hill neighborhood. H.F. Ward, in his 1912 handbook of East Africa described the club as the "owner of spacious and handsome grounds situated on

⁸⁶ Berman, "Structure and Process in the Bureaucratic States of Colonial Africa," *Development and Change* 15, no. 1 (1984), 163.

⁸⁷ Aldrick, "The Mombasa Club," 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 16; Charles William Hobley, *Kenya, from Chartered Company to Crown Colony; Thirty Years of Exploration and Administration in British East Africa* (London: H.F & G. Witherby, 1929), 30. Hobley, describing Mombasa in the 1890s, states, "sports ground did not exist, and there was no Club (sic), although we had made a primitive attempt for our own convenience, in a couple of dark rooms near the shop of the local Harrod, to wit an obliging Goan named Souza." De Souza's shop, located adjacent to the railway station, continues to be open as "the oldest pub in Kenya."

the hill,” with fourteen acres to accommodate polo, hockey, cricket, football, and tennis.⁹⁰ Land was available to the government in ways that money to develop public recreational amenities was not. Clubs, despite their exclusive membership, assumed the role of providing recreational facilities for the benefit of the European population.

Clubs rationalized their claims to land by highlighting their social benefit as places of sports and recreation for the general community. Sergeant Francis Scott, secretary of the prospective Njoro Sports Club, complained that the government’s proposed annual rent of RS 10 was excessive, given the club’s potential “benefit to the district as a means of bringing people together.”⁹¹ B.J. Flint, Secretary of the Parkland’s Sports Club (PSC), posed a similar argument when he requested an extension of his club’s grounds: “It is our considered opinion that the more extensive our activities become the better it will be for the community, as a whole, to have a central sports club in a position to promote every possible branch of sport.”⁹² While utilizing space for non-economic purposes, clubs nonetheless claimed to contribute to the development of urban land. P. Barry, the Chairman of the Mombasa Golf Club (MoGC) argued that his club contributed to the “health of the community,” both from “the game itself and the necessity of always keeping the ground clear.”⁹³ Health officials, for example, incorporated the golf course into local malaria eradication efforts. An editorial in the *East African Standard*, which lamented the general sanitation problems of Mombasa, cited the golf course as the district’s single achievement concerning public health: “We note the once bush covered sea front now clear and converted into a lawn for the Golf Club, but we see no great evidence of any other clearings, nor

⁹⁰ H. F Ward, *Handbook of British East Africa* (London: S. Praed, 1912), 46.

⁹¹ Francis Scott to Edward Northey, Governor, November 16, 1920, KNA, BN/40/16.

⁹² B.J. Flint to Commissioner of Local Government, September 30, 1932, KNA, BN/40/8.

⁹³ P. Berry to Secretariat, March 2, 1911, KNA, PC/Coast/1/3/52.

yet any attempt made to drain the mosquito breeding swamp lying near Kilindini station.⁹⁴ Clubs rationalized their access to land, by asserting their contribution to community recreation and urban development.

The development of the Muthaiga Country Club (MCC) exemplified the connection of clubs with concerns of community recreation and urban planning. James Archibald Morrison, a wealthy real-estate developer, opened the club on New Year's Eve, 1913 as a feature of a broader residential housing scheme. Morrison acquired the land from a local farmer with the intention of developing a "modern residential suburb with a club and 9-hole golf course."⁹⁵ Deriving from Ebenezer Howard's "garden city" model, Muthaiga Estates (see figure 2.5) signified a departure from the crowded, and unhygienic conditions of Nairobi.⁹⁶ Muthaiga, on the other hand, with its "wooded and exhilarating atmosphere" and explicit policies that barred South Asians from owning property, promised European settlers a superior standard of town life.⁹⁷ The estate's residents even gained authority to form their own township committee with powers to collect rates and determine byelaws.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Editorial, "the Public Health: an Indictment," *East African Standard*, July 20, 1912: 5,

⁹⁵ Stephen Mills, *Muthaiga*, 60.

⁹⁶ A Garden City," *East African Standard*, August 17, 1912: 20; For discussion of the Garden City form of urban planning see Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1988), 86-135; Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1902). Howard's garden city emphasized the neighborhood as a self-contained unit in close relationship, encircled by a greenbelt, to balance the demands of industrialization with urban residents' desire for a natural landscape.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Government of Kenya, *Report of the Local Government Commission* (Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 1927), xviii. Muthaiga residents rejected the proposal to bring them into the fold of Nairobi primarily because of the 1923 Devonshire White Paper, which stipulated that cities should be non-segregated, in regards to Indian populations. The Local Government Commission report, however, maintained that Indians would be precluded from moving to Muthaiga because of their inability to afford homes, and zoning requirements that required a minimum size of one acre for a household plot.



Figure 2.5: A map depicting the plan for Muthaiga, an “ideal residential area.” The club and the golf course are positioned on the lower right corner of the map. *East African Standard*, August 17, 1912.

According to Morrison’s plans, the MCC would function as the social center of the new estate, as an article in the *East African Standard* described:

An area had been reserved for a shopping center and among the Estate buildings will be a club combined with a recreation ground. The Estate is now actively engaged in laying out golf links and these are nearly completed. There will be probably four tennis courts, two are under construction; a football and cricket ground have been marked out and a squash racket court will be located among the trees at the back of the club premises.⁹⁹ MCC, as this description detailed, was an extension of the neighborhood; residency in Muthaiga promised membership to the club. F.G. Afalo, a travel writer, lauded the club’s features and function as a community amenity: “at present the use of the club is restricted to members, but arrangements are in contemplation which will throw it open for residential purposes or, otherwise, to tourists with the usual introductions.”¹⁰⁰ Afalo’s description posed little distinction between the club and the interests of the neighborhood as whole; residency in Muthaiga itself

⁹⁹ “A Garden City,” *East African Standard*, August 17, 1912: 20.

¹⁰⁰ F.G. Afalo, “a Jigsaw Puzzle,” *East African Standard*, May 2, 1915: 2.

signified membership in an exclusive community. The MCC assumed the function of an open space that would satisfy the recreational needs of that community.

The government allocated land to clubs on either long term leases, or Temporary Occupation Licenses (TOL). These agreements were established through the Lands Office, which typically conferred with local township boards and committees (see table 2.1). If the local government determined that a club was desirable, and was willing to accord the space, the Land Officer would issue a lease or a TOL. For clubs, leases were generally the more desired and secure form of arrangement, with tenure of between twenty-five to ninety-nine years; TOLs, on the other hand, were more temporary agreements between an association and the government, and required periodic renewal. Even leases, however, included a special provision that allowed the government to terminate an arrangement and recapture the land after six months' notice. This provision allowed the government to quickly reclaim the land if it became needed for a public purpose. The terms of rent clubs paid for access to land varied; plots in the larger towns, Nairobi and Mombasa, was more valuable than those in rural townships.¹⁰¹

Leases were a frequent source of friction between the government and clubs. Club committees were particularly concerned with the security of their tenure. Arthur Bonham Carter, writing on behalf of the MoGC, requested his club receive a long-term lease in place of a TOL. Carter emphasized that secure tenure was crucial to the golf course's development: "The committee are anxious and willing to spend from RS4000 to RS6000 in building a coral and tile house, but cannot do so without the lease and acquiescence from the government, and some sort of security that we should be not be turned down without notice."¹⁰² The District Land

¹⁰¹ Edward Northey, Governor, to Sgd. Francis Scott, March 7, 1921, KNA, BNA/40/16.

¹⁰² Arthur Bonham Carter to Barton Wright, March 10, 1915, KNA, PC/Coast/1/111/309.

Table 2.1: Terms of Land Granted for Sports and Country Clubs

	Acres	Length of Lease (Years)	Annual Rent
Club Name	Acres	Length of Lease (Years)	Annual Rent (Shillings)
Nairobi Golf Club	Unspecified	Unspecified	Unspecified
Nairobi Polo Club	19	10	285
Nairobi Club	21.837	99	330
Caledonian Society	6.89	TO License	15
EA Turf Club	171	99	25
Nakuru Race Course	78.24	25	15
Naivasha Sports Club	10	25	15 (first 5 yrs.)' 45/-after
Rift Valley Sports Club	8.43	25	15 (first 5 yrs.)' 45/-after
Parklands Club	15.8	25	240/-
Parklands Golf	80	TO License	15/-
Mombasa	Unspecified	TO License	15/-

Officer (DLO), Barton Wright, sympathized with the club’s concerns, arguing that the MoGC “had duly erected a small club house and have expended considerable sums in clearing the ground and making the course, and are anxious to improve and beautify the ground and build a more permanent club house, but feel naturally unwilling to secure the necessary expenditure without some guarantee from Government of greater security of tenure.”¹⁰³ Wright’s advocacy helped the golf club secure a ninety-nine year lease in place of the TOL. The lease, however, maintained the government’s prerogative to terminate the lease “should at any time it needed the ground.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Barton Wright, Land Officer Mombasa, to Chief Secretary, March 26, 1915, KNA, PC/Coast/1/111/309.

¹⁰⁴ Barton Wright, Land Officer Mombasa, to Chief Secretary, July 6, 1915, KNA, PC/Coast/1/111/309.

While the government rarely terminated leases with clubs, the threat of losing their right to land concerned club committees.¹⁰⁵ A secretary for an upcountry golf club challenged the inclusion of this provision, stating that his club had spent over £240, towards the development of the course, and intended to spend another £150.¹⁰⁶ He added, “it seems particularly hard that Government should have the right to take over all the land on which this money has been spent, without compensation to the loan certificate holders.”¹⁰⁷ W.M Logan, the Commissioner of Lands, maintained that the terms of the lease were “common to all sports grants made by Government and is standard Government policy in recent years.”¹⁰⁸ The East African Jewish Guild complained to the Parks Committee of the Municipal Council of Nairobi (MCN) of “persistent rumors” that the local government intended to “dispose of the land in question by way of exchange.”¹⁰⁹ The club asked for “assurance that no such exchange would take place during the next three or four years.”¹¹⁰ The Parks Committee denied their request and reminded the Guild that the land had been “let to them for a nominal rent.”¹¹¹ Lease agreements and TOLs, as these examples illustrated, gave the government influence over clubs’ decisions regarding their internal development. The ability of the administration to revoke tenure effected clubs’ ability to make improvements on the land or enhance their facilities.

¹⁰⁵ A 1922 letter from the Commissioner of Land directing the NGC to remove its ten-year old club house. See Hooper, *Game of Golf in East Africa* (London: W. Boyd 1953), 34. The government typically reclaimed land by refusing to new leases once they expired. This was the case with the Caledonian Sports Club when the MCN resolved that the application of the society for a “renewal of the lease not be granted.” Minute 28, Town Planning Committee, MCN, August 5, 1947, KNA, JW/2/23.

¹⁰⁶ Secretary of Thompson Falls Golf Course to DC Nakuru, December 12, 1935, KNA, BN/40/31.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ W.M. Logan, Commissioner of Lands, to Secretary, Thompson Fall’s Golf Course, January 27, 1936, KNA, BN/40/31.

¹⁰⁹ Minute 4, Parks Committee, MCN, May 5, 1937, JA/2/52.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Leases were technical, legalistic, and blandly written documents; nonetheless, they were the basis of dynamic negotiations between clubs and the state. When the government approached the Mombasa Club to retain a portion of its plot to make room for car parking, Rex Bouldsted and P.H Clark, the club's proprietors requested the deletion of the clause in their lease that "tied them down to the utilization of the premises for the purpose of a club."¹¹² Charles Hobley, the Provisional Commissioner (PC) postulated that such a deletion would cause the club's members to "consider that their interests should suffer if there was a serious dispute between the members and the proprietors."¹¹³ He suggested that patrons of the club instead assume control of the property and covert it to a members' clubs.¹¹⁴ Hobley staked an interest in the club's internal affairs; while the members of the Mombasa Club maintained a generally congenial relationship with their proprietors, there were persistent rumors that they intended to covert the property into a hotel establishment, which would deny the membership a club space.¹¹⁵ W. McGregor Ross, the Director of Public Works, recommended that the government inform the committee of the Mombasa Club of Bouldstead and Clark's request and inquire if the club's membership desired "to take over the buildings from the proprietors at a valuation to be fixed by arbitration."¹¹⁶ Ross's recommendations provided an avenue for the club's membership to assume control over the property and establish itself as a members' club. Although an agreement between Boustead and Clarke and the government never materialized, the discussions

¹¹² Charles Hobley, PC Coast, to Land Officer, to Land Officer, KNA PC/Coast/1/11/310.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ A proprietary club was one in which an owner or company provided the property for club on behalf of its members. Members clubs, on the other hand, were clubs in which the members themselves controlled the property, typically in the form of a board of trustees.

¹¹⁵ Rodwell, *Mombasa Club*, 20.

¹¹⁶ W. McGregor Ross, Director of Public Works, to Land Officer, May 5, 1917, KNA, PC/Coast/1/11/310.

between local administrators underscored the convergence of administrative priorities and the internal affairs of clubs.¹¹⁷

A conflict between the Muthaiga Golf Club (MGC) and local land officials further illustrated the state's concern with the affairs of private clubs. The golf club began as nine-hole golf courses, but used two subsequent land grants to establish a new and separate eighteen-hole course, as well as a sports ground, polo ground, and tennis courts. In 1935, J.H. Hamilton, the attorney for the MGC requested that the government release the club from stipulations that required the original nine-hole course be "used as a Golf Course only."¹¹⁸ With its eighteen-hole course complete, the club wanted to redevelop the original nine-hole course for alternative, unspecified purposes. Hamilton argued that the club had "shown its bona fides" by expending £3500 on the development of the land¹¹⁹ "As long as Government is satisfied that these areas are being bona fides used as a Golf Course and Sports Ground," he declared, "there is no advantage to Government in restraining the user."¹²⁰

Two competing views emerged from the Land Office's assessment of the golf club's request. The Assistant Land Officer surmised that the club's proposal was merely a ploy by Morrison Estates, the club's proprietor, to subdivide the land for the promotion of real-estate development: "there seems to be no doubt that the intention of the applicants, if the present application is successful is to subdivide plot No 1000 into residential and possibly business plots."¹²¹ Such an action, he argued, would leave "the golfing and sporting amenities of the

¹¹⁷ Acting Governor, Charles Bowring, expressed he would not consider any proposal to "alter the terms of the lease of the Mombasa Club plot," enforcing the property's use as a club. T.S. Thomas, Ag. Chief Secretary, to PC Coast and Land Officer, Mombasa, August 2, 1917, KNA, PC/Coast/1/11/310.

¹¹⁸ J.H.H. Hamilton to Commissioner of Lands, February 5, 1935, KNA, BN/40/9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Assistant Land Officer to Commissioner of Lands, February 13, 1935, KNA, BN/40/9.

locality to be provided at the expense of crown land.”¹²² The MGC provided a public function of which the government was unable to provide. The provision of recreational grounds, the Assistant Land Officer opined, was the “the duty of every person desirous of developing residential estates.”¹²³ The acting Lands Secretary, Alec Lindsay Basford, however, strongly disagreed with this appraisal, arguing that, “The relationship of the Club to Morrison Estates does not concern us, the members of the former must fight their own battle if their rights are interfered with by Morrison Estates Ltd.”¹²⁴ Basford regarded the MGC as a private entity that was not of government interest. The Commissioner of Lands, W.M Logan, concurred with the original opinion of the Assistant Land Officer and denied the golf club’s request to remove the restrictive clause from their lease.¹²⁵

Later that year the MGC made a second request to sublease its polo ground to the Kenyan Polo Association. This petition extended the administration’s debates concerning whether the club was appropriately using their land. Logan reiterated that the government had allocated the plot to the club for the explicit purpose of a golf course. He declared, “As it appears the portion to be subleased is surplus to the requirements of the Golf Club, I consider it should be surrendered to the crown and that the government should then deal any application from the Kenya Polo Association.”¹²⁶ Basford again defended the golf club’s perspective, explaining that Morrison Estates had invested a “good deal” towards lying out the polo ground and was entitled

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Assistant Land Officer to Commissioner of Lands, February 13, 1935.

¹²⁴ Alec Lindsay Basford, Acting Lands Secretary, to Commissioner of Local Government Lands and Settlement (CLGLS), February 23, 1935, KNA, BN/40/9.

¹²⁵ W.M. Logan, Commissioner of Lands, to Hamilton Harrison and Matthews, KNA, BN/40/9.

¹²⁶ W.M. Logan, Commissioner of Lands, to CLGLS, July 6, 1935, KNA, BN/40/9.

to the financial benefits of a sublease arrangement.¹²⁷ Logan, despite his misgivings, ultimately determined to allow the MGC to advance its arrangement with the Kenya Polo Association.

The tensions between the MGC and the Land Office illustrated the intricate relationship between clubs and the colonial state. The attention of land officers to the MGC's use of their land, illustrates recreation as a state interest and a recognized utilization of land. While the creation of public recreational spaces eventually became a concern of urban planners and social engineers of the 1940s and 1950s—see Chapter 3—the state initially addressed concerns of leisure space through its land administration. By allocating land to clubs, the state demarcated territory as recreational and strictly enforced this form of use through lease agreements. Although clubs, were private institutions, their dependence on state land limited the extent to which they could freely develop their space. Leases restricted clubs to developing land for specific, and often narrow recreational purposes. The government regarded clubs as providing a public function by creating space for recreation and leisure. Subject to these demands and government scrutiny, clubs never fully achieved the privacy and independence they sought; rather, their interests were linked to obligations to a wider public, even while maintaining control over their membership.

While it would be erroneous to claim that clubs and the state were outright competing interests, they nonetheless developed dynamic relationships out of negotiation between their respective needs and priorities. When Morrison Estate, approached the administration to convert the MGC polo ground into an aerodrome in 1931, the government denied the request, not only because it constituted an impracticable use of recreational land, but also on the basis that it economically conflicted with the newly opened Nairobi Aerodrome.¹²⁸ That same year, Basil

¹²⁷ A.L. Basford, to CLGLS.

¹²⁸ U.B. to CLGLS, May 2, 1931, KNA, BN/37/8.

Flint, the president of PSC, requested a land extension to accommodate an arrangement with the Nondescripts Football Club. The existing ground, however, was too small to accommodate such an arrangement, requiring the addition of a vacant 2.68-acre plot adjoining the club's existing grounds.¹²⁹ While the MCN recommended approval of Flint's request, Logan, the Commissioner for Local Government, expressed concerns that the extension of the club's plot up to road frontages would result in a financial loss for the MCN. Flint's request was ultimately approved after the Town Clerk assured Logan that it was sufficiently revenue neutral.¹³⁰ This example, however, illustrates that even the most mundane financial concerns had potential to effect clubs' negotiations with the government.

The expansion of Kenyan cities and townships heightened demands for urban space. In 1906, Nairobi had 11,512 permanent residents; by 1926, the population had more than doubled to 29,864; the population had nearly reached the 50,000 mark by 1936.¹³¹ Although not as spectacular, the population of Mombasa grew from 24,700 residents in 1897 to 42,000 in 1930.¹³² The growth of Kenya's townships into burgeoning population centers produced new requirements for urban planning—provision of housing, industry, transportation, etc. Local administrations negotiated communities' requests for recreational space with the various economic and logistical demands of growing urban centers. In 1918, the MoGC approached local officials with an offer to purchase a bungalow adjacent to its property, for the purposes of

¹²⁹ B.J. Flint to Commissioner of Lands, January 29, 1931, KNA, BN/40/8; Assistant Land Officer to CLGLS, February 24, 1931, KNA/40/8.

¹³⁰ Town Clerk, to CLGLS, April 8, 1931, KNA, BN/40/8. Club's enjoyed special privileges that exempted them from paying municipal rates for the maintenance of roads. Buildings with access to roads, typically paid a higher municipal rates. Logan argued that the proposed arrangement would give the club road access, depriving the MCN of potential revenue from rate collection.

¹³¹ R.A. Obudho and Rose A. Obudho, "The Colonial Urban Development Through Space and Time," in an *Economic History of Kenya*, ed. W.R. Ochieng' and Robert M. Maxon (Nairobi, English Press, 1992), 149.

¹³² Jewell, *Mombasa the Friendly Town*, 21.

establishing a permanent club house. The Department of Forestry was using the bungalow for temporary housing of staff. Although the MoGC offered to pay the government for a replacement building elsewhere in the city, the administration was reluctant to depart with the house, citing a “shortness of housing accommodation in Mombasa.”¹³³ H.W. Hobby, a member of the Mombasa Municipal Committee, urged the government to support the golf course’s request, arguing that the existing “temporary structures” on the golf course was “an eye sore for the city.”¹³⁴ The Director of Public Works, William Ross, however, concurred with his engineer that a reduction of housing facilities, even in the slightest, was “out of the question,” and stressed the government’s interest in the beachfront property for future development, proclaiming, “I equally should deprecate government's cession of any of the available land around the sea front for other than present uses in the housing of officials, a requirement which is only likely to expand in the future.”¹³⁵

Urbanization constrained the advancement of clubs’ requests for space even in smaller townships. When a sports club in Njoro applied for land near the township’s center, the local township committee expressed its disapproval, characterizing the allocation of thirty acres “for sports purposes” as “unwise both in the interests of the sports promoters of the locality and of the township.”¹³⁶ The committee argued that there would be “likelihood for liability” for disturbances of the Sports Club, due to the “intrinsic value” of the area for “general urban development” and railway business.¹³⁷ The claim that Njoro constituted a “growing townlet,” albeit questionable, illustrated the tenuous position of sports clubs within an urbanizing colonial

¹³³ W. Blain to R.F. Gaunt, December 31, 1918, KNA, PC/Coast/1/111/309.

¹³⁴ H.W. Hobby to Director of Public Works, January 23, 1919, KNA, PC/Coast/1/3/52.

¹³⁵ William Ross, to Chairman Housing Committee, October 7, 1919, KNA, PC/Coast/1/3/52.

¹³⁶ Minutes of Township Board Meetings, October 18, 1920, KNA, BN/2/25.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

economy, as considerations for housing, business, and industry took precedent over interests of leisure. Clubs, which used land without promising substantial economic returns, depended on the generosity of local officials and land officers for their claims to space.

Despite the growing scarcity of urban land, various groups and constituencies continued to approach the government for land to establish clubs, or recreational facilities. In 1934, the District Surveyor (DS) of Mombasa urged tightening policies regarding the provision of recreational land to individual constituencies. TOLs for sports purposes, he contended, cost the local government substantial revenue, adding that his board would no longer support “further proposals to license any more Crown Land for temporary occupation for sports purposes, and so deprive themselves of still more revenue.”¹³⁸ When the Police Commissioner approached that the MCN to assist his department to acquire a new parade and sporting ground on a plot at Jeevanjee market, the Director of Public Works claimed that the existence of “ample open spaces,” made a new allotment for a sports field unnecessary.¹³⁹ The land that the Police Commissioner requested was too valuable commercial land for the administration to part.¹⁴⁰ The government ultimately offered a sports ground to the Kenyan Police, but on a plot much smaller than the Police Commissioner requested. The Police Commissioner rejected this alternative proposal viewing the land as insufficient in size, and requiring substantial work to develop into a viable recreational amenity; rather, he formed an agreement with the Caledonian Sports Club for an exchange of land.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ DS Mombasa to Ag. CLGLS, March 23, 1934, KNA, BN/40/26.

¹³⁹ Commissioner of Police to CLGLS, June 2, 1932, KNA, BN/1/79; P.A.C to CLGLS, June 8, 1932, KNA, BN/1/79.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ C.E. Mortimer, CLGLS, to the Town Clerk, Nairobi, March 14, 1933, KNA/BN/1/79.

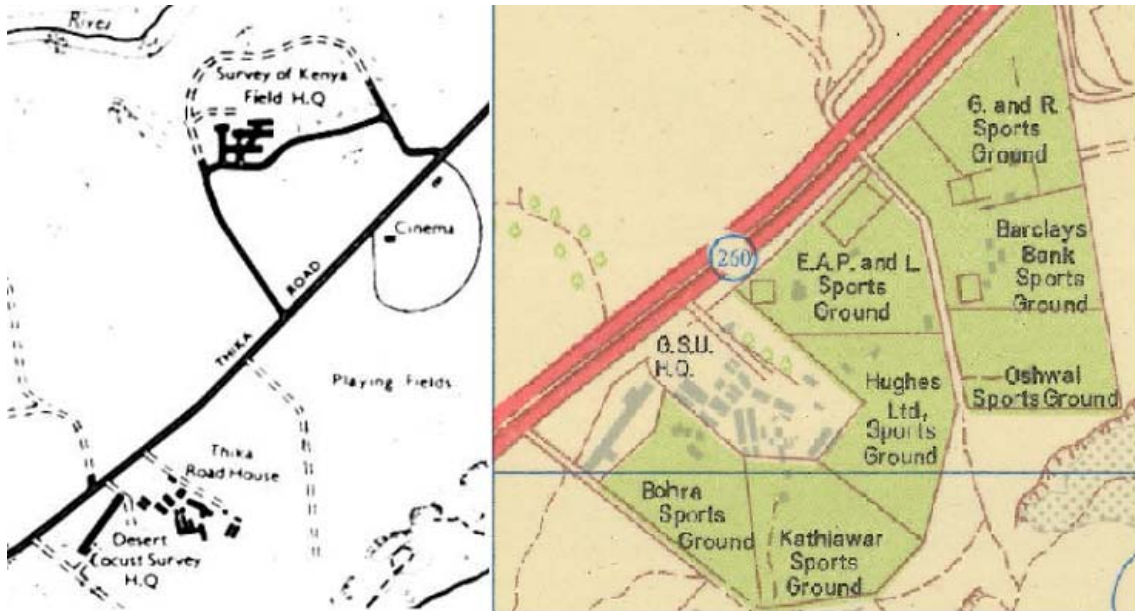


Figure 2.6: The left map shows the area of Thika Road demarcated for playing fields in 1959. Survey of Kenya, 1959. The right map shows the same area subdivided into various plots for sports clubs. Survey of Kenya, 1968.

The efforts of the Kenyan Police to acquire a sports field, illustrated a more tightfisted approach by the government concerning the allocation of recreational space to individual clubs, groups and associations. Although administrators and local officials continued to recognize the importance of clubs to the development of recreational facilities, they also sought to curtail the number of associations, groups, and communities receiving valuable urban space for this purpose. In 1955, the government subdivided a large area demarcated as playing fields—approximately 97.69 acres—near Mathare Valley into several plots (See figure 2.6), and invited tenders “for the direct grant of these plots for sports ground purposes.”¹⁴² The announcement stipulated that “satisfactory evidence that sufficient funds are available must be given and details of the number of members belonging to the applicant clubs as well as the type of sport intended to be played on the ground should be included in the tender.”¹⁴³ The announcement also invited

¹⁴² *Kenya Gazette*, September 13, 1955, 912.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

joint tenders from smaller clubs wishing to share a plot.¹⁴⁴ The gazette notice illustrated that the government sought to control the processes to which individual communities and constituencies claimed recreational space. New clubs would need to compete with each other, in the form of bidding, for access to sports grounds, or agree to share facilities.

RACE, RECREATION, AND EXPANDING CLAIMS TO THE CITY

The state, through its relationship with clubs, emphasized a form of leisure that was predicated on distribution of urban space to specific constituencies and interests. Access to recreational land gave groups and communities a claim to the city, providing a setting for sports, relaxation, or socializing with friends. The state's dependence on private clubs for developing social facilities, however, proved unfeasible as expanding urban populations resulted in more claims for exclusive leisure space than the state was willing to accommodate. Two distinct trends emerged concerning the state's involvement in the development of leisure in urban Kenya during the 1930s and the 1940s. First, the government gave more attention to the need for publically accessible recreational facilities to accommodate a younger, diverse, and less affluent European population. Second, the government began to recognize the social needs of non-Europeans living in the city, who contributed the most to Kenya's rapid urban population growth.¹⁴⁵ The state, promoting itself as a just and neutral arbitrator, could not ignore the pressing needs of the cities' non-European communities for access to leisure space.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ In 1938, Europeans constituted only ten percent of the Nairobi population of 65,000; by 1945 that number had dropped slightly to 9.5 percent of a total population of 108,900. Indians, meanwhile, increased from 18,500 residents in 1938 to 38,000 in 1937. The African population was 40,000 and 66,600 in 1937 and 1945 respectively. *The Colonial Office List, Comprising Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the Colonial Empire, List of Officers Serving in the Colonies, Etc.* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1945), 152.

The role of clubs as the predominant spaces for leisure in urban society, left a void for spaces for recreation that were not predicated on membership to an exclusive club. In 1904, Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee, an influential Parsee businessman, donated a plot of his land to the government, for a public garden.¹⁴⁶ The garden soon fell into disarray, as the government was unwilling to commit funding for its upkeep until the 1930s.¹⁴⁷ In 1923, “concerted efforts were made to open up parts of the Municipal Forest for public recreational use.”¹⁴⁸ A notice in a 1926 edition of the *Kenya Gazette* demarcated the boundaries and policies for this area, which eventually acquired the name City Park.¹⁴⁹ Both City Park and Jeevanjee Gardens functioned more as scenic areas, than as recreational amenities, capable of supporting sport activities. The Municipal Council of Nairobi (MCN) sub-leased portions of the park to various clubs to develop such facilities. In 1934, the MCN leased a plot in City Park of 120 yards long and 80 yards wide to the Sikh Union, and another seven-acre plot to the Patel Club. Each lease was short term, for one year only, and at a rate of Sh 20 per year.¹⁵⁰ The East African Jewish Guild also had plot at City Park, which they developed a portion into tennis courts.¹⁵¹ The MCN discussed the possibility of developing a “public recreation ground,” which would include facilities for cricket matches and tennis.¹⁵² The Municipal Engineer, however, concluded that “at the present time no further action could be taken.”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ For a comprehensive history of this space see Zarina Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism* (Nairobi: Zarina Patel, 1997), 210-218. In a notice in the *Kenya Gazette*, John Ainsworth officially named the public gardens after Jeevanjee. Notice, *Kenya Gazette VIII*, No. 154, March 22, 1906. A discussion of the later history of Jeevanjee Gardens, including its conflicts with city development projects, will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁷ Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism*, 212-213.

¹⁴⁸ Gordon Boy and Dino J. Martins, editors, *City Park: the Green Heart of Nairobi* (Nairobi: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2012), 12.

¹⁴⁹ *Kenya Gazette*, May 12 1926, 40-41.

¹⁵⁰ Minutes 8 & 9, Town Planning Committee, MCN, March 20, 1934, KNA, JW/2/48.

¹⁵¹ Minute 7, Estates and Parks Committee, MCN, August 6, 1947, KNA, JW/2/23.

¹⁵² Minute 16, Town Planning Committee, MCN, March 21, 1944, KNA, JW/2/20.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

A 1945 report by Janish and H.F. Bauman stressed the need to establish recreational amenities for youths who lacked “easy opportunities for joining a local sports club by reason of the parents’ membership.”¹⁵⁴ They prescribed the formation of a youth council that would approach the MCN, for the purposes of acquiring space for the “provision and equipment of playing fields.”¹⁵⁵ Existing clubs, they argued were unable to accommodate a new generation of Europeans residing in the city. They envisioned adolescents eventually arranging their games into junior sports clubs.”¹⁵⁶ As late as 1960, W. Jackna, the Chief Inspector of Schools lamented that the “absence of facilities for games such as tennis for visitors to the city and for families who do not join clubs has been worrying many games enthusiasts.”¹⁵⁷ He recommended the development of public tennis courts, and other recreational amenities, which would also be available for rent by clubs for use in athletic events.¹⁵⁸

Demands for public recreational space, non-contingent on club membership, underscores the limitations of clubs to providing for the social needs of a diversifying urban society. In 1948, Doctor A.U. Sheth, a counselor on the Mombasa Municipal Board (MMB) proposed a resolution to reclaim the territory of the Mombasa Golf Club (MoGC) for the purposes of establishing a public recreational ground. He stressed the importance of this area as a place “for Mombasa citizens of all races to go out in the evening for fresh air and a walk.”¹⁵⁹ Accusing the golf club of planning to “prevent Mombasa citizens from using this area for fresh air and evening walks,” Sheth’s resolution called for the government to take “immediate steps to make this land

¹⁵⁴ Janish and H.F. Bauman, “Recreation and the Use of Leisure Hours (Europeans),” 1945, ACK, ACKA/CMG/CMS/2.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ W. Jackna, Chief of Inspector of Schools, to Provincial Educational Officer, October 19, 1960, KNA, RN/1/36.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Notice of Motion No 55, MMB, June 1, 1948, KNA/UY/12/310.

available...for use by the citizens of Mombasa,” and to “cancel the lease granted to the Golf Club, Mombasa.”¹⁶⁰ The European majority of the MMB defeated Sheth’s resolution in an eleven to seven vote.¹⁶¹ Sheth’s resolution was the first—according to my research—to call for recovery of club land for the purposes of establishing more public space. The MoGC, in his view, deprived the general public of a potentially valuable open space and recreational amenity. Race also contributed to debates regarding the future of the MoGC; while the European majority on the MMB supported the golf club’s interests, non-European members almost uniformly supported Sheth’s resolution, which pledged to open the area to all races. By forcefully challenging a vestige of European leisure, Sheth called attention to the demands of non-European populations for inclusion in urban space.

The state and local government contemplated the recreational requirements of its non-European urban populations. Asian communities were a large urban population that persistently demanded space to establish community clubs. From the years 1911 to 1948, Asians represented 26 to 37 percent of Nairobi’s population.¹⁶² Jewel approximated 9,000 Asians in Mombasa in 1930, when he estimated the city’s population to be 42,000.¹⁶³ Asian groups generally occupied the position of the middle class in Kenya’s racially hierarchical society, working as bankers, shopkeepers, and low-level clerks. The Asian population, however, was itself fragmented into “about a hundred associative communities,” grouped according to “religious affiliation, region of origin and socio-professional status.”¹⁶⁴ The Hindus, the largest Asian community in Kenya,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Minute 127, MMB, June 1, 1948, KNA/UY/12/310.

¹⁶² Michel Adam, “A Microcosmic Minority: The Indo-Kenyans of Nairobi,” in *Nairobi Today: The Paradox of a Fragmented City*, ed. Hélène Charton-Bigot and Deyssi Rodriguez-Torres (Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2006), 208.

¹⁶³ Jewel, *Mombasa a Friendly Town*.

¹⁶⁴ Adam, “A Microcosmic Minority.”

consisted of forty separate communities based on area of origin and professional class. Sectarian difference, meanwhile, shaped the social organization of Kenya's sunni and shi'a Muslim communities.¹⁶⁵ Kenya also had a large population of Goans, whom were mostly Roman Catholics. These divisions, guided the economic, political and social activity" of Kenya's Asian population.¹⁶⁶ The government pursued a strategy of ethnic pluralism that embraced internal stratifications within the Asian population, while asserting itself as the paternalistic arbitrator of these divided communities.¹⁶⁷ Asian communities received recreational spaces to accommodate their cultural, social, and recreational requirements. Adam's survey of the South Asian community in Nairobi, enumerated at least a dozen clubs, sports grounds, or halls, belonging to different segments of the Hindu community alone.¹⁶⁸

Asian community clubs were important settings for camaraderie, socialization, and performance of traditions. Weddings frequently occurred within the spaces of the community institutes, halls or clubs; these occasions reinforced ethnic, kinship, and sectarian ties.¹⁶⁹ Lacking financial support from the colonial administration, Asian communities met in their clubs to organize initiatives for schools, health care facilities, and other social requirements.¹⁷⁰ "The Goans originally maintained two separate institutions: the Railway Goan Institute, for employees of the railway, and the Goan Institute, where employees working for "banks, customs and other

¹⁶⁵ Anne Cussac and Nathalie Gomes, "Muslims of Nairobi: From a Feeling of Marginalization to a Desire for Political Recognition," in *Nairobi Today: The Paradox of a Fragmented City*, ed. Hélène Charton-Bigot and Deyssi Rodriguez-Torres (Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2006), 269–304.

¹⁶⁶ Robert G. Gregory, *Quest for Equality : Asian Politics in East Africa, 1900-1967* (Hyderabad, A.P: Orient Longman, 1993).

¹⁶⁷ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁶⁸ Adam, "A Microcosmic Minority: The Indo-Kenyans of Nairobi," 214.

¹⁶⁹ Cynthia Salvadori, *Through Open Doors: a View of Asian Cultures in Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenway, 1983), 252.

¹⁷⁰ Robert G. Gregory, *The Rise and Fall of Philanthropy in East Africa : The Asian Contribution* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992).

institutions” frequented.¹⁷¹ An internal conflict within the Goan Institute led to formation of a new club, the Goan Gymkhana in 1936. Jos de Souza, a local Goan businessman, donated part of his property to the new club,” which included a library, as well as tennis and badminton courts.¹⁷² “Life centered around the club,” Fred Lobo, a longtime member of the Nairobi Goan Gymkhana recounted.¹⁷³ Expounding on the significance of the club to his community’s social and cultural life, Fred told me, “They finished work and everybody came here, the wives, the kids, and we grew up in community clubs. That is where traditions and cultures were practiced, were handed down to generations.”¹⁷⁴ Tony Franco, another member of the Goan Gymkhana, stressed the significance of the club’s “casual functions” as a starting point for lifelong friendships and marriages, telling me, “That is where you met up as young kids the parents would bring you here and you would meet up with young kids, and you got familiar with the community in general. When we grew up some people continued the relationship with the kids they met when they were young and went on to marry the same people.”¹⁷⁵ He particularly remembered “village feasts,” which corresponded with Roman Catholic feast days for patron saints of villages in Goa; if there was a sizeable population from a particular Goan village in Nairobi, then the people from that village would host a celebration at the club’s premises.¹⁷⁶ Goans from other villages joined the festivities, which included music, dancing, and traditional foods.¹⁷⁷ The Goan Gymkhana, like other Indian community clubs, offered its members a place to maintain cultural traditions and linkages to their ancestral homes.

¹⁷¹ Jack De Souza, interview by author, Nairobi, October 3, 2014.

¹⁷² “The Goan Gymkhana: Golden Jubilee Souvenir Magazine” (Nairobi: Goan Gymkhana, 1986).

¹⁷³ Fred Lobo, interview by author, Nairobi October 3, 2014.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Tony Franco, interview by author.

¹⁷⁶ Stanley Franco, interview by author, Nairobi, October 3, 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Jack de Souza; interview by author; Tony Franco; interview by author.

As was the case with European clubs, rising land values and requisites of urban planning, challenged the state's commitment to accommodating recreational space for Indian communities. When the Parsee community approached the government for a plot of land to establish a club in 1912, H.R. Tate, the acting Provisional Commissioner of Mombasa, denied the group's request, questioning the benefits of allocating recreational space to "every community," regardless of their population. "With land values as high as they are in Mombasa and the area so restricted as it is," he declared, "I am adverse to granting land for the purpose of sports grounds to each small community as such grant forms a precedent for a new application."¹⁷⁸ T C.G. Usher, the Town Clerk of Mombasa, raised similar concerns when he responded to a request for a plot by a community of Jains—a group of decedent Hindu.¹⁷⁹ Naunat Mahajan writing to the government on behalf of the club appealed to state paternalism: "As almost all the communities have either applied to or got from the government some ground for their sporting requirements, we shall deem it a favor, if you will kindly consider the importance of sports to such a vast community as ours, and shall stretch your helping hand to allot some space in sporting area to our community."¹⁸⁰ This argument, however, was unavailing; Usher reiterated the logistical problems of Indian social exclusivity, opining, "It may not be that the present allocation, illogical as it appears, cannot be bettered, but my impression is that something should be attempted by way of discouraging in the sphere of sport the natural inclination of the Asiatic to exclusiveness and segregation."¹⁸¹ He added that Indian and Arab associations "might be inspired" for the "pooling together of resources of a group of committees."¹⁸² Eliding the own factionalist

¹⁷⁸ Ag. PC Coast to DLO Mombasa, December 6, 1912, KNA, PC/Coast/1/36.

¹⁷⁹ Naunat Mahajan to Town Clerk, Mombasa, August 21, 1929, CPA, UY/19/78; See Adam, "A Microcosmic Minority," 215.

¹⁸⁰ Naunat Mahajan to Town Clerk, Mombasa.

¹⁸¹ Ag. Town Clerk to DS Mombasa, August 22, 1929, CPA, UY/19/78.

¹⁸² Ibid.

proclivities of European clubs, Usher blamed the prolific demands for exclusive recreational space on Asian groups' irrational propensity for internal segregation. Asian communities, he surmised, would need to set aside ethnic, cultural, and religious differences and share common recreational spaces.

Asian communities, despite Usher's presumptions, did attempt collective organization of clubs. An interethnic group of Indians in Mombasa, for example, founded the Young Indian Sports Club in 1925, with the purpose of providing a recreational and social venue for the city's Indian community as a whole.¹⁸³ In 1935, however, the club was very small with a mostly Hindu membership; the club reported twenty-six members, of which twenty were Hindu, five were Parsees, with one Esmalli Khoja individual.¹⁸⁴ L.M. Doshi, the club's secretary, reported that most of the Indian population had "desisted from taking any interest" in the affairs of the Young Indian Sports Club," preferring to participate in the activities of the clubs "in the names of their communities."¹⁸⁵ In a controversial meeting, the club's Hindu majority, voted to change the name of the club to the Coast Hindoo Gymkhana and subsequently had the District Land Officer (DLO) alter the name on the club's Temporary Occupation License (TOL). The club's non-Hindu members wrote to the Land Officer to protest the name change and accused the club's Hindu majority of "usurping" the rights of the club's other communities.¹⁸⁶ Even if the club continued to permit membership of non-Hindu communities, the group regarded the name change as a "highly offensive and monstrous act" that would compel members to join or

¹⁸³ T.M. Javanjee to President Young Indians Sports Club, April 4, 1935, KNA, BN/40/27; L.M. Doshi, Secretary Hindoo Gymkhana to J.B. Pandya M.L.C.M.E, April 5, 1935, KNA, BN/40/27.

¹⁸⁴ L.M. Doshi to J.B. Pandya.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Group Letter, Members Young Indian Sports Club, to Land Officer, April 2, 1935, KNA, BN/40/27.

maintain membership in a Hindu institution.¹⁸⁷ They insisted that the government had granted land to the club for the “use and benefit of all Indian communities of Mombasa.”¹⁸⁸

Doshi defended the decision to approve the name change, contending that the alternative name was approved by a fair and democratic process. He claimed that non-Hindu members had accepted the proposed change without acrimony and even received life memberships, guaranteeing their permanent access.¹⁸⁹ He, meanwhile, maintained that the Hindu membership had an enhanced stake in the club because of their financial and social contribution to the institution’s development. When the club faced financial struggles, the Hindu members had contributed “very large sums besides their regular subscriptions.”¹⁹⁰ Members of other communities, he alleged, refused to contribute, “on the pretense that they have their communities’ club to carry on.”¹⁹¹

The Land Office, meanwhile, found itself in the delicate position of mediating an internal conflict between the Club’s Hindu and non-Hindu factions. After the club’s non-Hindu members beseeched the Land Office to “refuse any application” for a transfer of lease to the Hindoo Gymkhana, R.H. Drake, the DS, lamented that the club had misled him on the unanimity of the change in name.¹⁹² He recommended that, “to avoid further friction between the two sections,” he would “recall the TOL with a view to reverting to the original name of the Young Indians Sports Club, or to such name as will not rouse sectarian grievances.”¹⁹³ Basford downplayed the scandal’s significance, stating that “too much was being made of the matter.”¹⁹⁴ He explained

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Group letter to President of Young Indian Sports Club, April 1, 1935, KNA, BN/40/27.

¹⁸⁹ L.M. Doshi to J.B. Pandya.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² R.H. Drake, DS Mombasa, to CLGLS, April 12 1935, KNA, BN/40/27.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ A.L. Basford to CLGLS, April 15, 1935, KNA, BN/40/27.

that the “real reason for the change,” was a recent policy by the Asian Sports Board to stipulate that “Asians must play in communities,” which prevented the Young Indians from competing as an interethnic sports club.¹⁹⁵ Charles Mortimer, seeking to diffuse the controversy, proposed that the Land Office endorse the name change under a stipulation that the club would continue to “always be open to all Indians.”¹⁹⁶ Drake, however, determined that even with “such an endorsement,” the Non-Hindoo members would not belong to a club bearing a Hindu name.¹⁹⁷ The administration ultimately directed the club to either revert back to its previous name, or to select a name that did not purport “to place any section of the Indian Community in predominance.”¹⁹⁸ Within days, Doshi reported that members had approved the culturally neutral “Coast Gymkhana” as the new name for the club.¹⁹⁹

The controversy of the Young Indian Sports Club highlighted the politicization of recreational space, as cultural and ethnic factions contested the identity of the club. The Young Indian Sports Club was distinct from most other Indian community clubs in that it sought to build a club based on multicultural and interethnic cooperation. Cultural and ethnic struggle nonetheless shaped the institution’s internal politics. The proposal to change the name to the Coast Hindoo Gymkhana was acrimonious because it signified efforts by one faction, the Hindus, to control the identity and, by extension, access to the club. Disregarding the actual motivations of the proposed name change, the non-Hindu minority saw the alteration as an affront to their membership and access to the club. The involvement of local land administrators, who attempted to mediate this conflict, further underscored the Land Office’s involvement in

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ R.H. Drake, District Survey to CLGLS, May 9, 1935.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Lands Secretary to CLGS, 7.

¹⁹⁹ M.M. Doshi and L.M. Doshi to DS Mombasa, May 16, 1935, BN/20/37.

matters of leisure; even the mundane action of altering a TOL put the DLO into a position of arbitrating ethnic and cultural differences. Officials' expectations that different Indian communities would bond together for the creation of common leisure spaces proved more difficult in practice, even while some groups of Indians sought to do so.

Despite ethnic, religious and cultural differences, many Asians were united in their resentment of color bars and their exclusion from European clubs. Madatally Manji, the patriarch of the House of Manji, one of Kenya's largest food processing companies, recounted his frustration that he was unable to patronize European clubs, bars, or hotels, despite his economic success, which surpassed even most of the European patrons of such establishments.²⁰⁰ Racial barriers hotels, clubs, and other urban social settings were among the concerns that drove Asian collective political mobilization and demands for social equality.²⁰¹ Community clubs carried a reputation of being second-class in comparison to European institutions. Akbar Hussein, who played cricket for the Aga Khan Sports Club, characterized European clubs as more socially prestigious and possessing superior facilities.²⁰² "If you had an Indian club there would be one or two tennis courts," he explained, "But in a European club there was something like twelve to fifteen tennis courts. So you had access to facilities which were easily available. You did not have to wait for your turn."²⁰³ European and Asians competed against each other in sports such as cricket, which gave Asian athletes temporary access to the premises of European clubs. Akbar nostalgically recollected the baked cakes and sandwiches the European host clubs served between innings.²⁰⁴ "Have you ever had a cucumber sandwich?" Akbar asked me, explaining,

²⁰⁰ Madatally Manji, *Memoirs of a Biscuit Baron* (Nairobi: Kenway, 1995), 144-145.

²⁰¹ Gregory, *South Asians in East Africa: An Economic and Social History*.

²⁰² Akbar Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, January 7, 2014.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

“This was a very special one. This was a very English thing to have. A cucumber sandwich is a very thinly sliced cucumber put on a bread...buttered bread...on top of the cucumber is green chutney and quite a bit of green chilies. It was very tasty. And I used to eat a few.”²⁰⁵

Raskik Patel remembered these matches differently, emphasizing their social frigidity: “Mombasa Sports Club had the best cricket ground and we always looked forward to playing a match there. All the visiting players-(sic) nonwhites, had to sit in a banda to the right of the mango tree. No one was allowed in the pavilion or club house. Tea was served outside between the present club house and kitchen.”²⁰⁶ For Patel, European’s treatment of Indian athletes typified the racial hierarchy of colonial society. Akbar, on the other hand, saw these matches as signs of progress for socialization across racial lines.²⁰⁷ Through these matches, Akbar familiarized himself with the same clubs he eventually joined after independence. Patel did eventually join the MSC, but only despite misgivings and for the purpose of introducing other Asians into the club.²⁰⁸

Prior to the 1940s, there were few clubs, associations, or facilities that provided for Africans’ socialization, sports, or recreational activities. Municipal regulations permitted Nairobi’s African population to build and reside only in a single location at Pumwani. Social amenities, including recreation, were primarily accessible through self-help and missionary initiatives. The government assisted in the construction of Pumwani Social Hall in 1923, which provided space for dances, and boxing. A 1928 letter from the Acting Commissioner of Lands of Settlement to the General Manager of Kenyan Railways and Harbors referenced a reserve of land

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Qtd. in Judy Aldrick, ed., *Mombasa Sports Club*, 35.

²⁰⁷ Akbar Hussein, interview by author.

²⁰⁸ Judy Aldrick, ed., *Mombasa Sports Club*, 36.

on the government quarry where African laborers were playing football.²⁰⁹ The scarcity of clubs in Nairobi reflected a racial hierarchy that regarded Africans as a temporary presence in the city, rather than as permanent residents requiring recreational fixtures. While European officials recognized the heterogeneity within the Asian population, through their allocation of clubs based on individual communities, they accorded onto Africans a few public and undifferentiated play grounds, irrespective of class, ethnic, gender, or generational distinctions.

Even these minimal concessions to the recreational needs of African communities were sources of controversy. In 1936, the MCN, began to implement plans for a new “Native Stadium” that would accommodate the municipality’s various football clubs and recreational activities.²¹⁰ The African and Arab Sports League, which organized Nairobi’s African football clubs, had been advocating for a central location to hold athletic events. The EAWL challenged the project, questioning the merits of spending £12,000 for recreation in view of more “pressing needs in connection with native hospitals, housing, and welfare generally.”²¹¹ The Native Affairs Committee of the MCN irately rebuked the EAWL, proclaiming, “The Native Affairs Committee is fully conscious of its powers and responsibilities...and these responsibilities it is not empowered to delegate and is not prepared to share with the East African Women’s League and takes the strongest exception to their interference in this matter.”²¹² An editorial in the *East African Standard*, while defending the right of the EAWL to question the merits of the project, stressed the need for the new stadium. The government had emphasized too much the removal of African settlements, and “too little” on measures for improving their living conditions.²¹³ The

²⁰⁹ C.E Mortimer, CLGLS to General Manager Kenya Uganda Railways, October 29, 1928, KNA, BN/40/5.

²¹⁰ Minute 7, Native Affairs Committee, MCN, February 7, 1936, KNA, JW/2/50.

²¹¹ Minute 1, Native Affairs Committee, MCN, June 5, 1936, KNA, JW/2/50.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

project, moreover, drew entirely from the Native Trust fund and revenues from native liquor sales, which amounted to little expense for the settler population.²¹⁴ The editorial called for a change in administrative tone, in which the local government recognized the permanence of Africans in the city, while adopting measures to enhance their daily lives.

Although there was less stringent residential segregation in Mombasa, race also shaped residents' access to recreational space. In 1936, the MMB approved an extension of 6.7 acres of land for African recreation. The Board agreed that this extension, combined with an existing allotment of thirteen acres allowed for "four football grounds and stadium," would "meet the requirements of the natives on the Island for many years to come."²¹⁵ A minute of the General Purposes Committee, of the MMB noted the use of a playing ground by the Nianda Athletic Club, which was comprised of "native municipal employees."²¹⁶ The Commissioner of Lands, however, transferred the ground to the Alladina Visram School, an Indian secondary school for use as a sports ground for its students.²¹⁷ The MMB passed a resolution to protest the government's decision to "deprive the African employees of their playing field."²¹⁸ The open support of the MMB for the Nianda Athletic Club strained the fragile racial relationships between the city's European, Indian, and African communities. An editorial in the *Kenya Daily Mail*, an Asian newspaper, chastised the European members of the MMB for misrepresenting the interests of the school, arguing that they had erroneously "insinuated that Indian members of the board were trying to deprive the defenseless natives of the playing ground prepared by them and

²¹⁴ Editorial, "On Being Rude—A Stadium Echo," *East African Standard*, June 29, 1936.

²¹⁵ DS Mombasa, to Commissioner for Local Government Lands and Settlement, April 11, 1936, KNA, BN/40/28.

²¹⁶ Minute 554, General Purposes Committee, MMB, CPA, UY/19/78.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

give it to the Allidina Visram High School.”²¹⁹ The editorial dispelled European board members’ claim to be “protectors of Native interests” as “sentimental trash,” adding that the Nianda Athletic Club had no legal claim to the ground and had been using the space without permission or payment.²²⁰ “In this particular case,” the editorial opined, “the matter is one of principle. Can the Government allow the use of their land without permission? It may be the employees of the Municipality today. Tomorrow employees of P.W.D. might do the same thing. Such a thing should not and cannot be allowed on principle.”²²¹ The editorial added that there was a “common ground for the native community, and all should make use of it.”²²²

While the *Daily Mail* down played the role of race in the conflict, framing the issue as a matter of principle and public policy, its editorial belied the racialized nature of urban space in Kenya where race determined access to recreational facilities. Africans were at the greatest disadvantage of this system, as the extent and terms of their access to recreational spaces depended on the tacit permission of paternalistic European administrators. While Europeans and Indians had clubs, with some guarantee of tenure, Africans were accorded temporary playing grounds, which the administration could reallocate at their whim. On the other hand, the allocation of recreational spaces to the African community reflected a growing, albeit begrudging, recognition on the part of the administration of the permanent position of Africans within urban space. The provision of playing fields and municipal stadiums of the 1930s, although amounting to small concessions, portended the state’s more extensive involvement in the establishment of social halls and recreational amenities, which this dissertation will later explore in future chapters.

²¹⁹ Editorial, “the Nianda Ground,” *Kenya Daily Mail*, October 9, 1932.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted the development of recreation as a governing issue for the colonial state in Kenya. The state connected recreation with concerns of urban planning, and land policy. In doing so, the state extended its purview beyond concerns of capitalistic production. The allocation of land to clubs provided a mechanism for which the state supported the development of playing fields and recreational amenities without assuming the financial burden of such endeavors. The state sought to reinforce its role as a benevolent, neutral arbitrator by providing land for leisure to Kenya's various urban constituencies. Leases, or TOLs, meanwhile, gave their holders access to space for sport and recreation, legitimizing their claims to the city. These agreements, however, were also mediums of negotiation between the government and clubs that integrated the state into the internal affairs of these private interests. State and settlers' mutual emphasis on club formation proved to be an impracticable approach to meeting the growing demands for leisure space in colonial Kenya. Clubs emphasized a form of leisure that was predicated on exclusivity and membership. As the population of Nairobi and Mombasa expanded and further diversified, so did the number of claims for land to establish such clubs or exclusive rights to playing fields. Urban residents' demands for land to establish new clubs conflicted with emerging spatial requirements for housing, industry, and transportation, ultimately requiring the state to reconsider this principle.

The prominence of clubs underscored the racial, class, and cultural stratifications of colonial urban Kenya. Settlers sought to socially and culturally reproduce the familiar metropolises of Europe within a distinctively colonial landscape. Their vision, however, relied on the unrealistic presumption that it could exclude races they deemed unworthy of urban citizenship. By the 1930s and 1940s, the administration was clearly, albeit begrudgingly,

recognizing the presence of non-European populations within the urban landscape. Asian groups and Africans alike demanded greater access to the city and rights to urban space. They also sought clubs, sporting fields, recreational centers, and other lands of leisure. The state's attempt to create such venues, through Indian community clubs, native stadiums, and sport grounds, reflected its growing recognition of the permanence of non-Europeans in urban space. European society, moreover, was itself stratified by rank of office, social class, and gender of which the state struggled to accommodate. The vast number of clubs in Nairobi and Mombasa underscored the multitude of constituencies demanding urban space. The state handled these demands the best way it knew how; mediating difference through allocation of land.

CHAPTER 2

THE “LINKS” OF LAND AND POWER: GOLF, EUROPEAN LEISURE, AND LANDSCAPE MEANINGS IN KIBERA

Kibera, Kenya’s most renowned “slum,” neighbors the Royal Nairobi Golf Club, one of the country’s most prestigious golf courses. Today, a concrete wall separates the well-manicured greens and sprawling fairways from the neighboring mud and corrugated metal roofed houses. For many contemporary observers, the juxtaposition between Kibera and the golf course has exemplified Nairobi’s “city of extremes,” characterized by visible inequalities between the urban rich and poor.¹ Rye Barcott, for example, noted the drastic contrasts between the golf club and the adjacent neighborhood:

I stopped to photograph one of Kenya’s most jarring contrasts, where a ten-foot cinder block wall separated Kibera from the Royal Nairobi Golf Club, the city’s oldest golf course. Every day, tens of thousands of residents walking to work passed this two-hundred-yard stretch of manicured lawn with its dapper golfers. A playground for Kenya’s elite, the course came with a sweeping view of extreme poverty.²

The golf course, according to Barcott’s description, symbolized the broader economic disparities dividing the urban poor and elites in Kenya. Concrete walls, however, often mask the intricate and dynamic associations between the spaces they separate; the golf course and Kibera maintained a decades-long connection with each other, characterized by negotiations over territory, as well as the fluid boundaries of culture. The proximity and relationship between the golf club and Kibera developed through the extensions and limitations of state power, the consumptive demands of Nairobi’s settler population, as well as the continued struggles of African communities for inclusion into the city.³

¹ Martin Murray, *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

² Rye Barcott, *It Happened on the Way to War: A Marine’s Path to Peace* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 73.

³ See Frederick Cooper, “Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labor in Africa,” in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa.*, edited by Frederick Cooper and Luise White (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 7–50.

The previous chapter outlined how diverse interests shaped the development of Kenya's burgeoning townships through the establishment of clubs and golf courses. This chapter documents a yearlong court case between the Nairobi Golf Club (NGC), and several Nubian families of Kings African Rifles (KAR) veterans. In 1928, the government leased the NGC 217 acres for its expansion from nine to eighteen holes. The lease required the eviction of several Sudanese families who had been occupying the land since Kibera's origination as a military reserve. The evicted residents acquired a lawyer and took to the colonial court system to defend their homes and *shambas* (farms). The conflict between the Sudanese families of Kibera and the NGC highlighted the social and political conflicts that resulted from multiple claims over urban landscapes. This dispute took place as the Kenyan state sought to control growing urban African populations that were gradually encroaching into the "European" spaces of city.⁴ Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, the government undertook sweeping demolitions of urban "squatter settlements," the largest of which occurred in Pangani village in 1936.⁵ Before Pangani, the KAR settlement in Kibera was the focal point of the state's efforts to curtail growing African urban settlements.⁶ The state's engagement with the Nubian community of Kibera, however, transpired differently than its engagement with African populations elsewhere; as former soldiers of the Empire, the Nubians were able to maintain a moral and legal claim to Kibera, which made them more impervious to removal.

⁴ See, Jennifer Robinson, "A Perfect System of Control'? State Power and 'Native Locations' in South Africa," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 8 (1990): 136-160.

⁵ Luise White, "A Colonial State and an African Petty Bourgeoisie: Prostitution, Property, and Class and the Struggle for Nairobi, 1936-1940," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Luise White (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 178.

⁶ Ibid.

The present scholarship on Kenyan cities has emphasized the elaborate systems of control and rigid bye-laws that made Nairobi an enclave of white settlement.⁷ While municipal codes aimed to restrict Africans' presence to the outskirts of town, this system became much more porous than municipal authorities desired.⁸ John Lonsdale noted that, "African unskilled workers and artisans slept all over Nairobi, wherever they could put up a shanty, find shelter, or move in unobserved in suburban servants' quarters."⁹ Africans frustrated state and municipal authorities by resisting pass-laws, building shanty structures, renting out dwelling spaces, as well as other mechanisms that asserted their presence within the urban landscape.¹⁰ The municipality's own expansion into African territory further complicated the boundaries between European and African space. By shifting municipal boundaries into areas of African settlements, administrators had to grapple with the possible inclusion of African peoples into the European zones of urban space.

Golf courses have been sources of acrimonious conflicts over space and land-use.¹¹ The famous efforts of a First Nation society to combat the expansion of a luxury golf course near

⁷ There has been much written on Nairobi's history of racial segregation. See David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 181-84. Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna, *Interpreting Nairobi: The Cultural Study of Built Forms* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen, 1996), 205; Herbert Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study in Nairobi* (New York: Africana Publishing House, 1974); Godwin R. Murunga, "Inherently Unhygienic Races: Plague and the Origins of Settler Dominance in Nairobi, 1899-1907," in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, ed. Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 98-130; Milcah Amolo Achola, "Colonial Policy and Urban Health: The Case of Colonial Nairobi," *Azania* 36 (2000): 119-37.

⁸ Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Cooper "Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labor in Africa."

⁹ John Lonsdale, "Town Life in Colonial Kenya," *Azania* 36, no. 1 (2001): 221.

¹⁰ Maynard Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony 1900-1909," *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387-410.

¹¹ Globally there have been a number of land disputes involving golf clubs infringing on the rights of indigenous communities. For a few examples of such conflicts, see "Land Disputes Put Golf Course on Hold," *Vietnam Investment Review* (2004); Anton Lucas, "The Cimacan Golf Course Dispute since the New Order," in *Land for the People: The State and Agrarian Conflict in Indonesia*, edited by Anton Lucas and Carole Warren (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 114-148.

Quebec, Canada highlighted the conflicts between the consumptive interests of hegemonic groups and the rights of indigenous societies.¹² Golf courses linked matters of power, leisure and consumption, and land. Golf is a game that is traditionally played in vast, outdoor settings; the production of scenic, natural landscapes is a significant feature of golf courses and an important appeal of the game. Geoffrey Cousins, in his history of golf in Great Britain, contended that the golfer sought a “pleasant landscape, suitable subsoil, and natural features in place of suburban dullness and artificiality.”¹³ As the Nairobi municipality expanded, its settler population viewed the four-thousand acre KAR reserve as valuable land for development of European housing and new recreational amenities. The development of the golf course, however, first necessitated the physical separation between the land and the people living there. Roderick Neumann, Jan Bendler Setler, and Amanda Lewis, in their respective histories of conservation and natural park creation, delineated the connections between landscape production and the alienation of local peoples.¹⁴ Conflicts over land access, as this chapter will highlight, also extended into the human environments of Kenya’s burgeoning townships. As officials and settlers sought to create new spaces that would give them relaxation, leisure, and relief from the sprawl of the city, they found themselves in increasing contact with the African peoples living in these spaces.

Landscapes were not only contested, but also negotiated; these negotiations took place through multiple mediums and dimensions, both material and cultural. The legal conflict

¹² Henry Swain, *Oka: A Political Crisis and Its Legacy* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991). The state’s deployment of the military to support the removal of the Mohawk from the contested territory resulted in two deaths and created a public relations crisis for the Canadian government.

¹³ Geoffrey Cousins, *Golf in Britain: A Social History from the Beginnings to the Present Day* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 90.

¹⁴ Roderick P. Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles Over Livelihood and Natural Preservation in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Jan B. Shetler, *Imagining Serengeti: A History of Landscape Memory in Tanzania from Earliest Times to the Present* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007); Amanda E. Lewis, “Amboseli Landscapes : Maasai Pastoralism, Wildlife Conservation, and Natural Resource Management in Kenya, 1944-Present” (Michigan State University, 2015).

between the Nubian occupants and the NGC marked the beginning of a decades long social and cultural relationship between the two areas. When I began my visits to Kibera in early 2014, I fully anticipated narratives emphasizing the conflicts between locals and the neighboring golf course. Most respondents, however, stressed the Nubians' relationship with the golf club in terms of cooperation and their mutual athletic interests.; many of their fathers had earned livings as caddies and groundskeepers, becoming skilled golfers in their own right. Through their labor and athletic talents, Nubians gradually infused themselves into European social and cultural domains, shifting the terrain of negotiation from the courtroom to the fairways. The early success of the Nubian community as caddies and golfers portended the broader integration of Africans into urban space and previously exclusive domains of European leisure. Although the government had initially envisioned the extension of the NGC into Kibera as fortifying the boundaries between the European municipality and its peripheral African settlements, Nubians' athletic advancements muddled the boundaries between African space and the enclaves of European culture.

Finally, an underlying, but significant, issue of this chapter is the multitude of institutions and bureaucracies involved in this conflict, which included the golf club management, the land administration, government commissions, district and provincial officers, municipal councils, the colonial court system, and finally the Nubian community itself. Building on recent trends in literature, this chapter underscores the ideological incongruences within the multiple institutions and bureaucracies that made up colonial rule.¹⁵ State bureaucracies were neither the efficient, organized, and effective systems that they purported to be.¹⁶ The issue of compensation and

¹⁵ For a particularly seminal work posing this argument, see Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Tim Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

resettlement, instituted by the 1933 Kenyan Land Commission, undermined the unity between the interests of the government and the golf club in their seemingly shared pursuit of evicting the Nubians. The multitude of institutions and forms of bureaucracies involved in the Nubian's land case undermined state administrators' monolithic control over the production of space. The curtailment of African settlements and the reaffirmation of European control of urban space predominated the discourse and policies of Kenya's cities throughout the 1920s and 1930s; however, the state's entanglement with multiple and often competing policy principles, obligations, and relationships significantly undermined the clarity and implementation of this vision.

KIBERA, LEISURE, AND NAIROBI'S EXPANDING MUNICIPALITY, 1906-1933

Between the years 1912 and 1935, Nubian settlements in Kibera developed in close apposition with the Nairobi Golf Club (NGC). The two spaces originated within a few years from each other. Despite their proximity in terms of both chronology and space, Kibera and the NGC represented two distinct utilizations of land. For Nubian former soldiers, Kibera represented a final place for them to settle, establish families, build livelihoods, and reproduce the communities and cultures of their homes in Sudan. Nairobi's European settler community viewed the area around Kibera as a vast, attractive outdoor landscape, well-suited for sport and leisure. These different interpretations of environment set the stage for conflicts over space and territory, particularly when the NGC expanded the size of its links. The development of Kibera and the NGC coincided with the state's efforts to control African settlements. As the state became more aligned with the interests of European settlers after the First World War, it adopted a more antagonistic attitude towards African populations in urban centers and townships.

Kibera, which is a translation of the Nubian word “Kibra,” meaning “forests,” emerged as an African settlement during the years following the completion of the British conquest of East Africa. The British, lacking the manpower to provide security for the Kenya-Uganda railway and subdue local resistance, relied heavily on the support of Sudanese regiments.¹⁷ In lieu of pensions, the British Government began allowing decommissioned KAR soldiers to settle on a four-thousand-acre reserve on the outskirts of Nairobi.¹⁸ As Sudanese expatriates, the former soldiers fell into the category of “detribalized natives,” lacking a local homeland to which they could return to after decommission. According to Timothy Parsons, the first waves of settlers were “survivors and widows of the Sudanese askaris, who were later “joined by other Sudanese veterans who had been evicted from their settlements near Machakos and Kiambu that same year.”¹⁹ In 1912, the KAR dispensed permits to 291 veterans and their families; each recipient of a permit had accumulated at least twelve years of service. These “shamba passes” allowed veterans to live and farm on the land free of rent, as “a form of unofficial pension.”²⁰ The government officially designated Kibera a military reserve in 1917, establishing a northern boundary up to Ngong Road “at the bridge below the golf links.”²¹

The settlement of Kibera by a handful of expatriated veterans and their families was not initially a social threat to Nairobi’s settler population; Nairobi was, at this point, still small and clustered mainly around the railway depot and the upper hill region. Officials saw Kibera as a

¹⁷ For a history of the origins of the KAR and their role in the East African campaigns see Malcolm Page, *KAR: A History of the King’s African Rifles* (London: Leo Cooper, 1998); Mervyn Hill, *Permanent Way: The Story of the Kenya Uganda Railway* (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbors, 1950), 283; Marcia Wright, “East Africa, 1870-1905,” in *Cambridge History of Africa*, ed. Roland Oliver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 539–85.

¹⁸ Timothy Parsons, “‘Kibra Is Our Blood’: The Sudanese Military Legacy in Nairobi’s Kibera Location, 1902-1968,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30, no. 1 (1997): 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Legal Notice No 686, *The Official Gazette of the Protectorate of Kenya*, July 10, 1918.

remote and unideal territory in terms of physical development. At just over four thousand acres, the allocation of Kibera to African veterans paled in comparison to the 500,000 acres the government apportioned to its European veterans under the 1919 Soldier Settlement Scheme.²² Kibera was a form of pension on the cheap that allowed the administration to satisfy its obligation to its Sudanese veterans through access to a cache of dispensable lands, rather than enduring financial payments. Kibera nonetheless provided a space where former soldiers, following their discharge from the army, could “peacefully” settle with their families, raise cattle, and cultivate agriculture.²³

By 1963, Nubian settlers had established thirteen distinct villages, each with their own affiliation to a particular clan or village in Sudan.²⁴ Ismail Ramdan, a descendent of one of the original KAR settlers of Kibera, estimated that the average homestead size was “about five acres to one family,” with some families receiving up to fifteen acres.²⁵ Land distribution operated mainly under a usufruct system, with a committee of elders, in corroboration with military authorities, determining allocations. While people engaged in multiple economic activities, subsistence agricultural was the most frequent utilization of the land. Ismail explained, “People had their own food from the land and, when they kept livestock, produced milk from them. They

²² C.J. Duder, “‘Men of the Officer Class’: The Participants in the 1919 Soldier Settlement Scheme in Kenya,” *African Affairs* 92, no. 366 (1993), 70. The social relationship between imperial powers and African conscripts has been a matter of attention in scholarship. See Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5& 215.; Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991). For specific discussion of the KAR see Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of Colonial Military Service in the King’s African Rifles, 1902-1964* (Athens: James Currey, 1999).

²³ Community Rights Forum of Kibra, *a Presentation to Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission* (TJRC) (Community Rights Forum of Kibra, 2012), 12-13; Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Nairobi’s Self Help City* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), 96.

²⁴ Ismail Ramadan, interview by author, Nairobi, February 9, 2014.

²⁵ Ibid.

had more than they needed and the rest was sold to other members of the community.”²⁶ Captain B.F. Montgomery, during his testimony to the Kenyan Land Commission, admired the ways in which the veterans had developed their homesteads, remarking, “Every man has his own plot. It is well worth it. It is extraordinary the way they retain their military customs and routine. The plots are all very clean and well laid out. It is very good land. Each man has his, but round it he has his shamba and keeps goats as well.”²⁷

In addition to their multiple economic and agricultural activities, Nubian residents set aside portions of their land for community open spaces and leisure. “There were plenty of open spaces when I was growing up,” recounted Yusuf Diab, who grew up in Kibera during the late 1940s and 1950s.²⁸ Yusuf remembered spacious landscapes where he spent his days hunting, swimming, and playing football.²⁹ Homesteads typically provided space for relaxation, hosting guests, and children’s play (see figure 3.1). Nubians also apportioned spaces for community gatherings, graveyards, ceremonies, and for worship.³⁰ The development of such spaces, Ismail Ramadan explained, occurred through donations “from different families, bordering the area that was ideal for particular activities.”³¹ During periods of drought, food shortages, or diseases, members of the community gathered in a large open space in one of villages to sacrifice a goat or cow. This ritual preceded a large community feast, complete with drums, singing, and dancing³²

Although these particular memories occurred in the years after the Nubians’ dispute with the NGC, they built on local informal oral traditions, emphasizing ideals of home, community,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ B.F. Montgomery, *Kenya Land Commission Evidence Vol 2* (Nairobi: Government Press, 1933), 1153.

²⁸ Yusuf Diab, interview by author, Nairobi, February 27, 2014.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Jamaldin Yahya, interview by author, Nairobi, February 3, 2014.

³¹ Ismail Ramadan, interview by author.

³² Ibid.



Figure 3.1: Childhood photo of Adab Rajab at his family's shamba c. 1950s. Photo courtesy Adab Rajab.

domesticity, and posterity. Many interviewees reminded me that the Nubians were a diasporic community that originated in Sudan, not in Kenya. The physical production of homesteads and community grounds gave local residents connection and sentiments of autochthony to the area. Ibrahim Amber stressed this particular point when he told me, “A home is a homestead, a piece of land belonging to somebody where he will have his house. And if he is married he will make it his home. And, in that place, there are all the necessities of his need. When we were young, a lot of food came from our land. That is why we are stronger than the children we bear.”³³ Amber, a third generation settler, affirmed the importance of land to the memories of Kibera's residents. His grandfather had constructed his family's “ancestral home,” on a large ten-acre compound, planting a mango tree that still bears fruit today.³⁴ Amber demonstrated a form of autochthony

³³ Ibrahim Amber, interview by author, Nairobi, February 5, 2014.

³⁴ Ibid.

that was grounded in settlement and creation, rather than origination; Nubian respondents saw their cultural connection to Kibera as deriving from their ancestors' physical production of the landscape, i.e. through their creation of homesteads, shambas, burial grounds, and community spaces that established a semblance of home.

The Nubians' settlement of Kibera coincided with the development of the NGC. As the previous chapter outlined, by the 1910s, the colonial state faced a multitude of demands for new recreational spaces. Golf was a particularly popular pastime among Kenya's European community. By 1912, Kenya boasted no fewer than six golf courses, as well as an annual championship. When Prince Edward of Wales toured the East African colonies in 1928 and 1930, a friendly game of golf with local settlers was frequently a highlight of his visits to various settler townships.³⁵ Golf was popular in Kenyan towns because it provided a relatively easy and relaxing game within a natural and aseptically pleasing outdoor landscape. Bertram Francis Gurdon described golf's appeal to Nairobi settlers, proclaiming, "It is a game especially suitable to those who are working in the capital. The official or business man usually leaves his work about four, and has just comfortable time for a cup of tea and a round of golf amid beautiful air and surroundings."³⁶ Unlike hunting safaris, which often required weeks long time investment, golf allowed for city dwellers to commute a few kilometers after work, find sport and relaxation in a country setting, and then return to their homes in the city by supper.

The NGC, founded in 1906, was the jewel of Kenya's golf clubs (See figure 3.2). Gurdon, highlighted the course's various features, proclaiming, "A bird's-eye view of the town is obtained on one side and the N'gong forest skirts the other, while on a clear day Kilimanjaro to

³⁵ Edward Windsor and Patrick R. Chalmers, *Sport and Travel in East Africa; an Account of Two Visits, 1928 and 1930* (London: P. Allan, 1934).

³⁶ Bertram Francis Gurdon, 2nd Baron of Cranworth, *Colony in the Making: Sport and Profit in British East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 339.



Figure 3.2: The fairways of the Nairobi Golf Club, c. 1933. National Museums of Kenya.

the south-west and [Mount] Kenya to the east reveal their snowclad peaks.”³⁷ The imagination of landscape was central to Gurdon’s description. The appeal of the NGC was that it harmoniously skirted the boundaries between town and country, allowing townsmen to find temporary escape from the confines of the city. The golf club and its members saw the occasional presence of the KAR veterans as adding to the physical environment of the golf course. Gurdon boastfully recounted an incident in which a lion brutally mauled a KAR soldier on the NGC’s fairways.³⁸ His point was to accentuate the golf course’s coexistence with abundant nature and exotic wildlife and people, which promised golfers an experience of

³⁷ Ibid., 340.

³⁸ Ibid., 340.

adventure. The poor soldier himself became a fixture of a romantic and bucolic African landscape.

In 1916, the club faced a financial crisis, as many of the club's male members returned to Europe to participate in the First World War. In order to stay financially afloat, the club allowed women to become playing members. Membership rebounded during the years after the war, as "enthusiastic golfers joined the club and proceeded to assist the earlier members with such vigor and goodwill that a successful future to the club became assured."³⁹ The club's expanding membership required additional space. Territorially, golf was among the most consumptive of European pastimes; most professional-standard golf courses consist of eighteen holes, not including space for a driving range and club house. Even when the NGC was only a nine-hole course, it utilized 216 acres of land.⁴⁰ Despite the extent of its territory, the club's members determined that "the space and the facilities of the club were completely inadequate to cope with current demands made on it."⁴¹ During the 1910s, the military reserve posed a physical barrier to the club's development. R.W. Hooper, for example, wrote that the extension of the KAR lines had required the club to acrimoniously "redesign its nine-hole layout."⁴²

By the late 1920s, the colonial government began to reconsider the status of Kibera and discussed options to relocate the African population living there. In 1928, the KAR transferred its control of Kibera to the civil administration, which saw the Nubian population living there more as uncontrolled "natives," than veterans. Sydney Hubert La Fontaine, the Provincial Commissioner (PC) of Kikuyu, argued that "the removal of the Nubian residents from Kibera

³⁹ R.W. Hooper, *Game of Golf in East Africa* (London: W. Boyd, 1953), 30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴¹ Royal Nairobi Golf Club History. This is an online document accessible via the Royal Nairobi Golf Club's website, <http://www.royalnairobigc.com/about-us/our-history.html>.

⁴² Hooper, *Game of Golf in East Africa*, 33.

(sic) must be dealt with energetically and finally now.”⁴³ Nairobi’s District Commissioner (DC), E.B. Hosking, while ceding a moral obligation to the former soldiers, characterized Kibera as in a state of moral degeneration due to mixed marriage and corruption of soldiers’ offspring. He declared, “The old Nubi is a man to whom the colony owes much, but the second generation and the hybrids arising from mixed unions are degenerate and usually a disgrace to their fathers.”⁴⁴

The racial anxieties of Nairobi’s European settler population drove the government’s change in attitude regarding Kibera. After the end of the First World War, as Robert Maxon delineated, Kenya’s colonial government became increasingly aligned with its settler population, beginning with the installation of General Edward Northey, who had commanded the British forces in Nyasaland during the war.⁴⁵ Across Kenya, settler dominated township councils rigidly enforced sanitation codes and residential byelaws that restricted African populations to a few designated zones.⁴⁶ In 1922, the Nairobi Municipality established Pumwani as the single recognized “native location” in the town. The government followed with the clearing of three African villages, Kaburini, Mombasa, and Masikini.⁴⁷ In 1926, the state again exercised its powers when it cleared another Sudanese settlement at Kileleshwa to make way for a European suburb.⁴⁸ The report of the 1927 Local Government Commission resulted in a significant expansion of the Nairobi Municipality, extending up to the boundaries of Kibera (See figure 3.3).⁴⁹ While Kibera had once offered the government a convenient solution to compensation of

⁴³ S.H. La Fontaine, PC Kikuyu, to CLGLS, August 10, 1931, KNA, VQ1/1/136.

⁴⁴ E.B. Hosking, DC Nairobi, to CLGLS, May 13, 1931, KNA, VQ1/1/136.

⁴⁵ Robert Maxon, *Struggle for Kenya: The Loss and Reassertion of Imperial Initiative, 1912-1923* (Rutherford NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993), 128-190.

⁴⁶ See Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 38-41; Murunga, “Inherently Unhygienic Races.”

⁴⁷ Government of Kenya Colony, *Report of the Local Government Commission* (London, Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1927), 15.

⁴⁸ White, *Comforts of Home*, 48; Parsons, “Kibra is our Blood,” 91.

⁴⁹ Government of Kenya Colony, *Report of the Local Government Commission*, 16.

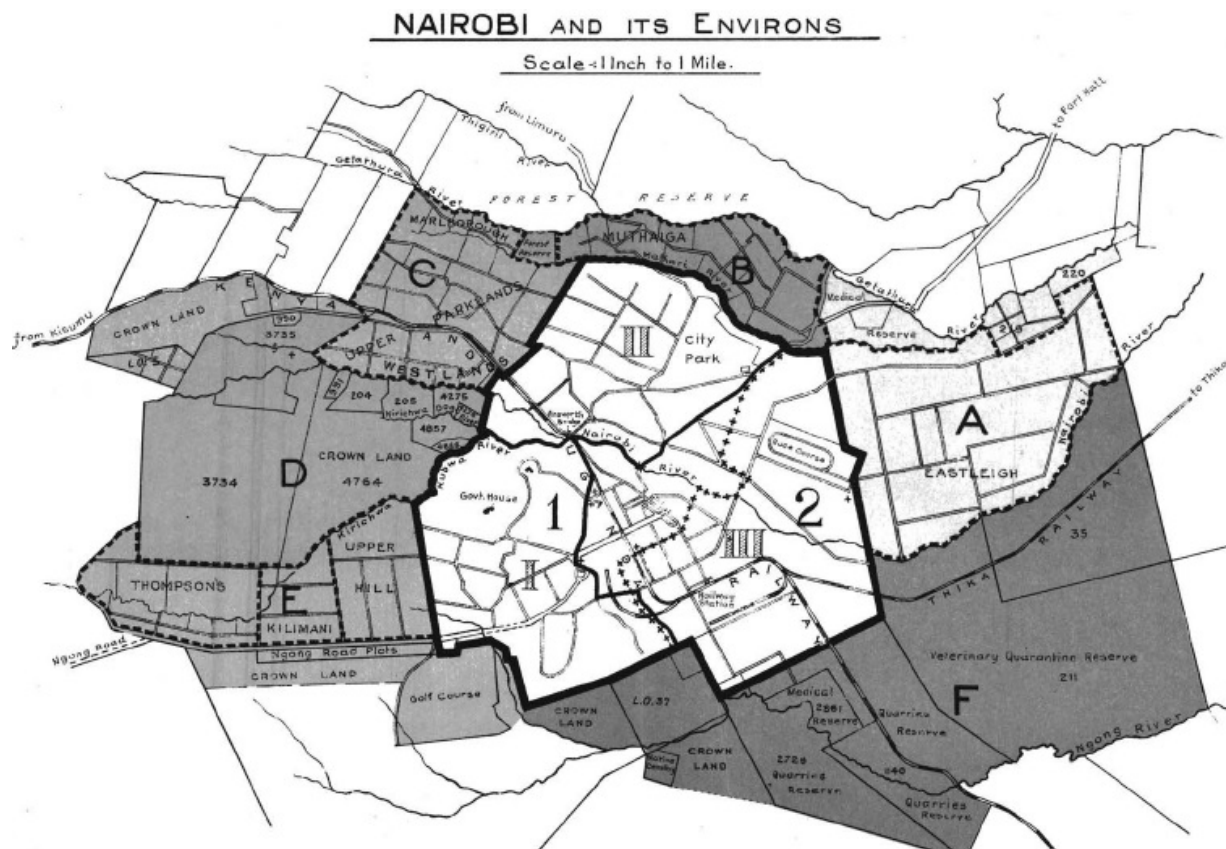


Figure 3.3: Nairobi and its Environs 1927. Report of the Local Government Commission. London, Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1927.

its African soldiers, Nairobi's settler community regarded the area as an uncontrolled "native settlement" that threatened the stability of the town. Nairobi's Commissioner of Police, Roy Godfrey Bullen Spicer, condemned Kibera as a socially unstable area exclaiming, "Kibera, as it is today, has a pernicious influence on Nairobi; its geographical position covering this vast area and the nature of the ground make it impossible to control."⁵⁰ The younger generation of Nubians, he concluded was a "degenerate and a bad type of native, who is merely battenning on his parents and to a large extent on the Nairobi public."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Roy Godfrey Bullen Spicer, Commissioner of Police, to CLGLS, June 5, 1931, KNA, VQ/1/136.

⁵¹ Ibid.

While racial anxieties predominated the government's evaluation of Kibera, material motives also influenced officials' intentions to remove the Nubians from the area. As demand for urban land increased in Nairobi, officials saw Kibera, with its four-thousand acres, as potentially valuable land for housing and development. La Fontaine posited that "the expenditure involved in building residences for these [Nubian residents] prior to their eviction from Kibira (sic) would be balanced by the profit that would accrue to Government from the area of valuable building land thus made available."⁵² Hosking offered a similar assessment, bluntly declaring that the four-thousand acres inhabited by the "Nubi time-expired *askaris*" constituted a free use of "what is really valuable building land."⁵³ These statements demonstrate that while principles of segregation drove the state's efforts to remove the Nubian population from Kibera, pragmatic rationalities of land utilization and infrastructural development also significantly shaped administrators' interest in the area. Kibera was simply too valuable to be left in the hands of an African community, regardless of their past contributions to the British Empire.

State and municipal officials adopted a position of treating the Nubian population the same as other communities of "detribalized natives," emphasizing their relocation to the designated "municipal zones" for African settlement.⁵⁴ Officials, however, moved much more cautiously in their efforts to clear Kibera than they had with other African settlements. While some expansion had certainly occurred, Kibera was, at this point, still sparsely and heterogeneously populated, with most of the households having either direct or familial connection to the 291 plot holders.⁵⁵ Government officials were accordingly wary of assuming too aggressive of a posture. When it became clear that the Nubian veterans would ardently resist

⁵² S.H. La Fontaine to CLGLS.

⁵³ DC Nairobi, to CLGLS, May 13, 1931, KNA, VQ1/1/136.

⁵⁴ Roy Godfrey Bullen Spicer to CLGLS.

⁵⁵ Timothy Parsons, "Kibra is our Blood," 91.

relocation to Pumwani, Nairobi's Native Affairs Officer recommended granting the Nubians a separate reserve further outside of Nairobi.⁵⁶ Hosking reiterated this position, stressing the importance of allowing Nubians to continue to "enjoy some of the amenities of town life without being a burden on the town."⁵⁷

Even despite these attempts at compromise, administrators found that the Nubian population was firm in its resistance to relocation or capitulation to state control. The Municipal Native Affairs Officer expressed his frustration after meeting with Nubian elders to discuss relocation, bemoaning, "I can get no guidance from the natives concerned, who simply say they would find it impossible to live outside Nairobi in their old age."⁵⁸ In 1931, government officials convened a meeting with Kibera residents to announce plans to demarcate "legitimate plot holders," whom had rights to reside in Kibera. The officials decreed that "each man" with permission to reside in the area would receive a numbered disk that they would fix to the door of their houses. The officials, moreover, made the right to settle in Kibera contingent on demonstrating respectability and good behavior; if convicted of a crime, a resident would forfeit his disk and "right to live in the reserve."⁵⁹ The Nubian attendees at the meeting responded to the administrators' decrees with consternation and protest.⁶⁰ Regarding their settlement in Kibera, as an essential right, not a conditional privilege, the veterans viewed the administrators' proposals as intrusive and demeaning. Most offensive to the veterans, was the administrators' proclamation that their tenure of land would expire upon their deaths and not carry over to their progeny.⁶¹ They responded by telling the officials that the land "had been given to them and their descendants in perpetuity"

⁵⁶ Municipal Native Affairs, Nairobi, Officer to DC Nairobi, May 30, 1931, KNA, VQ1/1/136.

⁵⁷ E.B. Hosking, DC Nairobi, to CLGLS, May 13, 1931, KNA, VQ1/1/136.

⁵⁸ Municipal Affairs Officer to DC Nairobi.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ DC Nairobi, to PC Nyeri, April 27, 1931, KNA, VQ1/1/136.

and demanded that the government “either leave them in peace to pursue their own way of living without Police interference...or repatriate them back to the Sudan.”⁶²

The government, meanwhile, made other moves to advance its agenda concerning Kibera. In 1927, the government approved an additional allotment of 213 acres to allow the NGC to expand from nine-holes to eighteen. This allotment significantly expanded the NGC’s territory to a combined total of 429 acres.⁶³ The club’s plans for expansion required the eventual removal of several Nubian plot holders who were using the land for their homesteads and farms. The expansion of the golf club reflected growing demands on the part of Nairobi’s European population for new spaces of leisure. The government, moreover, regarded the expansion of the NGC as the initial step to the municipality’s expansion into the area. By granting the land to the NGC, the government exercised its prerogative to clear Kibera, believing that the golf club would ultimately see to the Nubians’ removal. The NGC, however, delayed its plans for expansion because of financial constraints; while the golf club, working with military authorities, removed a handful of occupants, the NGC elected to allow most of the families to continue residing on the land, while it pursued the necessary capital to undertake its renovations.

The “Kibera Question” contributed significantly to the investigations of the 1933 Kenyan Land Commission, a commission which the government established to resolve multiple conflicts concerning settlement and land allocation throughout Kenya. Nairobi officials’ testimonies to the commission made clear their interest in purging the African population from Kibera. C.H. Adams, who succeeded Hosking as the DC of Nairobi, acknowledged the government’s previous commitment to its former soldiers. He nonetheless questioned the veterans’ claim that the state had granted the land to them for perpetuity, arguing, “There never was any promise that they and

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Alec Lindsay Bashford, Letter to Attorney General, August 26, 1936, KNA, BN/72/1.

their decedents should be allowed to reside there in perpetuity and there is no such obligation on the Government.”⁶⁴ The government added that many of the original soldiers had either died or resettled elsewhere, leaving their plots to their offspring or relatives.⁶⁵ Other officials went as far as to question whether the government had even intended Kibera to be a form of compensation for military service. E.B. Hosking argued in his testimony to the commission that military authorities had established the reserve primarily as “a recruiting ground for the future.”⁶⁶ In this regard, he concluded, Kibera had outlived its purpose. Captain Montgomery, representing the military’s position, reported that the area had transformed from a useful training ground into a “native settlement,” with intermarriages and “tembo” production. He doubted whether the area could be “a success as a potential recruiting area now.”⁶⁷

Representatives of the Nubian community had the opportunity to present their perspective before the Land Commission. The Nubians emphatically maintained their rights over Kibera, citing the moral obligation of the British Empire to uphold their access to the land. Alluding to their military service, the veterans proclaimed, “The lands were given to us and our decedents as a pension and in recognition of our services. Some of us came down from Uganda with Lord Lugard and others were recruited in the Sudan; and we were told that Kibira (sic) should be ours in perpetuity and that Government wished us to settle it and not to return us to our native country.”⁶⁸ The veterans, regarded the government’s efforts to remove them not only in

⁶⁴ C.H. Adams, qtd. in *Kenya Land Commission Evidence Vol 2*, 1145-1146; Parsons, “Kibra is Our Blood,” 95.

⁶⁵ B.F. Montgomery, qtd. in *Kenya Land Commission Evidence Vol 2*, 1153.

⁶⁶ Mr. E.B. Hosking, qtd in *Kenya Land Commission Evidence Vol 2*, 1153.

⁶⁷ B.F. Montgomery, *Kenya Land Commission Evidence*, 1153.

⁶⁸ Aminalla Mohamed, Juma Kibanda , Sadala Salim, Absura Salim, Amber Musta, Absura Burkeif, “Memorandum of Ex-Soldiers Kings African Rifles,” *Kenya Land Commission Evidence Vol 2*.

terms of reneged promises and obligations, but as threat to their posterity and livelihoods.⁶⁹

Kibera had become the adopted home for the Nubian soldiers who saw the area as a place where they could establish livelihoods, bequeath property on their decedents, and build communities.

In its final report, the Kenyan Land Commission gave credence to both the positions of the government and the Nubian settlers. On the one hand, the commission reaffirmed the state's moral commitment to the Nubian soldiers, stating that there was "no doubt" that the allocation of Kibera to the Nubians derived from "a moral obligation either to repatriate them or find them homes in the country."⁷⁰ The commission nonetheless concluded that "it was certainly not intended that the whole area should be devoted to the military cantonment."⁷¹ The commission defined the occupants of Kibera as "tenants of the Crown," who's tenancy was "liable to termination at any time." The commission, however outlined specific terms by which the government would need to compensate the Nubian settlers for lost homes, cultivation, and grazing upon their resettlement. Such terms also directed the government to provide comparable land for the former soldiers to resettle.⁷²

The report of the Kenyan Land Commission, rather than providing a conclusion to the conflicts over Kibera, set the stage for the 1936 legal contest between the NGC, the government, and the Nubian settlers. Colonial administrators viewed the report's conclusions as a license to implement their plans for removing the Nubian community. The efforts of the NGC and its membership to expand their golf course represented, in the government's eyes, a useful starting point for the ultimate whole-sale eradication of Kibera's Nubian villages. The Nubians, however,

⁶⁹ Parsons, "Kibra is Our Blood," 92. These discourses were similar to those of West African veterans. See Mann, *Native Sons*, 215.

⁷⁰ Kenya Land Commission *Report of the Kenya Land Commission, 1932-1933 Vol 1* (Nairobi: Government Press 1933).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

likewise interpreted the findings of the Kenyan Land Commission to give credence to their own rights to the area. At the center of the ensuing conflict, as this section has delineated, were distinctly contrasting and competing perspectives on the physical environment. On the one hand Kibera represented ample territory for the development of new lands of leisure, catering to the outdoor enjoyment of Nairobi's European population. This vision, however, was contingent on the physical removal of the Nubians who, through their own production of homesteads and community grounds, had made Kibera their home.

THE LAND CASE 1936-1937

By 1936, the Nairobi Golf Club had acquired the capital to implement its plans for expansion. While the club had previously delayed evicting most of the Nubian occupants residing on the land, they began to seek their removal from the area. The remaining families, which amounted to approximately ten-twelve households, refused to vacate and instead acquired the assistance of an attorney. The Nubian families maintained that they, not the golf club, had rights to the land, denying the authority of the NGC to remove them. The NGC, on the guidance of the government, filed a civil suit to formally evict the Nubian settlers. The plot holders' refusal to vacate and the efforts of the NGC to evict them, set in motion an intricate yearlong court struggle, which involved the evictees, the management of the golf club, and the administration. This section underlines the incongruities within the colonial administration and land system, and how the government's multiple entanglements and competing interests undermined its control over territory and management of urban space.

Compensation emerged as a central issue of the case, disrupting the unity between the state and the NGC's respective interests. Under the terms of the 1927 lease agreement, the NGC

was responsible for compensating any displaced Nubian households.⁷³ In 1927, the golf club paid eight shamba owners at a flat rate of SH 700, under the terms of its lease. In 1933, however, the Kenyan Land Commission, recommended an elaborate formula to determine compensation, based on a combination of household value, livestock holdings, and agricultural production. Several of the proposed evicted families had, since the start of the NGC's lease, enhanced their homesteads and livestock holdings, thereby significantly increasing their value under the Land Commission's formula. The NGC, when filing their suit to evict the Nubian occupants, adopted a complicated and contradictory position, postulating that the evictees held legal rights to the land.⁷⁴ The Nubian plot holders, in the golf club's view, were the unfortunate victims of the government's mismanagement of land granting procedures; the golf club nevertheless maintained its own rights to the territory, insisting that the government make financial amends with the occupants. Such a position derived primarily from the golf club's own pragmatic interests, rather than genuine concern for the rights of the evictees; according to the golf club's logic, if the Nubian plot holders had legal rights to the land, then the government, not the golf club, would be responsible for their compensation.

The government rejoined that the golf club, as lessees of the land, had the financial obligation to remove and compensate displaced plot holders.⁷⁵ The government, moreover, contended that the golf club's procrastination in evicting the Nubian occupants was the cause of its current financial predicament.⁷⁶ The golf club had allowed the occupants to develop their properties to such an extent that compensation had become logistically difficult and financially burdensome. These divisions escalated during the weeks leading up to the trial. Delany and

⁷³ Alec Lindsay Bashford to Attorney General.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ DC Nairobi, to CLGLS, C. May 1937, KNA, BN/70/1.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Stratton, the NGC's attorneys, forewarned administrators that the club would hold the government "responsible" for "all damages suffered by reason" of the Nubians continued occupation and efforts to remove them.⁷⁷ Charles Mortimer, the Commissioner of Local Government, responded, with a short and tersely worded disputation of the accuracy of Delany and Stratton's claims.⁷⁸ The administration and the NGC, while ultimately united in their goals of removing the Nubians, sought to shift financial responsibility for undertaking the task on to each other.

In late 1936, the NGC and the evicted plot holders went to trial. The Nubians' case hinged on two main contentions. First, they cited their previous relationship with the government as former soldiers; the government, they contended, had accorded the Nubians rights over Kibera as compensation for their services to the Empire.⁷⁹ Their second claim cited a 1934 amendment to the colony's Crown Lands Ordinance, which included language that prohibited the allocation of lands to Europeans in cases where there was "actual occupation of natives." The government intended this amendment to more definitively demarcate lands available for European settlement, while reiterating the government's stated principle, under the 1923 Devonshire White Paper, to safeguard African interests.⁸⁰ The government, however, had intentionally left the meaning of the phrase "actual occupation of natives" vague. The law's intended purpose, moreover, was to protect "tribalized natives" living within the reserves; in the eyes of officials, the application of the ordinance to a group of "detrIALIZED natives" and their claims to urban space represented a new and potentially dangerous interpretation of the law.

⁷⁷ Delany and Stratton to CLGLS, May 14, 1936, KNA, BN/70/1.

⁷⁸ Charles Mortimer, CLGLS, to Delany and Stratton, June 10, 1936, KNA, BN/70/1.

⁷⁹ M.K. Horne, Majesty's Supreme Court of Kenya, Nairobi Civil Case No 69 of 1936, November 16, 1936, KNA, BN/70/1.

⁸⁰ For further discussion of this law see Edward Soja, *The Geography of Modernization in Kenya* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), 20; Mervyn Hill, *Permanent Way*, 266.

While the government hoped for a definitive ruling in favor of NGC, the opinion of M.K. Horne, the presiding judge, instead offered credence to both sides. While rejecting the Nubians' claim that their prior tenancy and military service gave them rights over the land, Horne declined to rule whether Kibera was a "native settlement," declaring, "If Kibera is not a native settlement I do not know what is."⁸¹ Horne directed the Provincial Commissioner to determine the legal status of the Kibera, and whether it required protections under the Crown Lands Ordinance. Horne's ruling highlighted the rifts within the colonial administration concerning the legal status of Kibera. A.W. Sutcliffe, Nairobi's new District Commissioner (DC), immediately dismissed Horne's interpretation, arguing that Kibera was never intended to function as a long term settlement of Africans.⁸² The Attorney General, on the other hand, concurred with Horne that Kibera was a protected "native settlement," contending that residents were entitled both to compensation, as well as allocation of comparable land elsewhere.⁸³

The Nubians added pressure to these deliberations; rather than waiting for the judgement of the Provincial Commissioner, they appealed Justice Horne's ruling to the colony's supreme court, hoping that it would issue a definitive ruling in their favor. The evictees' decision to put their faith in the colonial court system posed a no-win scenario for the administration; if the NGC prevailed, the government would have a moral obligation 'to provide compensation and alternative accommodation' for the Nubian families who would 'not only be rendered landless and homeless, but will be liable for heavy court costs.'⁸⁴ On the other hand, if the court ruled in favor of the plot holders, it would effectively nullify the government's lease with the NGC, giving the golf club grounds to sue the government. This latter scenario was particularly

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² A.W. Sutcliffe, DC Nairobi, to CLGLS, January 26, 1937, KNA BN/70/1.

⁸³ Land Surveyor to CLGLS, November 22, 1936, KNA, BN/70/1.

⁸⁴ A.W. Sutcliffe to CLGLS, January 26, 1937.

concerning to Sutcliffe, who believed that it would establish a precedent, which would have “unwelcome repercussions throughout the country.”⁸⁵ The Nubian’s lawsuit, in other words, threatened to undermine the credibility of the government concerning land distribution, as well as its authority to clear African settlements elsewhere.

The NGC, seeing its own plans for development under threat, proposed a resolution; in exchange for agreeing to relocation, the Nubians would receive both compensation as well as an alternative plot elsewhere. The golf club and the government, in turn, would split the costs of compensation and resettlement. Sutcliffe opposed this proposal, believing that “the piece meal removal of Kibira (sic) was undesirable.” He cited the government’s difficulty of finding a “suitable” alternative site to relocate the evictees.⁸⁶ Sutcliffe instead proposed allowing the Nubian plot holders to resettle on another part of Kibera, pending the “complete removal” of the area.⁸⁷ Under this arrangement, the government would ultimately compensate the plot holders again, upon the eventual complete clearing of Kibera. W.M. Logan, the Acting Colonial Secretary, objected to this proposal, complaining that “some of the natives” had “no claim to this land after it had been granted to the Golf Club,” adding that compensating them would be viewed as a “bonus for obstruction.”⁸⁸

Despite these objections, the government faced mounting pressure from both the Nubian plot holders and the NGC to reach a resolution to the matter. On the day of the Nubians’ appeal hearing, F.C. Stratton, representing the Golf Club, defended the rights of the evictees, telling the *East African Standard* that they had “a moral claim against the Government” and were entitled to

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ H.M. Logan, Acting Colonial Secretary to Attorney General, February 2, 1937, KNA, BN/70/1.

compensation.”⁸⁹ Stratton blamed the government for the predicament, proclaiming, “the difficulty has been that Government has been considering the matter for ten years and I suppose therefore it is hardly reasonable to make up their mind in ten days to the proposals now before them.”⁹⁰ The attorney for the Nubian evictees, echoed this sentiment, exclaiming, “I do hope something will be done for these old soldiers, whatever their rights, legal, moral or anything else.”⁹¹ The government, in its indecisiveness, had done the virtually unthinkable, bringing together two legal adversaries around the same moral argument. The golf club’s backing of the Nubians, moreover, flipped the script on the conventional political allegiances of colonial Kenya; a settler dominated institution adopted the mantle of paternalistic guardianship of an African community against an antagonistic state bureaucracy.

The government, facing pressure from the Nubians and the NGC, concluded that the best way to save face was to settle with the Nubians, a plan that would in effect eventually compensate them twice.⁹² Although this plan was not ideal to officials, the growing potential of the Nubians’ successful appeal backed the government into a corner; allowing the plot holders to resettle elsewhere in Kibera, even at the expense of double compensation, represented the most convenient and expeditious outcome.⁹³ The government’s concessions, albeit narrow, had wider implications for the future of Kibera; in their compromises with the Nubians, administrators internally acknowledged that they had “no immediate prospects” for the removal of Nubian

⁸⁹ “Government Asked to Make Haste in Case Effecting Ex-Soldiers,” *East Africa Standard*, February, 10 1937.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² DC Nairobi to CLGLS, February 12, 1937, BN/70/1.

⁹³ H.M.L. to Provisional Commissioner, C. February 1937, KNA, BN/70/1. This letter indicates that even Logan, despite his initial objections, eventually conceded that the plan, while flawed, was the most expedient approach to contain the situation.

settlements in Kibera. While it continued to view the area's African settlements as a nuisance to the Nairobi Municipality, the administration ultimately capitulated to their continued existence.

The government presented their proposal at a community forum in Kibera. Various administrators, a number of the effected plot holders, Nubian elders, and officials of the golf club were all in attendance. The government offered to compensate the evicted households, according to the stipulations of the Land Commission, on the condition they vacate the land.⁹⁴ The government also agreed to pay the evictees' legal expenses, including attorney fees. Following some additional dialogue concerning the deadline for plot holders to relocate, most of the effected households accepted the proposal. A number of effected plot holders, however, were not present at the forum; consistent with usufruct practices, community elders signed the agreement "on their behalf."⁹⁵ Whether or not the actual occupants would have consented to relinquish their land had they been present is uncertain.

Even after the settlement, the administration faced lingering technical dilemmas. A government surveyor visited Kibera to finalize the boundaries between the NGC and the Nubians' territory. The surveyor reported that the settlement had omitted several households located on the NGC's land; this omission, according to the surveyor, presented possibilities for future litigation.⁹⁶ One of these plots belonged to Yusuf Abdulla, who had received the plot from his father, a former KAR soldier. Yusuf had transferred the house to his sister Sakina, who was in prison, after he moved to Mombasa. Administrators decided to swiftly settle the matter by

⁹⁴ A.W. Sutcliffe, DC Nairobi, to CLGLS, February 15, 1937, KNA, BN/70/1.

⁹⁵ Ibid; Such practices of allowing elders, chiefs, or headman to sign agreements on behalf of plot holds were quite common under British colonial systems. See Elizabeth Colson, "The Impact of the Colonial Period on the Definition of Land Rights," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, ed. Victor Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 196.

⁹⁶ District Officer, Nairobi, to DC Nairobi, February 16, 1937, KNA, BN/70/1.

retroactively including Sakina into the settlement.⁹⁷ Another resident, Mursaal Said Adhmed, told the surveyor that the Golf Club had extended its fence into his homestead, “enclosing all his land within theirs.”⁹⁸ While the surveyor found Adhmed’s concerns unwarranted, noting that the fence was only a temporary aberration, he nonetheless directed the golf club to avoid any “temporary deviations” that would create “unnecessary alarm.”⁹⁹ Taken together, these minor concessions illustrated the government’s more conciliatory tone towards Kibera’s African population. Administrators, in the case of Sakina’s plot, effectively recognized the entitlements of a soldier’s progeny, an idea they had previously forsaken.¹⁰⁰ When Nubian elders informed the surveyor that the expanded NGC territory would include one of their burial grounds, the government and the Golf Club agreed to leave the area untouched. A 1959 city map of Nairobi (see Figure 3.4) provides visual evidence of this concession, demarcating a small triangular section of the golf course as a “KAR cemetery.”

The government’s decision to settle with the Nubians, while sparing it from more embarrassment and potential litigation with the NGC, exposed the limitations of the state land system. The “multiple contours,” of “colonial tradition,” had undermined the state’s “ability to govern in the manner it claimed.”¹⁰¹ As Sutcliffe vented at the conclusion of the case, “It cannot be denied that, due to the, probably imperfections of land administration in the past, the Government of today has inherited as handsome a legacy of anomalies and difficulties as can

⁹⁷ Ibid. The District Officer concluded that, “If Sakina is daughter of ex Askari and the house was built for his or her family, there is no logical reason for refusing her compensation since other Nubians with large families have been allowed to own more than one house up to the time of the investigation.”

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Parsons, “Kibra is Our Blood,” 92. Administrators, while debating the merit of relocating the former soldiers, had been adamant that, regardless of their decision, Kibera would die a “natural death” after legal plot holders had passed away.

¹⁰¹ Steven Pierce, *Farmers and the State in Colonial Kano: Land Tenure and Legal Imagination* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2005), 7.

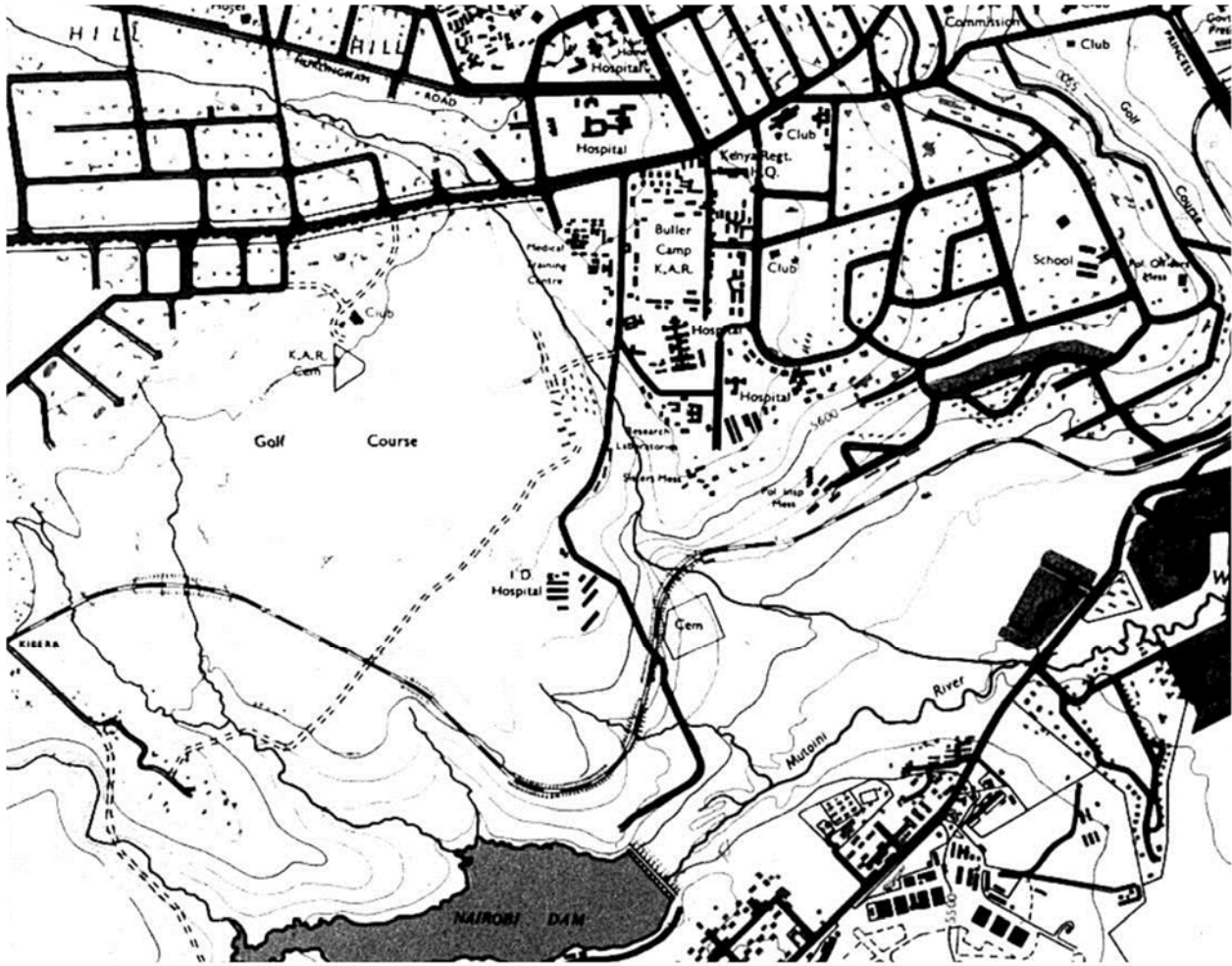


Figure 3.4: Nairobi Golf Club with KAR cemetery. The KAR cemetery is the triangular area in the center. Survey of Kenya, 1959.

well be imagined.”¹⁰² The colonial administration in its handling of the conflict had alienated both parties, underscoring a political structure that was too encumbered by its own bureaucratic and legal entanglements to implement an effective policy concerning urban space and land tenure.

The case also highlighted the various mechanisms by which Africans frustrated colonial urban policy. Squatter settlements, prostitution, open air markets, and crime had all become

¹⁰² A.W. Sutcliffe to CLGLS, January 26, 1937.

visual reminders of the state's limited hold on the city.¹⁰³ The Nubians' use of the colonial court system resulted in their retention of their claim to the space of the city. Had the government not settled, it is quite possible that the legal ramifications of their court case would have been wider. In any case, by the late 1930s, the government's attention had shifted from Kibera to other African settlements in the city, particularly Pangani village. While the government continued to regard Kibera as a potential nuisance to Nairobi, it emphasized mechanisms of implementing control rather than outright removal.

Finally, the court case laid the groundwork for an intricate and evolving social relationship between the NGC and the Nubian community of Kibera. The NGC's dealings with the resistant plot holders suggested a social relationship that was more paternalistic than ostensibly hostile. Golf was a game that integrated sport and leisure with the production of physical environments. The development of the golf course, not unlike the history of national parks or nature reserves, ultimately necessitated the physical separation between the land and the African peoples living there. While the NGC ultimately prevailed in its efforts to expand its greens and fairways, Nubians likewise maintained a perpetual physical existence within the area, which led to an enduring social relationship between Kibera and the NGC. The final section of this chapter will explore the nature of this relationship in fuller detail.

GOLF AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN KIBERA, 1937-1963

Despite the intricacies of the 1936 court case between the Nairobi Golf Club and the Nubian plot holders, it did not deliver a definitive outcome concerning the future of Kibera. Although the Nubian occupants retained their ability to settle on the land, the government maintained its

¹⁰³ Frederick Cooper, "Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labor in Africa." Luise White, *The Comforts of Home*; Andrew Burton, *African Underclass: Urbanization, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar Es Salaam* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

prerogative to evict and relocate Nubian occupants at its whim, a power which it periodically exercised throughout the 1940s and the 1950s. While the government never implemented its plans for the total removal of Kibera's African population, it gradually condensed and downsized the area through multiple small incursions. By Kenya's independence in 1963, Kibera had contracted from its initial size of over four-thousand acres, to a mere 1150 acres.¹⁰⁴ Much of the territory went towards the development of new European housing and recreational amenities (See Figure 3.5). "Recreation was the main agenda," Jamaldin Yahya posited, as he delineated the Nairobi Municipality's gradual encroachment into the area. In addition to the golf club, Jamaldin identified examples of encroachment by several sports clubs, including the Caledonians, Impala, and Harlequins sports clubs. "You can see that all of these sporting facilities were only for Europeans," he exclaimed, "We couldn't access them. We couldn't play there."¹⁰⁵

European recreation significantly contributed to the alienation of the Nubian community from their lands. The vast terrain that once provided Nubians with space for homesteads, farming, relaxation, and community gatherings, became the golf links, sports clubs, swimming pools, and playgrounds of Nairobi's European population. Ibrahim Ali, who grew up in Kibera during the 1940s and 1950s, attested that the British "took over the grounds," where Nubian Muslims had traditionally gathered to celebrate the end of Ramadan, turning it into a playground for the children of Woodley Estate, an estate for European municipal employees. He told me,

¹⁰⁴ Samantha Balaton-Chrimes, "Kenya's Nubians: From the Until Now: A Historical Timeline," in *Kenya's Nubians: Then and Now*, Greg Constantine (Bangkok: Nowhere People, 2011), 8.

¹⁰⁵ Jamaldin Yahya, interview by author. In 1963, a group of Nubian elders wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, enumerating several instances in which the municipality had infringed upon their lands since 1940; the petitioners cited the development of the Nairobi Golf Club, Caledonian Football Stadium, Harlequin Rugby and Football Ground, Italian Football Ground, Impala European Club, and the Nairobi European Yacht Club as examples of the municipality's encroachment. Community Rights Forum of Kibra, *A Presentation to Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission*, 12-13.

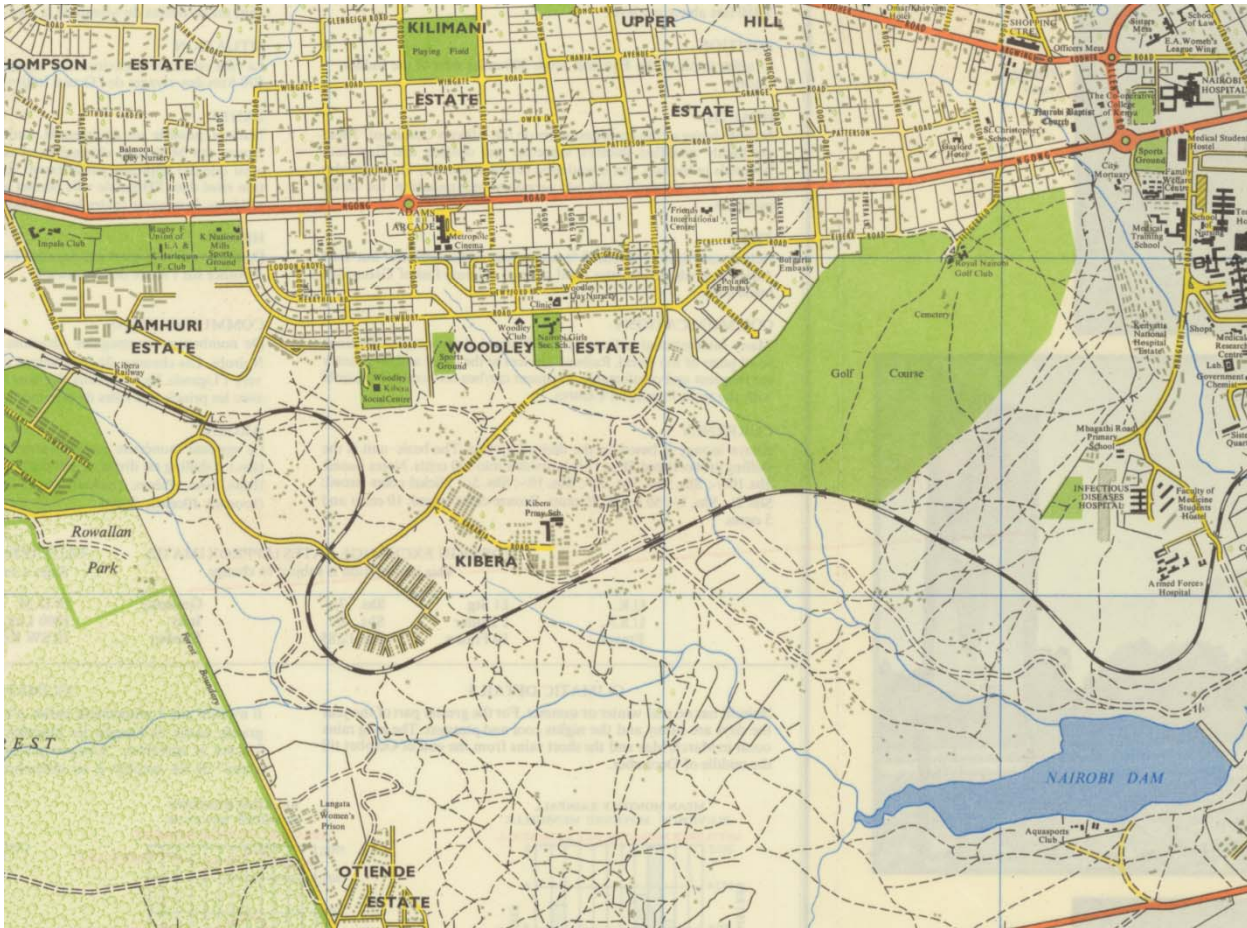


Figure 3.5: Map of Kibera and its surroundings shortly after independence. Survey of Kenya, 1968.

“They put up a small runway where they would exercise their [toy] planes for take-off and landing. I was very small by then. So the Nubians went back to praying in the mosques.”¹⁰⁶

Despite the connection of these recreational venues with a trajectory of displacement, many respondents fondly connected these spaces with their own pastimes and experiences of leisure.

Describing the relationship between Kibera and the NGC, Abdul Juma told me, “We have had a very nice association with the golf course because they knew we were very loyal and obedient servants even up to now. So there developed a form of partnership with them and on some

¹⁰⁶ Ibrahim Ali, focus group by author, Nairobi, February 1, 2014.

occasions when there were big matches they would invite us to go and spectate.”¹⁰⁷ This section will highlight how Nubians transgressed the boundaries of European clubs and domains of recreation, including the Nairobi Golf Club, and how they integrated these spaces into the culture and social life of their community.

The NGC saw the neighboring Nubian population of Kibera as an abundant reservoir of labor for grounds keepers, caddies, and other services for their European members. R.W. Hooper, in his *Game of Golf in East Africa*, exclaimed that “Kenyan golfers have for many years enjoyed the luxury of having their clubs carried at, what may well be the cheapest rates in the world.”¹⁰⁸ Abedi Saleh began caddying around the late 1940s. He recounted earning seventy-five cents for nine holes, which he considered to be “good money” for the time.¹⁰⁹ Miraj Sebich, another former caddy, explained that wages were defiantly modest, but “had value.”¹¹⁰ While employment as a caddy did not promise riches, knowledgeable and talented caddies could earn a respectable standard of living from their work. Perhaps even more important, according to former caddies, were the personal relationships they developed with European golfers. Abedi Saleh boasted of his friendship with Sir Frederick Crawford, Kenya’s Deputy Governor throughout the 1950s, stating, “I started as a caddy for Sir Fredrick Crawford and I learnt by observing him. When he was not around, I would observe the others there and that is how I developed interest and started playing until I got a handicap.”¹¹¹ When Crawford left Kenya, he bequeathed his golf clubs onto Saleh. By working closely with British golfers, Nubian caddies became attune to the technical skills of the game. Miraj Sebich, who was born in 1951, recalled

¹⁰⁷ Abdul Juma, interview by author, Nairobi, January 22, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ R.W. Hooper, *Game of Golf in East Africa*, 265.

¹⁰⁹ Abedi Saleh, interview by author, Nairobi, January 27, 2014.

¹¹⁰ Miraj Sebich, interview by author, Nairobi, January 27, 2014.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

learning golf at the age of ten. Through his work as a caddie, he observed and learned the techniques of European golfers while they played. Kassim Buran began working at the Nairobi Golf Club as a caddy. After independence, the club invited him to become a member. Caddies, he declared, not only intimated Europeans' strokes, but could "astound" white golfers by "hitting the ball better."¹¹² Through their linkages to the NGC as caddies, Nubians came to adopt golf as a past time of their own, becoming skilled players in their own right. In 1960, the Minister for Tourism, Game, Forests and Fisheries, declared that the residents of Kibera were not only "loyal British subjects," but also "very good golf caddies," noting their particular talents for the game.¹¹³

Golf became one of the signature sports of Kibera's Nubian community. "Golf was the prime game," Yusuf Diab proudly proclaimed, adding that all of the elite sportsman were from there.¹¹⁴ Golf was certainly not a new sport to the Nubian community; many of the area's KAR veterans had knowledge of the game through their interactions with British military officers. Ibrahim Amber, for example, recounted that his grandfather, who had ascended to the rank of Sergeant Major—the highest available rank to Africans—had played rounds alongside British officers in Rumbek, Sudan.¹¹⁵ In the years following the extension of the NGC, however, the popularity of the game expanded in Kibera as Nubians adopted the game and integrated it into the social life of their community.

During the 1940s, various community members established a local golf club for caddies and enthusiasts to hone their skills. The golf course even included a club house, built from mud,

¹¹² Kassim Buran, interview by author, Nairobi, February 5, 2014.

¹¹³ W.E. Caskill, *Kenya National Assembly Record*, May 6, 1960.

¹¹⁴ Yusuf Diab, interview by author.

¹¹⁵ Ibrahim Amber, interview by author.

where local golfers hung out and relaxed after games.¹¹⁶ The Kibera golf course was significantly smaller than the NGC, primarily consisting of a few short holes for golfers to practice their drives and putting. Community members compensated for lack of water by replacing greens with “browns”—i.e. hardened, compact soil—and converting a five iron into a putter to adjust for the change of terrain. In contrast to the prestigious, elite atmosphere of the members-only NGC, respondents maintained that their golf course was public, casual, and open to all members of the community.¹¹⁷ “The ground was our past time,” Abedi Saleh recounted, “We would just go over there to relax and pass time, even if we were not playing. It was also a place for socialization.”¹¹⁸ Adab Rajab, the son of one of Kibera’s earliest professional golfers, recalls meeting his friends at the local golf links where they would hit balls using makeshift clubs of long-wires and disposed corn-cobs. He told me, “We made the shape of the clubs, using long wire and [we] just designed it like a club and hit the ball. We got the flight.”¹¹⁹ Through their browns, mud-bricked club houses, and corn-cob golf clubs, Nubians built on the paternalistic relationships that they developed with European sportsmen on the fairways of the NGC, making the game their own.

Through their talents, Nubian golfers quickly gained recognition across Kenya. “The British respected African golfers,” Abedi Saleh declared, “they would really be amazed at the way we played and would even give us clubs and sticks as presents when we played well.”¹²⁰ Even as racial segregation characterized the identities of most European clubs, the NGC invited golfers from Kibera to participate in tournaments and friendly competitions.¹²¹ In one such event,

¹¹⁶ Abedi Saleh, interview by author.

¹¹⁷ Ibid; Miraj Sebich, interview by author.

¹¹⁸ Abedi Saleh, interview by author.

¹¹⁹ Adab Rajab, interview by author, Nairobi, February 21, 2014.

¹²⁰ Abedi Saleh, interview by author.

¹²¹ Ibid.



Figure 3.6: Participants of competition between Nairobi Golf Club and Kibera team, c. 1961. Photo curtesy of Adab Rajab.



Figure 3.7: Group of Nubian professional golfers at the Nairobi Golf Club, c1950s. Photo curtesy of Adab Rajab.

a team of golfers from the NGC competed against a team from Kibera (see figure 3.6).

Community members I spoke with remembered the feats of their local golfers, including Burhan Marjan, Shaban Morris, Mohamed Rajab (see figure 3.7).¹²² While Yusuf Diab did not play golf himself, he could easily recollect the particular talents and strengths of each golfer he saw play during the 1950s and early 1960s:

People like Shaban [Morris], had a very wide fan base. And some were renowned for their good shots. Mohamed Rajab, the father of Adab was a professional and was in a class of his own, I would say. He was an all-rounder. He didn't drive very hard, but from the second stroke to the putting he was good. The person with the best drive was Shaban Morris. He was a quite a hefty figure, about six feet six and he had a very good drive.¹²³

Yusuf's ability to identify the technical strengths and weaknesses of various athletes in specific terms attested not only to the talents of local golfers, but the popularization of the game in Kibera. As a pastime, the popularity of golf extended even beyond those who excelled in the game, to include local spectators who proudly followed the triumphs of their community members without themselves competing in the sport.

The fame of Kibera's golfers' carried over during the years after independence when Nubians made up much of the cohort of Kenya's first generation of professional golfers. An article in the popular magazine *Kenya Sports Review*, extolled the accomplishments of Nubian golfers, such as Burhan Marjan, Mohamed Rajab and Shaban Morris, who had "inspired many Africans to take up golf."¹²⁴ Touting his community's contributions to the development of golf nationally, a senior community member stated that, during the early 1960s, Nubians "were actually leading the blacks" in golf.¹²⁵ Nubian golfers, in the years after independence,

¹²² Osman Amber, interview by author, Nairobi, February 6, 2014; Abdul Juma, interview by author; Kassim Buran, interview by author.

¹²³ Yusuf Diab, interview by author.

¹²⁴ Hezekiah Wepukhulu, "Marjan to Turn Professional," *Kenya Sports Review*, 1968: 6.

¹²⁵ This perspective came from a focus group I did with the Nubian Council of Elders in Kibera on February 1, 2014.

established training schools where they taught aspiring Kenyan golfers the skills of the game.¹²⁶

Ben Okello, a Luo from Nyanza Province, dominated golf throughout the 1970s. He attributed the success of professional golf in Kenya to the Nubians, observing, “They set an example for other Kenyans that Africans could play.”¹²⁷ Many Nubian professionals translated their successes on the fairways into business or positions as club trainers. For example, Burhan Majan, who began his career as a grounds keeper at the NGC, maintained a job as the golf pro at Railways Golf Club—where he also had a shop—until his retirement during the 1970s.¹²⁸

Nubians’ successes in golf illustrated not only their athletic talents in the game, but also the permeability of both cultural and physical boundaries. While the sport came to Kibera from a context of encroachment and alienation, Nubians made the game an important aspect of social life in their community from 1940 through the years after independence. In doing so, locals from Kibera maintained a stake in the NGC. Ibrahim Diab, who grew up in Kibera during the 1950s, recounted walking to the golf club during weekends to cheer on local golfers:

We used to go and watch the Kenya open. Everybody would go. A lot of people from Kibera would go and that would not be bad. There was a lot of racial discrimination before independence and even after independence. We also didn’t have money. There were certain places that were just bad for going. But I believe the golf club used to be one of the open places. If you just wanted to go watch a game of golf, you could not be stopped. You could not play in the grounds, but you could follow an eighteen course game or a nine course game.¹²⁹

Diab emphasized that the NGC was one of the areas where conventions of segregation in colonial Kenya broke down, allowing for residents to participate in the golf club’s activities as spectators.¹³⁰ It was also a space that members of the community could access free of charge.

¹²⁶ Ismail Ramadan, focus group by author, Nairobi, February 1, 2014.

¹²⁷ Ben Okello, interview by author, Nairobi, January 28, 2014.

¹²⁸ Kassim Burhan, interview by author.

¹²⁹ Yusuf Diab, interview by author.

¹³⁰ A number of respondents corroborated Diab’s recollections. Abdul Juma, interview by author; Adab Rajab, interview by author.

By appropriating golf as a community pastime, Nubians crossed racial boundaries dividing African settlements from European domains of leisure.

According to several accounts, it was not until the land pressures of the 1990s, explored in future chapters, that the NGC began establishing fencing and concrete walls; prior to that, residents easily accessed the course, cutting through the fairways on their way to town.¹³¹ Abdul Juma, recalling his time as a young man during the 1940s, told me, “I remember some days while we were young and there was no water in Kibera, the authorities there would allow us to fetch water from there because they had developed a trust in us.”¹³² Even as late as the 1980s, Ester Warimu could recall some residents using undeveloped parts of the golf club for small scale farming.¹³³ While it is unclear the extent to which the club’s management authorized these particular uses, such forms of engagement, which extended beyond sport, added to the Nubians’ sense of casualness and permeability concerning the boundaries between the golf club and their homes.

In addition to golf, Nubians’ engagement with other sports, such as football and rugby, opened new spaces of contact with European sportsmen. Several respondents reported that local athletes frequently used the grounds of the Caledonian Sports Club for football and rugby scrimmages, even occasionally playing alongside Europeans.¹³⁴ “Some of us played rugby here at Harlequins, which was a white man’s game,” Ismail Ramadan recounted. He added, “Everything they did was known to us, so we would go and cheer the games.”¹³⁵ Community members formed several clubs of their own, such as Jupiter, Watania, and Makanara, which

¹³¹ Abdul Juma, interview by author; Miraj Sebach, interview by author.

¹³² Abdul Juma, interview by author.

¹³³ Ester Warimu, interview by author, Nairobi, February 8, 2014.

¹³⁴ Adam Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, March 1, 2014; Ismail Ramadan, interview by author; Yusuf Diab, interview by author.

¹³⁵ Ismail Ramdan, focus group by author.

often used the European clubs' playing fields for their games and scrimmages. As Ismail recounted, "Whenever there was a European tournament taking place everybody would go to watch. The next week when there were no European activities then we would have a local event involving the Nubian clubs."¹³⁶ While clubs, such as the Caledonian Sports Club and Harlequins, were initially established for the interests of European leisure, they, like the NGC, ultimately became popular fixtures for sports and entertainment within the Kibera community, supporting new pastimes and forms of identity.

The shared-interests of sport and even friendships that Nubian athletes developed with Europeans on the fairways and football pitches have been an important source of pride for Kibera's Nubian community, as well as a way that they have distinguished themselves apart from other communities in the area. When "the rest of Kenya" was playing football and other sports "barefoot," Abdul Juma declared, "we were playing in boots."¹³⁷ In the decades after independence, other ethnic groups swept into Kibera, making the Nubians a minority population within the area. Nubians' connection with sports, and their affiliations with the various prestigious European clubs, were a way in which they underlined their particular connection to the landscape. When I asked Miraj Sebich to explain Nubians' successes in golf, he responded by emphasizing the particular discipline of Kibera's Nubian community, proclaiming, "We Nubians were much disciplined as compared to then other tribes here."¹³⁸ Osman Amber corroborated this view point, connecting Nubians' success at the golf links with their elevated social status in the eyes of the British. He argued, "They were the only African tribe that was tolerated by the British. The British used to rate them as second [only] to them. The Nubians, in

¹³⁶ Ismail Ramdan, interview by author.

¹³⁷ Abdul Juma, interview by author.

¹³⁸ Miraj Sebich, interview by author.

terms of etiquette, could sit at the same table with the British and dine, drink, and even laugh. They had that close association.”¹³⁹ The implicit contradictions of these perspectives were noteworthy. Nubians, on the one hand, regarded themselves as trailblazers who advanced the game of golf for all Kenyans. At the same time, they regarded their place on the golf course, like their status in Kibera, as one rooted within their own privilege as a community, as well as their moral attributes of discipline, professionalism, manners, and talent.

CONCLUSION

Landscape meanings, like memories, are rarely legible, static, and unambiguous. While concrete walls provide physical markers of the divisions of class and political power, it is also important to examine the histories as well as the interrelationships between the spaces they intend to separate. The extension of the Nairobi Golf Club (NGC) and other European domains of leisure into Kibera exemplified classic land-use conflicts between the consumptive interests of European populations and the livelihoods of African communities. In many ways, the reduction of Kibera due to the advancement of various European clubs, with the NGC at the forefront, underlined the bitter effects of colonial power and its capacity to dislocate, dislodge, and alienate African communities. At the same time, Kibera’s Nubian community demonstrated that such venues also had potential to become significant sites for African cultural production and cross racial engagement. The NGC and other European clubs became spaces where Kibera’s Nubian residents explored broadening possibilities for leisure and fashioned new identities.

This chapter has primarily sought to highlight the murkiness of urban boundaries. The colonial state and the burgeoning Nairobi Municipality regarded the expansion of the NGC as an

¹³⁹ Osman Amber, interview by author.

act that would reaffirm the boundaries between African and European spaces and presage the eventual complete removal of Kibera's African population. The Nubians challenged these boundaries on two fronts. First, they used the colonial court system, leveraging their status as former soldiers into a moral claim to Kibera. Through the intricacies of this trial, the Nubian community retained their continued access to Kibera, while embarrassing the colonial administration. The court case, however, ultimately did not result in a definitive determination regarding the future status of the area. Nairobi's annexation of Kibera instead occurred through gradual and seemingly minute processes, rather than as one fell swoop. Leisure was central to these conflicts; much of Nairobi's expansion into Kibera during the 1940s and 1950s involved clubs and spaces that accommodated the demands of the city's settler population for new lands of leisure. It was through these clubs, however, that Nubian residents perhaps made their most meaningful impact on the production of urban space in Nairobi. If the state and municipality saw the extension of clubs and golf courses as part of a natural progression of European control over Kibera, they accomplished the opposite effect, creating new access points for Africans to penetrate European cultural and social zones. Through their skills on the golf links, or their friendships with European athletes, Kibera residents gradually secured a stake in the area's clubs and leisure venues, circumnavigating the racially segregated conventions of colonial urban society.

The Nubians' ability to both remain in Kibera and to access European recreational domains portended major social, cultural, and political shifts in Kenyan urban centers. By the end of the Second World War, rigid segregation and state efforts to keep Africans out of the city were becoming untenable objectives. With the major exception of the colony wide emergency in the wake of the Mau Mau rebellion, administrators' emphasis shifted towards arguably more

pragmatic objectives of reform and stabilization of African urban populations. This involved the creation of new, regimented housing, as well as the development of new spaces of recreation that would cater specifically to the needs of urban Africans. Such changes will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

TURNING “SPIVS” INTO CITIZENS: AFRICAN LEISURE AND URBAN SPACE IN LATE COLONIAL KENYA

In 1956, during the midst of the Mau Mau emergency, a group of welfare officers launched a series of programs aimed at providing day-time occupations for Nairobi’s vagrant youth. Activities featured multiple activities including film showings, football matches, and boxing spectacles.¹ The program represented an alternative strategy to the government's policy of expelling unemployed African youths from the city—a process which officials termed “repatriation”—by providing them with both education and entertainment.² In an April 1956 lecture, an unidentified welfare officer stressed the moral urgency of this project:

Many of these children have little to look forward to but a succession of empty days in which, out of sheer boredom, they will seek some outlet for their energies. If they are denied the opportunity of doing something healthy and adventurous, they will “let off steam” in ways unhealthy and harmful, and we will find ourselves with a generation of youthful spivs on our hands—spivs, moreover, through no fault of their own.³

The urgency of this report, delivered in the midst of the Mau Mau emergency, reflected cities that were in transition. With a population of 140,000 in 1957, Africans were easily the largest and most visible community in Kenya’s colonial capital. The same was also true in Mombasa where at least 74,053 Africans resided in the city.⁴ While colonial urban planners had once

¹ CDO Nairobi, Day Time Occupation of Children and Club Work in African Locations, 1956, KNA, AG/14/1.

² In 1956, four-thousand youth were repatriated under emergency statutes. C.E. Atkins, to Secretary Local Government Health and Housing, April 11, 1956, KNA, AA/14/15/2. For a more comprehensive discussion of the colonial state’s policy concerning vagrancy, see Paul Ocobock, “‘Joy Rides for Juveniles’: Vagrant Youth and Colonial Control in Nairobi, Kenya, 1901-52,” *Social History* 31, no. 1 (2006): 39–59; See also his forthcoming monograph: Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age: Making Manhood, Maturity, and Authority in Kenya, 1898-1978* (Ohio University Press, forthcoming); Herbet Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study in Nairobi* (New York: Africana Publishing House, 1974), 48.

³ Such language closely mirrored the ideologies of urban reformists of Victorian-era Great Britain and the United States. See Ocobock, “‘Joy Rides for Juveniles’”; Andrew Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 168.

⁴ For 1938 statistic see Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 80. White provides an excellent chart of the African population

imagined the city as a European space—with African presence temporary and restricted—few of even the most emphatic chauvinists could foresee the tenability of this vision.⁵ State and municipal leaders scrambled to make up for decades of neglecting their urban African population, by increasing wages, improving the standard of housing, and providing new spaces for leisure. Their efforts underscored the government's new emphasis on the social integration of Africans into the city, as stable, morally respectable, and politically predictable colonial citizens.⁶

Colonial officers' fear of the unintelligible African residuum was a transforming force during the 1940s and 1950s, as Kenyan cities became arenas of conflict between European administrators and an increasingly volatile, politically restless, and independent urban class.⁷ The 1940s and 1950s were decades of extensive expansion of recreational space within Nairobi and Mombasa, as the state sought to coopt its African urban population into a vision of imperial stability, defined by a spirit of development and modernity. By providing moral recreational outlets, the state believed it could promote the conditions conducive for establishing a stable and respectable urban middle class.⁸ State and local authorities accorded new playing fields, stadiums, and social centers that would provide Africans' with legible and "morally uplifting,"

between 1929-1938. For the Mombasa statistic see R.S. Winsor, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department African Affairs 1958, c. 1959, KNA UY/4/45.

⁵ Andrew Burton, *African Underclass: Urbanization, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar Es Salaam* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 277; Herbert Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 49; Godwin R. Murunga, "Inherently Unhygienic Races: Plague and the Origins of Settler Dominance in Nairobi, 1899-1907," in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, ed. Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

⁶ Burton, *African Underclass*, 222

⁷ The Victorian era term "residuum" described the elements, which the state considered to be the most threatening to society. Ibid., 17; For its use during the London labor crises during the nineteenth century see Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

⁸ Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

forms of entertainment.⁹ Boredom, on the other hand, signified disorder and insecurity. If young, African men were not working, officials concluded, then they best be playing; time spent playing football, attending dances, or watching film showings, was time away from the bottle, plotting hijinks, or stirring unrest.¹⁰

Scholars have highlighted the late 1930s and 1940s as an important period in terms of imperial policy and urban transformation. Colonial states embraced a reformist vision that featured the transformation of urban vagrants and casual laborers into industrial men who lived “with a wife and family.”¹¹ Colonial officials blamed the labor unrest of the late 1930s on the lack of an African bourgeoisie class, which would have a stake in maintaining an ordered urban society. Stability became the guiding mantra from which officials sought to reshape the daily lives and social experiences of its urban African population; administrators would accept trade unionism and increase of wages, while gradually phasing out casual labor relationships that enhanced Africans’ economic freedom and mobility.¹² They meanwhile sought to push Africans out of their “temporary” neighborhoods into regimented municipal estates.¹³ As Luise White and Lisa Lindsay have illustrated, such a vision was gendered; colonial ideology stressed that decent,

⁹ Legibility, as defined by James Scott, is to “arrange the population in way that simplified the class state functions” (2). James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1998), 2-3.

¹⁰ Police and officials blamed labor unrest and the Mombasa general strikes of 1939 on “idlers and stiffs,” seemingly unemployed men loafing around the city. Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987, 50.

¹¹ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Anthony Clayton and Donald C Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963* (London: Frank Cass, 1975), particularly 209-289.

¹² Cooper, *On the African Waterfront*. For discussion of the evolution of the state’s labor policy in London see Jones, *Outcast London*.

¹³ White, *The Comforts of Home*; Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 49; Richard E. Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa: Policy, Politics, and Bureaucracy in Mombasa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Garth Myers, *Verandas of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 35.

successful, healthier men would be in monogamous marriages and reside permanently with their families.¹⁴ The state, meanwhile, sought to curb the economic and social autonomy of female laborers, vendors, and house owners, while establishing welfare programs that trained women to serve as good mothers, wives, and homemakers.¹⁵

Within this context, the provision of leisure space assumed new urgency as a governing priority of the colonial administration. The stable and familial existence of urban Africans necessitated places for their children to play and for husbands and wives to socialize. During the late 1940s, state and municipal leaders planned for the provision of playing fields and social centers for residents. The state also sought to formalize various athletic and football activities into organized leagues and matches. The provision of intelligible and morally acceptable leisure spaces would reinforce the “new self-discipline and identity” of family life.¹⁶ The state’s efforts to establish playing fields, social halls, and recreational amenities coincided with its efforts to narrow the possibilities for Africans’ leisure, confining it to finite, meticulously supervised places that it could easily identify on a map.

Although social halls, playing fields, and other recreational spaces derived as institutions of colonial hegemony, urban Africans used these spaces to explore urban identities, as well as alternative leisure and consumptive interests. This chapter contributes to a growing interest among scholars to understand not only how Africans challenged colonialism, but also the ways

¹⁴ Luise White, “Separating the Men from the Boys: Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Terrorism in Central Kenya, 1939-1959,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (1990): 191; Lisa Lindsay, *Working with Gender, Wage Labor and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2003).

¹⁵ White, *The Comforts of Home*; Claire C. Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men, and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890-1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Joanna Lewis, *Empire State Building: War and Welfare in Kenya 1925-52* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 138-39; Burton, *African Underclass*, 232.

¹⁶ Lewis, *Empire State Building*, 138.

they engaged and transformed the various institutions of colonial rule.¹⁷ Welfare officers' desire to make their recreational initiatives appealing necessitated attention to the desires and tastes of African urban residents. Municipal records provide substantial information regarding the activities that resonated with the African population and those that failed to sustain patrons' interests. From the games and sports available at the social halls to the type of films shown, African patrons shaped the direction and practices of state recreational spaces. Africans, meanwhile, used these spaces to explore alternative forms of leisure, test the boundaries of generational authority, and develop new frameworks for identity. Through their participation in the social halls, stadiums, playgrounds, Africans made these venues public spaces that could accommodate their needs and aspirations regarding urban life.

Kenyans' ability to shape the halls according to their own social interests, highlighted a broader structural and cultural reconfiguration of Kenyan cities, which the state was unable to control. As this chapter's final section will highlight, these negotiations extended into various exclusive domains of European leisure—clubs, hotels, cinemas. Although the state succeeded in creating a small African bourgeois, African elites turned to ideologies of decolonization, racial equality, and nationalism rather than the acquiescence and cooperation that the European administration expected.¹⁸ While the state exalted the advancement of an African urban bourgeois as a sign of social progress, businesses, clubs, and establishments of entertainments continued to exclude Africans from entry. Such contradictions were not lost on Africa's elites, who identified color bars as emblematic of the injustices and indignities of colonial rule.

¹⁷ Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516–45.

¹⁸ See Myers, *Verandas of Power*, 38; Jack R. Roelker, *The Genesis of African Protest: Harry Thuku and the British Administration in Kenya, 1920-1922* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968); Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Heinemann, 1938); Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963).

Providing playgrounds and social halls were not enough to satisfy the demands of middle class Africans, whom demanded a greater share in the cultural and social spaces of the city. This chapter builds on existing literature emphasizing Africans' resistance to the contours of imperial urban planning, instead highlighting how Africans coopted and remade the spaces of the city according to their own social and cultural needs.

LEISURE AND THE HOUSING QUESTION

Recreation and housing were two sides of an emerging epistemology concerning community development and social engineering. The establishment of social halls and the conversion of open spaces into playgrounds reflected a state that was not only interested in defining where Africans lived, but also shaping their social relationships and activities more broadly. While the dire conditions of African housing emerged as the most pressing concern driving state action, social engineers recognized that improvement of dwelling spaces would matter little if they could not instill onto Africans a broader commitment to community and urban order. Playgrounds presumed the presence of children, while dances, women's' clubs and indoor games, would affirm the virtues of stable monogamous marriages, properly aligned gender relationships, and family life.

While development, uplift, and safeguarding of Africans' interests had always rationalized imperial intervention, the end of the Second World War necessitated change regarding the relationship between the British Empire and its colonial subjects; if the war was to represent a triumph for democracy, national sovereignty, and human dignity, then the exploitation of labor and raw materials were no longer morally acceptable rationales for

governance.¹⁹ In 1940, the British Parliament passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, which committed £1 million per year towards the improvement of education, health, and social services across the British colonies.²⁰ These changes occurred as Kenyans were beginning to more forcibly challenge the legitimacy of colonial rule and outline a postcolonial future. Welfare initiatives employed a discourse of multiracial partnership, in which Europeans and Africans would live and eventually rule together in a spirit of cooperation.²¹ Europeans would serve the role as senior partners, paternalistically guiding their African counterparts in the manners of modern civility and respectability. Administrators aspired to mold Africans into capable, upright, and dependable citizens, while attempting to quell the more subversive ranks of anti-colonial movements.

Across Africa, state welfare officers and sociologists viewed urban uplift as the most imperative development issue. In South Africa, welfare officers and sociologists regarded the promotion of a stable African middle-class as instrumental to combating the perils of urban delinquency and *tsotsism*.²² Delinquency, crime, political subversion, and other social ills were consequences of the destabilizing effects of city life on Africans, whom were uprooted from the

¹⁹ Lewis, *Empire State Building*, 87.

²⁰ Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 70-71; Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963*, 297.

²¹ John Lonsdale and Anthony Low, "East Africa: Towards a New Order," in *Eclipse of Empire*, by Anthony Low (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 205-209. Richard Frost, *Race against Time : Human Relations and Politics in Kenya Before Independence* (London: Collings, 1978), 68; Lewis, *Empire State Building*, 138. Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya*, 296-297.

²² Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000). Beginning in the 1940s, there was a proliferation of sociological surveys, addressing the psychological and societal effects of Africans' transition from rural to urban life. See Ellen Hellmann, *Problems of Urban Bantu Youth: Report of an Enquiry into the Causes of Early School-Leaving and Occupational Opportunities Amongst Bantu Youth in Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1940); Hortense Powdermaker, *Copper Town: Changing Africa; the Human Situation on the Rhodesian Copperbelt* (New York: Harper Row, 1961); A.W. Southhall and P.C.W. Gutkind, *Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and Its Suburbs* (Kampala: East African Institute of Social Research, 1957); J.A.K Leslie, *A Survey of Dar es Salaam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

traditions and moral structures of their rural homes. In Kenya, where the 1947 general strike preceded the insurgency of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), state efforts to promote stable, and morally respectable townsmen acquired particular urgency. Liberals regarded the KLFA insurgency as the outcome of a failed urban policy; John Colin Carother's influential study, *Psychology of Mau Mau*, blamed dislocation of men from their rural homes for the violent and unsocial behavior of the KLFA insurgency.²³ Although such causations ranged from exaggerative to hyperbolic, the events of the 1947 general strike and the KLFA seemed to validate the earlier premonitions of officials whom expounded the dangers of indolent urban policies and poor standards of living.

Urban uplift foremost meant addressing the "housing question" that had pervaded the discussions of Kenya's policy makers.²⁴ The "housing question," as Edward Murphy argued, is "entangled with everyday practices and expectations, social reproduction, the constitution of the family, governing relations, the evolution of social taste and distinction, the workings of finance, forms of production and consumption, the making of inequity, the unfolding of crises, and issues of belonging and justice, including the rights of citizenship."²⁵ By regulating where Africans lived, the state sought to determine the type of African settling in the city, as well as produce

²³ John Colin Carothers, *The Psychology of Mau Mau* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1954), 23-24.

²⁴ While there has been relatively little urban scholarship regarding Kenya, significant studies have emphasized matters of housing, particularly its relationship to state policy and urban geography. See Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa*; David Anderson, "Corruption at City Hall: African Housing and Urban Development in Colonial Nairobi, *Azania* 36 (2001): 131-54; Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Nairobi's Self Help City* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977).

²⁵ Edward Murphy, "Introduction: Housing Questions, Past, Present, and Future," in *The Housing Question Tensions, Continuities, and Contingencies in the Modern City*, ed. Edward Murphy and Najib B. Hourani, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 3-4. In Kenya, like other parts of the world, housing shaped the governing strategies of states, as well as claims to legitimacy within urban space. Property ownership and access to housing have shaped claims to urban citizenship. See James Holston, "Housing Crises, Right to the City, and Citizenship," in *Ibid.*, 255-69; Edward Murphy, *Housing Rights in the Margins of Urban Chile, 1960-2010* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2014).

well-ordered, sanitary, and economically efficient municipalities.²⁶ Urban housing was only one part of a broader nexus of social and community life; Africans' integration into urban society required more than improvement of dwelling spaces. The new estates of the 1940s and the 1950s featured churches, shopping centers, schools, social centers, and playing fields that would draw Africans into a broader conceptualization of community.

Prior to the 1940s, government action regarding housing occurred almost exclusively in the form of coercive mechanisms, including the enforcement of rigid sanitary laws and the razing of African settlements.²⁷ The Council's first designated African location in Pumwani accompanied the razing of three African villages to force their occupants to live in the "native location."²⁸ The municipal government's second estate, Kariokor, which the municipality opened in 1928, consisted of small, poorly lit bachelor quarters that offered residents little comfort. The Municipal Native Affairs Officer, and the Senior Medical Officer characterized Kariokor, as little more than a "labor cantonment," without the necessary amenities to provide a home for laborers.²⁹ Africans capitalized on government neglect, establishing their own accommodation, while accumulating wealth as landlords.³⁰ In Mombasa, where there were fewer legal restrictions concerning where Africans could reside, multiple forms of housing emerged. G.M. Wilson, in his 1958 *Social Survey of Mombasa* observed that "Swahili houses"—consisting of single floor

²⁶ Maynard Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony 1900-1909," *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977), 387; Godwin R. Murunga, "Inherently Unhygienic Races: Plague and the Origins of Settler Dominance in Nairobi, 1899-1907," in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, ed. Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 113.

²⁷ Garth Myers, *Verandas of Power*, 8.

²⁸ Luise White, "A Colonial State and an African Petty Bourgeoisie: Prostitution, Property, and Class and the Struggle for Nairobi, 1936-1940," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Louise White (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 171.

²⁹ K.A.T. Martin, Senior Medical Officer of Health, and T.C. Colchechester, Municipal Native Affairs Officer, "Memorandum on the Housing of Africans in Nairobi and Suggestions for Improvements," April 30, 1941, KNA.

³⁰ Luise White, *the Comforts of Home*, 1.

dwellings, subdivided into multiple rooms, with shared kitchens and lavatories—were the most popular form of accommodation.³¹ These houses were relatively inexpensive to build, and offered tenants privacy and security within “polyglot and often transient neighborhoods.”³² Swahili houses were often organized within “village layouts,” or *Manjengos*, which Wilson described as “self-contained neighborhoods,” each with a shopping center, bars and canteens, a school, churches, and a dispensary.³³ Like the early informal settlements in Nairobi, Mombasa’s *Majengo* villages maintained elaborate social systems that provided residents with social intimacy and support systems.³⁴ Residents could count on the leniency of landlords if they lost their job, fell ill, or—in the case of women—experienced the death of a husband.³⁵

Leisure within African neighborhoods was also self-organized. Although the Native Affairs Committee of the Municipal Council of Nairobi (MCN) had approved an allocation of £2,500 to expand Pumwani Memorial Hall in 1938, most African locations had few, if any, playgrounds until the postwar era.³⁶ R. Mugo Gatheru described the African locations of Nairobi as bleak and featureless, with “playgrounds and cinemas nonexistent.”³⁷ Urban Kenyans, however, created spaces of leisure for themselves within their homes, porches, and community open spaces. Donald Mbotela, recalling the pastimes of his grandfather in 1940s Freretown, told

³¹ G.M. Wilson, “African Housing in Mombasa,” in *Social Survey of Mombasa*, ed. G.M. Wilson (Nairobi: Kenya Government, 1958), 345–68. The government commissioned Wilson, who was well-known for his work in the copper belt, to conduct a survey to advise state efforts regarding labor stabilization following the 1947 Mombasa general strike. Wilson also noted the presence of three other types of housing: illegal temporary huts, servant’s quarters, and the estates of the High Commission, Central Government, Employers, and Municipality.

³² Richard E. Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa*, 34–37.

³³ Wilson, “African Housing in Mombasa,” 348. *Majengo* in Kiwahili translates “building,” which derives from the verb *kujenga*, “to build.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Native Affairs Committee, MCN, March 11, 1938; Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya*, 297.

³⁷ R. Mugo Gatheru, *Child of Two Worlds* (New York: Mentor, 1964), 87.

me, “In the evenings the grandparents would meet someplace together, chitchat, and have a drink.”³⁸ When I asked him to elaborate on where his grandfather typically went for drinks, he responded: “They were just gathering somewhere. Let’s meet at so-and-so’s today, or at an open space. They would come from this house, from that house, and from that house. There was not a club, not as such.”³⁹ Sale and consumption of locally distilled alcohols such as *nazi*, and “Nubian gin,” emerged as both a lucrative market and as a popular outlet for entertainment among Kenyans residing in the city.⁴⁰ Mtulu Mwastoia told me, “There were no clubs and entertainment joints those days, so they used to drink at home. One businessman could go and buy the wines cheaply and then bring them home.”⁴¹ Leisure also took the form of friendly football scrimmages in the spaces between houses, and excursions to the ocean. On Fridays, Donald and his classmates carried their school desks to the nearby Bambui beach to clean them. As the desks dried in the sun, they played football on the beach and swam in the ocean.⁴² Urban Kenyans, as these narratives illustrate, invented spaces of leisure where there were none, using homes, porches, or undeveloped land to meet with their friends and find social relaxation.

By the late 1930s, the state saw the autonomy and independence within the various African villages and majengos as a threat to urban stability and order. A 1941 joint report by K.A.T. Martin, Senior Officer of Health, and T.C. Colchester, Municipal Affairs Officer for Nairobi described the lack of “native housing” as a “major evil in Nairobi,” warning that “further delay over the provision of native housing may result in the demoralization and undermining of

³⁸ Donald Mbotela, interview by author, Mombasa, December 12, 2014. He clarified that it was mostly the men who went out, very few of the women would come together for those activities.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ismail Ramadan, interview by author, Nairobi, September 17, 2014; Mutulu Mwastoia, interview by author, Mombasa December 9, 2014

⁴¹ Mutulu Mwastoia, interview by author.

⁴² Donald Mbotela, interview by author.

the Nairobi native community, which will take many years to address.”⁴³ Nairobi was a tinderbox of urban malaise, discontent, and unrest. Improved housing, on the other hand, would instill into African laborers a “sense of reasonability and communal pride.”⁴⁴ The officers’ report, however, came in the midst of the Second World War, and at the tail-end of a global economic depression; they conceded that while housing was an urgent need, little could be done to improve the situation until after the war. This view reflected the general consensus of the state and municipal governments of both Nairobi and Mombasa. Only the year before, the MCN had rejected a proposal to commit additional resources towards African housing, instead putting the onus on employers to “make suitable provision” for their African employees.⁴⁵ According to Martin and Colchester memorandum, the MCN agreed spend £30,000 on “native housing,” but spent £7,500.⁴⁶ While the lack of control within the cities’ haphazard African estates represented a looming threat to urban order, sanitation, and stability, the state was reluctant to assume the costs for new housing.

Boredom, or more accurately Africans’ unstructured leisure time, was a second threat to urban stability; colonial social engineers, unable to discern legible forms of “indigenous” African leisure, regarded the city as a particularly dull and monotonous place for Africans. Wilson concluded that leisure time among Mombasa’s African population was “neither highly developed nor organized.”⁴⁷ Boredom connoted wasted time, decadence, and moral indiscipline.⁴⁸ If

⁴³ Martin and Colchechester, Memorandum on the Housing of Africans.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Minute 6, Native Affairs Committee, MCN, January 18, 1938, KNA, JW/2/53.

⁴⁶ Martin and Colchechester, Memorandum on the Housing of Africans.

⁴⁷ G.M. Wilson, “Recreation and Leisure Time Activities in Mombasa,” in *Social Survey of Mombasa*, ed. G.M Wilson (Nairobi: Kenya Government, 1958), 398.

⁴⁸ Adeline Masquelier, “Teamtime: Boredom and Temporalities of Young Men in Niger,” *Africa* 83, no. 3 (2013): 481. In addition to Masquelier’s work, there has been growing discussion of the issue of boredom. Emmanuel Akyeampong and Charles Ambler, “Leisure in African History: An Introduction,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 1 (2002):16; Daniel Mains, “Neoliberal Times:

Africans were not accessing social halls or playing fields they were undoubtedly finding recreation elsewhere, in the form of alcohol, criminal mischief, or other decadent behaviors. T.L.H. Fontaine postulated that, in absence of recreational facilities within the city, it was the tendency for young men to go to places like Bulu-Bulu in the Masai reserve in order to get drunk at the beer shops and brothels.⁴⁹ The “ordinary African,” he opined, “is not satisfied at the end of the day’s work to go home and go to sleep, and the reasons for providing him with healthy recreation, which will turn him into an efficient and loyal citizen are obvious.”⁵⁰ Municipal officers regarded Pumwani as a haven of prostitution, alcoholism, and illicit drug use. Nairobi’s education officer argued that the creation of social centers would encourage domestic laborers to seek “harmless recreation in areas where they work rather than in Pumwani.”⁵¹ E.R. Harris, the Community Development Officer (CDO) for Nairobi, noted several older boys, “loafing around the streets,” adding that many had turned to illicit drugs and the bottle to pass time.⁵²

The government increased its support for housing during the waning years of the war, with development of new housing projects reaching its apex during the postwar period. The MCN used funds from the 1940 Development Act to complete a new estate in Ziwani in 1943. The estate, which cost £150,000, promised to provide accommodation to six-thousand laborers and their families. That same year, Kenya’s Legislative Council passed a bill that established a Central Housing Board, with a mandate “to provide grants and loans to the local authority for the

Progress, Boredom, and Shame among Young Men in Urban Ethiopia,” *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (2007): 659–73; Michael Ralph, “Killing Time,” *Social Text* 26, no. 4 (2008): 1–29.

⁴⁹ S.H. La Fontaine to Ernest Vasey, Member for Health and Local Government, July 7, 1950, KNA, JA/25/22.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Minute 10, Parks Committee, MCN, April 4, 1945, KNA JW/2/21.

⁵² Ibid.

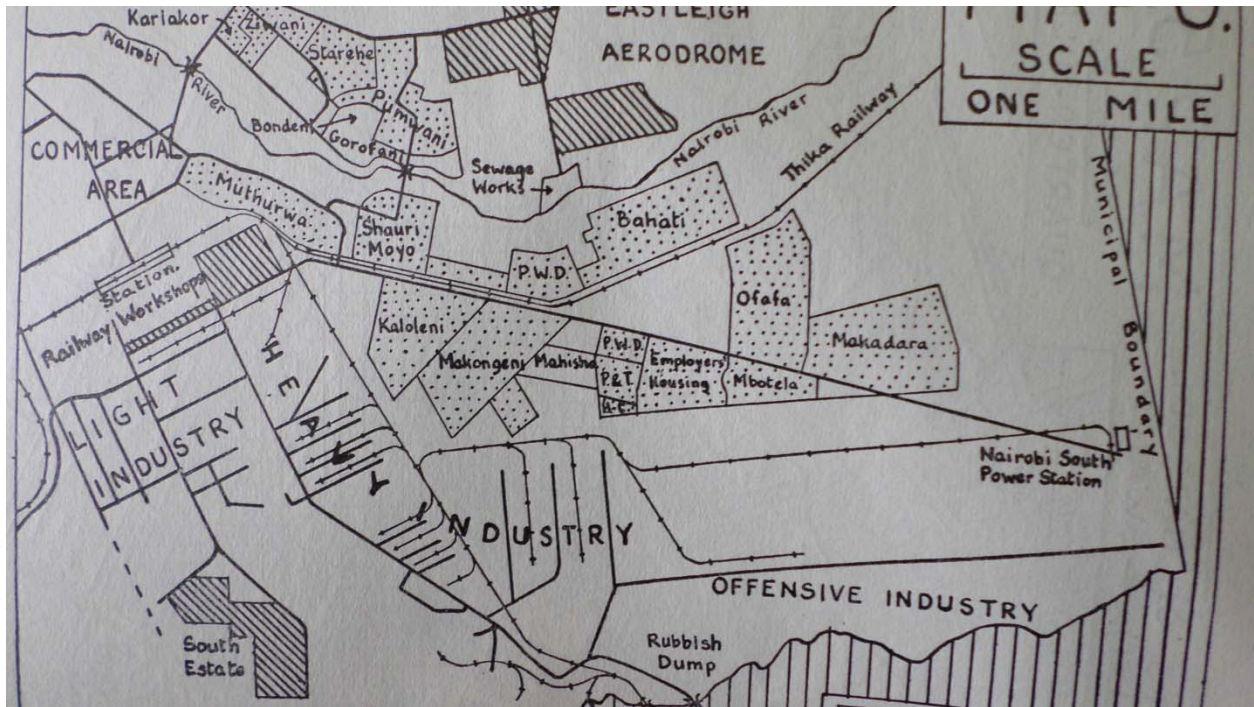


Figure 4.1: A map of Municipal Estates 1957. R.W. Walmsley, *Nairobi: The Geography of a New City*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1957.

construction of projects.”⁵³ The Board oversaw the completion of several new estates at Starehe, Kaloleni, Bondeni, Bahati, and Gorephani (see figure 4.1). Distinguishing themselves from the single roomed bachelor quarters of past housing initiatives, these estates planned for the accommodation of families, consisting of “semi-detached cottages,” separated by grass plots. Makogoni, the most expensive of the schemes, included a “kitchen, food store, bicycle or pram shelter, and small front or back verandah” for each dwelling.⁵⁴ These layouts signified the state’s vision concerning the type of African that would reside in the city: the steadily employed townsman, who would make a permanent home for himself and his family. George Tyson, a former mayor of Nairobi, highlighted the state’s new-found interest in the stability of the urban African family, proclaiming, “We can no longer take it as the normal state of affairs that a man

⁵³ Anderson, “Corruption at City Hall,” *Azania* 36 (2001): 145.

⁵⁴ L.W. Thornton White, L. Silberman, and P.R. Anderson, *Nairobi-Master Plan for a Colonial Capital* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1948), 36.

works in Nairobi and his wife and family scratch a livelihood out of an allotment in the Reserve.”⁵⁵ The 1954 Committee on African Wages echoed Tyson’s conclusions arguing that the “lack of housing has been a major factor in preventing the development of urban family life and of stable African labor force. The African worker wishing to live a decent existence has had to keep ‘one foot’—and his family—in the reserve.”⁵⁶

The family-unit likewise became the policy standard for housing on the coast. The Mombasa Municipal Board (MBB) established its first housing estate in 1947 on a seventy acre plot overlooking the Tudor Creek.⁵⁷ Wilson described this estate as a “model of effective African housing,” arguing that the estate provided “some of the finest housing in East Africa, at rents within the ability of Africans to pay.”⁵⁸ He also lauded the estate for its superior social amenities, which included, “easy access to transportation, adequate recreation facilities and available grounds to be developed for playing grounds, schools, and other facilities.”⁵⁹

Good housing, as Wilson’s remarks illustrated, not only meant the quality of the dwelling spaces, but the capacity of an estate to introduce African tenants to the broader features of community life, including leisure. The development of recreational amenities—playing fields, parks, and social centers—coincided with the general trajectory of housing development. Major John Lyons, a Labour MP, implored the MCN to include “adequate recreational facilities, with a community center and other small amenities” in its plans for estates.⁶⁰ A report ambitiously entitled *Nairobi: Masterplan for a Colonial Capital* described recreation as the “lubricant of

⁵⁵ George A. Tyson, *African Housing Problem* (Nairobi: English Press, 1953).

⁵⁶ F.W. Carpenter, Chairman, *Report on the Committee of African Wages* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1954), 95.

⁵⁷ Richard E. Stren, “A Survey of Lower Income Areas in Mombasa,” in *Urban Challenge in East Africa*, ed. John Hutton (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1970), 99.

⁵⁸ Wilson, “African Housing in Mombasa,” 364.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ C.E. Mortimer to Town Clerk, Nairobi, April 20, 1942, KNA, JW/217.

social relationships” for quality and harmonious urban life.⁶¹ The “masterplan” called for each estate, or “neighborhood unit,” to feature a large open space, functioning as both a general recreational area and as a place for social events and community gatherings.⁶² Estates would also have a community center and a nature reserve for relaxation. Regimentally was crucial to their plans concerning leisure spaces; the report linked recreation to legible and controlled spaces: social halls, parks, clubs, and playing fields.

Recreational facilities became a standard feature of housing schemes, with most estates including a social hall, in addition to playing fields, shopping centers, and gardens.⁶³ By 1956, Nairobi had five main social centers at Pumwani, Ziwani, Kaloleni, Kariakor, with plans for additional facilities at Bahati and Mbotela estates.⁶⁴ Nairobi’s Municipal Affairs Officer also enumerated at least nine different football pitches in the African estates, in addition to the Municipal Stadium, which “were being very fully used throughout the year.”⁶⁵ Mombasa had at least four neighborhood halls at Port Tudor, Buxton, Mwembe Tayari, and Ziwani, in addition to the African Social Center at Tonoka.⁶⁶ Even an inexpensive estate, while only offering its residents communal kitchens and shared bathrooms, boasted a club, library and reading room, a dance hall and tea room, football grounds, and tennis courts.⁶⁷ Between the years 1955 and 1957, the Municipal Council agreed to expend £60,000 towards improving welfare and recreational

⁶¹ Ibid., 48.

⁶² Ibid., 64

⁶³ Ibid. 36.

⁶⁴ F.A. Peet, African Affairs Officer, Nairobi, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1956, c. 1957, KNA, JW/6/11.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ G.M Wilson, “Welfare Organizations and Social Services in Mombasa,” in *Social Survey of Mombasa*, ed. G.M Wilson (Nairobi: Kenya Government, 1958), 420.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 18.

amenities within African estates, including the provision of new ngoma stages, sports and play grounds, and women's clubs.⁶⁸

Church organizations and employers also contributed to the development of new recreational facilities.⁶⁹ Wilson noted Changamwe residents' use of the Methodist Church Hall for social and recreational activities. Jackson Ochieno, whose father worked as a clerk for East African Railways and Harbors, described the dwelling spaces of his railways estate as small and unpleasant dormitories, with "plaster and cement walls" and shared outdoor kitchens and latrines, he remembered the excellence of the recreational facilities.⁷⁰ "Railways was a very good employer," he declared. He explained, "We used to have a playground, swings, and slides. We were living in an estate so the estate had such facilities."⁷¹ His estate also had a social hall where adults attended weekend dances.⁷²

Despite their lofty ambitions, state welfare and recreational initiatives struggled to produce the transformative results they promised. Plans for new recreational spaces were subject to internal debates, particularly regarding their costs. R.S. Winser, the Municipal African Affairs Officer for Mombasa, cited lack of capital as the primary cause for delays in laying out new playing fields.⁷³ The construction and maintenance of playing fields, he added, was a "costly business," due to the requirements of "watering and rest periods under Mombasa conditions."⁷⁴ The Nairobi African Affairs Committee, while affirming its support for social welfare programs, insisted that such work be undertaken with little "capital expenditure."⁷⁵ While the state ardently

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Jackson Ochieno, interview by author.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ R.S. Winser, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department, 1954-1956, c.1957, KNA, UY/4/3.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Minute 1, African Affairs Committee, MCN, KNA, September 17, 1954, JW/2/28.

self-lauded its role as the paternalistic guardians of Africans' interest, it was reluctant to pay for the costs of guardianship.⁷⁶ To generate revenue, municipal councils raised hire charges for the halls, encouraged the sale of beer, and attempted to distribute membership cards for paying patrons.⁷⁷

State and Municipal leaders, in seeking to develop new playgrounds and open spaces, encountered a variety of conflicting forms of land use. While the Nairobi "masterplan" designated 6,169.1 acres—or 28.71 per cent of the city's total space—to be used as open spaces, the report did not differentiate between private open spaces, and those that would be available to the general public.⁷⁸ Many of the demarcated spaces (see figure 4.2) belonged to clubs, with access exclusive to members and their guests. When the Parks Committee approached the Nairobi Club to allow for use of a small portion of their plot as a children's playground, the club rejected the request, stating that "the Club could not be committed to the establishment on its grounds of what would, in effect, become a public playground."⁷⁹

"Open space," moreover, was itself a broadly defined term that entailed multiple forms of uses, in addition to leisure. State and municipal urban planners attempted to develop open spaces into identifiable recreational amenities by installing swings, see-saws, and plantings.⁸⁰ They, however, encountered various social and economic interests that had a stake in the utilization of these spaces. In 1943, the occupant of house next to a playground at Yusufalli Road requested

⁷⁶ Lewis, *Empire State Building*, 139.

⁷⁷ For example see Minute 10, Finance Committee, MCN, February 16, 1949, KNA, JW/2/24. The committee urged raising the hire charges for halls as a result of declining beer sales.

⁷⁸ White, Silberman, and Anderson, *Nairobi-Master Plan for a Colonial Capital*, 1.

⁷⁹ Minute 2, Parks Committee, MCN, April 7, 1943, KNA, JW/2/18.

⁸⁰ There were many playground development projects, particularly between the years 1942-1950. For selected examples, see Minute 5, Parks Committee, MCN, November 4 1942, KNA, JW/2/18; Minute 5, Parks Committee, MCN, August 4, 1943, KNA, JW/2/19; Minute 10, Parks Committee, MCN, April 4, 1945, KNA, JW/2/21.

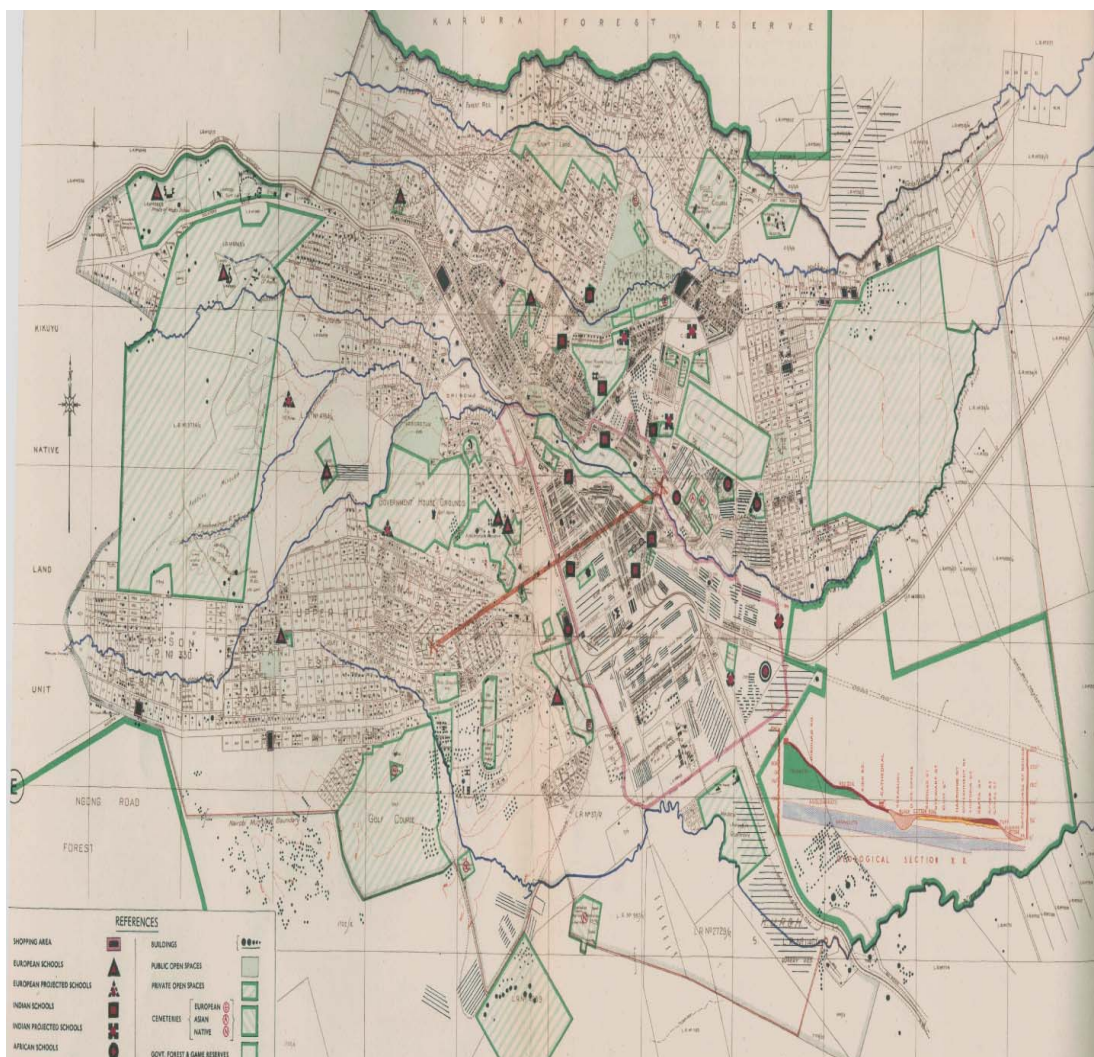


Figure 4.2: A city map of Nairobi demarcating open spaces and recreational lands. L.W. Thornton White, L. Silberman, and P.R Anderson, Nairobi-Masterplan for a Colonial Capital. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1948.

permission from the MCN to cultivate vegetables on a portion of a designated playground.⁸¹ The MCN granted the request, agreeing that “beyond a certain amount of clearing, no work had been carried out on this piece of ground and it was agreed that the time was not right for the erection of equipment thereon.”⁸² The MCN also abandoned plans to convert an open space in Eastleigh

⁸¹ Parks Committee, MCN, May 5, 1943, KNA JW/2/18.

⁸² Ibid.

into a playground, when it discovered that “a private individual had acquired the plot.”⁸³ Unlike social halls—which established spatial permanence by the physical presence of a building—playgrounds and football pitches required the physical transformation of an open spaces through landscaping and other embellishments that necessitated negotiation between municipal authorities and multiple community interests. The city, particularly the African Eastlands, was growing at a rate faster than the municipal government could control. Between 1948 to 1962, Kenyans migrated to towns at an outstanding rate of 174 percent, with Nairobi and Mombasa absorbing most of the population.⁸⁴ While leisure emerged as one important need of the African population, African residents were also looking for space to establish housing, small-scale food production, churches, and businesses.

Financial and land use dilemmas aside, urban planners and state social engineers confronted an African population that was both larger than anticipated and unwilling to accept state control over their daily lives. Despite the development of new estates, housing shortages continued to escalate throughout the 1950s and into the postcolonial era; by 1957, there was an estimated shortage of “bed-spaces amounting to 22,000.”⁸⁵ The administration nonetheless struggled to makes Africans live in the municipal estates. Vasey blamed this problem on Africans’ unwillingness to pay rent. “The African,” he postulated, did not “realize that the community is bearing a burden on his behalf, but tends rather to look upon the rent figure established at the onset of the scheme as being the level at which housing should be provided for him.”⁸⁶

⁸³ Minute 7, Parks Committee, MCN, June 6, 1945, KNA JW/2/21.

⁸⁴ Beverly Lindsay, *African Migration and African Development* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 157.

⁸⁵ Anderson, “Corruption at City Hall,” 149-154; also see *Histories of the Hanged*, 226-229.

⁸⁶ Vasey, “Report on African Housing,” 1.

While officials blamed economics for Africans' aversion to the municipal estates, social relationships were the primary factor that determined where Africans chose to reside in the city. Kenyans were willing to face the threat of demolitions and police harassment in order to live in the places where they enjoyed community bonds, social support, and independence.⁸⁷ "The new landlords in the model estate of Makadara," Luise White argued, "could not do for their tenants what the old ones in Pumwani or the new ones in Mathare could."⁸⁸ Wilson likened the municipal estates in Mombasa to an "impersonal insatiable monster," that stood in contrast to the social support systems of the *Majengo* villages. Juma Jajanda, who maintained a steady government salary as a clerk during the 1950s, chose to live with his family in a shared Swahili house, rather than the more prestigious estates of Tudor. Explaining his decision, he cited his friendship with his landlord and other tenants. "We were all Muslims," he told me, "everybody had each other and therefore we lived peacefully."⁸⁹

As the state struggled to control where people lived, it also could not determine the parameters of African leisure. Although social halls offered new novelties, Africans maintained their own autonomous leisure spaces within the houses and porches of friends and neighbors. Simon Thiga recounted parties, where he and his friends from the various estates met for lively music and dancing. "We sang the songs ourselves and danced to the tunes," he recalled, "We danced to traditional tunes and mostly with girls."⁹⁰ He maintained that these functions were self-organized by his friends and neighbors, not the state or municipality. Municipal leaders likewise struggled to make the stadiums profitable; urban residents were reluctant to pay for a ticket to the stadium when they could easily watch a football match for free. The Municipal

⁸⁷ White, *the Comforts of Home*, 215.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 213.

⁸⁹ Juma Kajanda, interview by author, Mombasa, December 8, 2014.

⁹⁰ Simon Ngugi Thiga, interview by author, Nairobi, March 10, 2014.

Affairs Officer for Nairobi, noted that the stadium's low perimeter fence of corrugated iron was "by no means unclimbable" and spectators would "go to great lengths of trouble to avoid paying the entrance money."⁹¹ Local officials in Mombasa conceded that teams themselves preferred to play within the various open spaces, where spectators could watch "free of charge," with often "little difference in the standard of play."⁹² Desperate to extract revenue from the stadium, Nairobi began using the stadium to stage ngoma performances and film showings. These efforts, however, were ultimately an economic bust, attracting only small crowds.⁹³ Africans, as these examples illustrate, created spaces of leisure for themselves outside of the parameters of state regulation and control. While many Africans certainly used social centers, stadiums, and playing fields for certain activities, they also contributed to the production of the city on their own terms and in ways that the colonial state was unable to map.

COUNTRY PASTIMES AND URBAN RECREATION

The state's creation of social halls occurred within a period of changing ideologies, and interests within African communities concerning their leisure time. Emmanuel Ayempong and Charles Ambler have argued that leisure was "not a fixed or natural category but a fluid phenomenon, variously understood and historically specific."⁹⁴ Colonial social engineers defined leisure according to their own standards of organized activities that they could map according to specific times and places: sports, organized dances, music performances, etc.⁹⁵ African leisure time, on the other hand, often consisted of multiple forms activities that operated within the

⁹¹ F.A Peet African Affairs Officer, Nairobi, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1957, c.1958, KNA, RN/13/4.

⁹² Winsor, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1958.

⁹³ Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1955.

⁹⁴ Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, C. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996).

⁹⁵ Ibid., 14.

private and ephemeral domains of everyday life.⁹⁶ Respondents identified activities such as gardening, hunting excursions, visits with neighbors and relatives, and reading the Bible or Qur'an as activities their parents enjoyed during their hours of relaxation.⁹⁷ "Mother was a good gardener," Mary Ramtu recounted, "she had a very big shamba. And she used to like that very much."⁹⁸ Jane Kangethe explained that her parents worked throughout most of the day; during the late afternoons, however, she would find them resting underneath a tree, "just going through the Bible."⁹⁹

Recreation in the countryside also took the form of organized dances and community rituals. Luka Mbatu, who currently resides in Changanwe, remembered vibrant community functions in his Kamba village. During these occasions, women performed dances, while the men watched as they consumed locally distilled liquor.¹⁰⁰ Peter Kuria Kirima, a Kikuyu, fondly recounted his own participation in various local dances: "We took the dancing occasions as just moments of joy. We would just go and normally engage in pure dance. We took the ladies away and danced the whole day. Sometimes we went to the bush and cleared a ground for dancing...it was a good opportunity to meet potential mates and even future wives."¹⁰¹ Kenyans residing in the city attempted to preserve such rituals, using the various open spaces of the city.¹⁰² Peter

⁹⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁷ Paul Kibwawa, interview by author, Nairobi, October 6, 2014.

⁹⁸ Mary Ramtu, interview by author.

⁹⁹ Jane Kangethe, interview by author. When I asked Hafswa Hussein Abdullah about the leisure activities of her parents, she told me that she would often find her parents reading the Qur'an in the evening. Hafswa Hussein Abdullah, interview by author, Mombasa, November 17, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Luka Mbatu, interview by author, Mombasa, December 11, 2014.

¹⁰¹ Peter Kuria Kirima, interview by author, Nairobi, March 1, 2014.

¹⁰² Godfrey Muriuki, interview by author, Nairobi, October 7, 2014. Professor Muriuki is a prominent historian of Kenya and a lecturer at the University of Nairobi. Our interview centered on his experiences in the city, as well as forms of Kikuyu leisure. While I treated this foremost as an academic interview, our discussion also emphasized his personal memories as young man and his early experiences in the city.

Kuria Kirima practiced dancing at Nairobi's Kamukunji grounds for "long hours," improvising traditional instruments by using bottle tops and waste metal.¹⁰³

Missionaries in the countryside, guided by a Victorian-era muscular Christianity, introduced sports, and field games, believing that these activities would enhance both Africans' physical health and moral discipline (See Figures 4.3 and 4.4)¹⁰⁴ Eunice Muthoni, a Kikuyu woman from Makuyu, recounted a colonial teacher named Carey Francis who took "games very seriously." Eunice told me, "He ensured that we were in the field for practice at every games time."¹⁰⁵ During her school days Mary Romtu was active in netball, volleyball, as well as a variety of field sports.¹⁰⁶ Track was her favorite; "I used to enjoy the competition," she exclaimed, "I would run really fast. I used to get a lot of prizes on that."¹⁰⁷ Missionary games and sports, although couched within a rationality of racial superiority and paternalistic guardianship, nonetheless provided entertaining diversions for curious youths in the countryside.¹⁰⁸

While state social engineers introduced new opportunities for sports and athletics, they found they could not make Africans play the games in the manner they wanted. Tom Askwirth, who was himself a former Olympic athlete, conceded that appreciation of athletic finesse, skill and endurance mattered less to African participants than fun, frivolity, and enjoyment. "The

¹⁰³ Peter Kuria Kirima, interview by author; Simon Thiga similarly recounted the improvisation of dancing using banana leaves: Simon Ngugi Thiga, interview by author.

¹⁰⁴ See J.A. Mangan, *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 6; J.A. Mangan, "Britain's Chief Spiritual Export: Imperial Sport as Moral Metaphor, Political Symbol and Cultural Bond," *the International Journal of the History of Sport* 27 (2010), 328–336. See also Tom Cunningham, "'These Our Games' – Sport and the Church of Scotland Mission to Kenya, C. 1907–1937," *History in Africa* 43 (2016): 259–288.

¹⁰⁵ Eunice Mutoni, interview by author, Nairobi, March 17, 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Romtu, interview by author.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Mangan, *The Cultural Bond*, 6.



Figure 4.3: African Olympic Games, Nairobi Police Grounds, 1931. National Museums of Kenya.



Figure 4.4: A Tennis Tournament. National Museums of Kenya.

African likes fun,” he declared, concluding that “he is only beginning to appreciate excellent individual athletic performance.”¹⁰⁹ Football, the most popular sport among Africans, featured rivalries, boasting, and jesting that deviated from Europeans’ emphasis on athleticism, discipline and teamwork.¹¹⁰ Adam Hussein, who played football as a youth in Kenya, recalled spirited competitions that evolved into lively jesting, which extended beyond the football fields and into the daily interactions within the community. He explained to me, “If you met some of the people whom I was playing against. Some of them were walking and I always laughed at them. When we were playing you were always trying to finish me. Now see how you are walking! Look at me, I am still strong. See how you how walking!”¹¹¹ Such rivalries, Adam insisted, occurred in the spirit of good fun and rarely developed into actual animosity. European officials nonetheless interpreted footballers’ heated passions and interactions with rivals as emblematic of discordant, unsportsmanlike, and violent behaviors. Africans, as Wilson remarked, too often regarded matches as “as a fight and the opponent as an enemy,” rather than adopting British ideals of sportsmanship.¹¹²

The migration of Africans to the city, as scholars have shown, was neither unidirectional nor necessarily permanent; Kenyans maintained linkages to their rural homes and oscillated between the city and the countryside.¹¹³ A central thesis of Galvin Kitching’s economic study of Kenya was Kenyan elites’ use of wages from urban labor to accumulate land in the

¹⁰⁹ Tom Askwith, “Community Development Works,” KNA, MSS/120/2.

¹¹⁰ Laura Fair, *Past Times and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post Abolition Zanzibar, 1890-1945*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 226-264.

¹¹¹ Adam Hussein, interview by author.

¹¹² Wilson, “Leisure and Recreation Mombasa,” 1.

¹¹³ James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Cooperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 123-165; White, *The Comforts of Home*, 29-51.

countryside.¹¹⁴ For many young men, labor had become a necessary requisite for marriage.¹¹⁵ Kenyans left for the city, but returned to invest in land, handle matters of family or to broker marriages. Return visits of urban residents to their rural homesteads shaped Kenyans' imaginations of city life. Godfrey Muriuki remembered seeing relatives and neighbors, who visited their homes from the city, where they worked as household servants, cooks, and drivers. "When they went home, they looked very sophisticated," he recounted, "here they are very nicely dressed with hats and ties, and so on. Once they got there, particularly the youth would look at them with envy, with admiration, with the rest of it."¹¹⁶ As a young girl Jane Kangethe boarded a train with her cousin to visit her aunt and uncle in Nairobi. Upon her arrival, her uncle took her and her cousin on a tour of the city. "I saw beautiful things like colored lights," she told me, "Kisumu did not have colored lights. We had one plain light. This one had colored lights which were beautiful."¹¹⁷

The circulatory migration patterns between the city and the countryside introduced new forms of leisure into the countryside. As urban laborers returned to the countryside, they brought with them new tastes in music and dances from the city. Guitar was particularly popular among the young men of Jane's village; she remembered visits from bands, which performed for local dances as attendees experimented with the latest styles, such as the twist.¹¹⁸ Dances integrated Western and local styles of dancing and instruments. As Godfrey Muriuki, recounted, "You

¹¹⁴ Gavin Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

¹¹⁵ Rising prices of bride wealth, the money a man had to lay down to secure a marriage, was a major impetus for men's move to the city. See Brett L. Shadle, *"Girl Cases": Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiiland, Kenya, 1890-1970* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2006); Bill Bravman, *Making Ethnic Ways: Communities and Their Transformations in Taita, Kenya 1800-1950* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998).

¹¹⁶ Godfrey Muriuki, interview by author.

¹¹⁷ Jane Kangethe, interview by author.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

would find that for the initiated youth, both boys and girls, there would be a specific field, where they would all gather, with metal bells, they would be ringing, and guitars and they would be dancing.”¹¹⁹

New forms of leisure were a source of friction between generations and senior members of the community. Some parents and community elders objected to the new dance styles and guitar playing, citing concerns of morality and sexuality. A good Christian, “should never be a guitar player,” Godfrey Muriuki explained to me.¹²⁰ Jane Kangethe’s parents strictly prohibited her and her sisters from attending these dances, believing that they would “be taken advantage of” if they attended such functions.¹²¹ She explained, “You could not get a daughter to go to those places. The sons some of them could break up (sic) and go. The daughters, we were really taken care of. You found that where you sleep is right next to where your parents sleep. So we found that we could not manage to go out at night.”¹²² Even sports did not escape suspicion and scrutiny of particularly conservative parents and elders. According to Eunice, “My parents were against me going [out] for tennis practice. They thought I was using it as an excuse to avoid duties at home.”¹²³ Benta Kilonzo, expounding on the obstinacy of her village’s elders, recalled a missionary priest being forced out of the community due to his enthusiasm for sports and recreational activities:

We had a Catholic priest who really took the issue of sport seriously. He would even arrange for games kits for us from America, and there was a time he wanted to fly us out so we could also see how the world is outside there. However, when the parents heard of it, they got so furious saying that the priest was spoiling their girls and wanted nothing to do with him. They finally chased him away when we got independence.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Godfrey Muriuki, interview by author.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Jane Kangethe, interview by author.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Eunice Muthoni, interview by author.

¹²⁴ Benta Kilonzo, interview by author, Nairobi, March 17, 2014.

Benta's narrative calls attention to the generational changes and conflicts concerning leisure.

While youth saw the new sports and games as fun, exciting and new, community elders viewed these forms of leisure as degrading the social values of discipline of their children. The older generation, Benta explicated, regarded sports as "something for idlers in the society," adding that, "parents did not take it kindly when their children engaged in too much (sic) games."¹²⁵

The provision of social centers, dances, and football leagues of the city were not removed from the social and cultural changes of country leisure; new recreational spaces coincided with social and cultural transformations regarding African leisure time. Urban migrants arrived in Nairobi and Mombasa with their own tastes, interests, and conceptions of leisure, which shaped both the activities that were popular in the social halls and those that failed to gain traction. The state's recreational initiatives, moreover, emphasized incorporating indigenous expressions of entertainment into a legible, controlled, and supervised framework. In 1934, the MCN approved a resolution stating that "no ngoma or native dancing shall be permitted in any building, tent, street, or open space within the Municipality without written permission first had and obtained from the district commissioner."¹²⁶ The opening of beer gardens coincided with local efforts to curb the production and consumption of locally distilled forms of alcohol.¹²⁷ The state's development of social centers and stadiums was as much about constricting avenues for African leisure, as it was about creating new opportunities. CDOs, however, found that they could not

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Minute 19, General Meeting, MCN, May 29, 1934, KNA, JW/2/48.

¹²⁷ Justin Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa 1850-1999* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 141-59. Justin Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa 1850-1999* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 141-59. Jonathan Crush and Charles Ambler, "Alcohol in Southern African Labor History," in *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, ed. Jonathan Crush and Charles Ambler (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 1-55

make their institutions successful without compromise and attention to the recreational interests of the African population.

The changes regarding African leisure, moreover, points to reasons that explain Africans' choices to use the halls. For many urban Africans, the move to the city from the countryside coincided with freedom to move from home and to seek out wage labor.¹²⁸ While the move from the city was far from the abrupt rupture from ethnic discipline that colonial sociologists had postulated, urban Kenyans were also not iron-clad traditionalists.¹²⁹ For young migrant men and women, the city was not only a space where they could aspire to economic success, but as a "site of new possibility" where they could forge new futures.¹³⁰ The social halls, municipal football leagues, and weekend dances became spaces where Africans explored new expressions of socialization, leisure, and identity within Kenya's urban centers. Africans did indeed become townsmen, although in ways distinct from the teleological expectations of colonial sociologists.

ADMINISTRATION AND NEGOTIATION OF STATE RECREATIONAL SPACES

Ideologies of space, as Henrietta Moore has argued, are often distinguished from day-to-day

¹²⁸ See G. Thomas Burgess and Andrew Burton, "Introduction," in *Generations Past: Youth in East African History*, ed. Andrew Burton and Hélène Chaton-Bigot (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 1–24. Ocobock, *an Uncertain Age*, 130–165. Ocobock elsewhere notes that some young men migrated to the city to find labor as early as the age of twelve. Ocobock, "'Joy Rides for Juveniles'," 43.

¹²⁹ For examples John Lonsdale, "The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty and Civic Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought," in *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity*, ed. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 265–314; Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, C. 1935 to 1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). In making this critique, I am wary of overtly challenging the influential and important work of multiple scholars of Kenya. Ethnicity has rightly been an important theme in Kenyan historiography. Much of the previous work, however, has emphasized the histories of particular rural areas, villages, and communities. I argue, on the other hand, that city provided a distinct space in which Africans negotiated ideas of ethnicity, and developed alternative modes of identity.

¹³⁰ Ocobock, *an Uncertain Age*, 132.

practices.¹³¹ By creating new social centers and playgrounds in the African estates, state welfare officers turned to developing multiple forms of activity that would shape the identity of these spaces. Municipal African affairs committees had authority over administering the social halls, typically with community development officers (CDO) serving as site managers.¹³² CDOs tended to be relatively progressive thinkers within the colonial administration. When Tom Askwith served as the Municipal African Affairs Officer of Nairobi, he insisted that his adjunct be an African.¹³³ While European welfare officers saw their work in terms of modern imperial paternalism, they also emphasized close collaboration with Africans. In 1949, the Management Committee of Tonoka Social Center, had at least seven African and South Asians on its ten-member panel.¹³⁴ Ismail Ramadhan described the local social hall at Kibera as managed by a group of young men from the community, rather than by Europeans. The young men often visited other social centers throughout the city, returning with new ideas regarding programming and activities.¹³⁵ While European interests drove the creation of social centers, African actors contributed to their day-to-day operations.

Two mandates drove the activities of CDOs. First, the state envisioned the social halls and playgrounds as familial spaces, reaffirming the virtues of a stable, African middle class with a stake in maintaining the colonial order. Social halls and playgrounds would expose Africans to moral and healthy outlets for entertainment and offer alternatives to the vices of the city. Secondly, the state's recreational initiatives would need to be financially self-sustaining. CDOs

¹³¹ Henriatta Moore, *Space, Text, and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996), 74. Moore argues that meanings of spaces are not necessarily inherent in their organization, rather through the "activities of their social actors" (74).

¹³² Wilson, "Welfare Organizations and Social Services in Mombasa," 420.

¹³³ "Tom Askwith, Obituary," *the Telegraph*, September 28, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1357785/Tom-Askwith.html>.

¹³⁴ E.K Binns, Annual Report of the African Social Center 1949, March 10, 1950, KNA, UY/4/9.

¹³⁵ Ismail Ramadan, interview by author, Nairobi, September 17, 2014.

faced pressure to find mechanisms that would generate revenue to support their social and athletic programs. Both mandates relied on the capacity of the social halls to become a resonant feature in urban Africans' social lives and ultimately their willingness to pay for their leisure. The commercial nature of leisure was a new value that needed to be instilled. CDOs monitored and evaluated the social effects of their programs. The following Table (3A) illustrates some of the activities occurring at the hall in terms of their frequency of occurrence. Municipal reports highlighted the struggles of CDOs to generate interest in their activities. Efforts to introduce indoor games, such as table tennis, "snakes and ladders," dominos, and draughts were unavailing.¹³⁶ In 1958, the Provincial Commissioner and Charles Njonjo inaugurated the opening of a new tennis court at the Tonoka Social Center, by playing an exhibition match against the District Commissioner and the African Affairs Officer, drawing a crowd of curious spectators; by the end of the year, however, the court sat empty with the exception of a few South Asian youths whom the management allowed entry, in the vain hope they would attract African patrons to use the facilities¹³⁷ Such failures call attention to the experimental nature of the social halls, as European CDOs sought to impose their own interests and activities into the social centers.

CDOs, on the other hand, found success through sports, such as football and boxing, which drew a stable cohort of young men to the social halls.¹³⁸ Jimmy Litumi, who grew up in Nairobi estates, recounted spending his youthful days playing football, going home in the

¹³⁶ E.K Binns, Annual Report of the African Social Center 1949; E.K. Binns, Annual Report of the African Social Center 1950, c.1951, KNA, UY/4/10.

¹³⁷ Winsor, African Affairs Officer, Mombasa, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1958.

¹³⁸ Ali Philip Njoro, interview by author, Mombasa, December 12, 2014; Frederick Uledi, interview by author, December 12, 2014; Mutulu Mwastoia, interview by author; Jimmy Litumi, interview by author, Nairobi, February 7, 2014.

evening to take a shower and eat dinner, and then returning to Karoleni social hall for evening boxing training.¹³⁹ “I did some boxing after dropping out of school,” recalled Frederick Uledi,

Table 4.1: Frequency of Social Hall Activities

Pumwani			Kariokor		
Activity	1958	1957	Activity	1958	1957
Dances	32	89	Dances	19	22
Meetings	224	155	Meetings	212	147
Cinema	359	317	Cinema	47	24
Clubs	475	324	Clubs	380	125
Tea Parties	4	2	Exhibitions	2	3
Boxing Shows	4	5	Boxing Clubs	93	NA
Demonstration	3	NA	Concerts	9	NA
			Tea Parties	11	7

who was born in Freretown in the 1930s. He added, “There was a teacher here also who trained us in boxing. He trained us from the Municipal Council, he was a white man.”¹⁴⁰ Uledi’s training by a European professional was not atypical; CDOS believed that boxing, although a violent sport, could instill moral attributes of physical strength and discipline onto urban men, if it was done in a supervised and professional setting.¹⁴¹ During the late 1950s, the Municipal Welfare

¹³⁹ Jimmy Litumi, interview by author.

¹⁴⁰ Frederick Uledi, interview by author.

¹⁴¹ For a comparative example regarding the development of boxing in Africa, see Emmanuel Akyeampong, “Bukom and the Social History of Boxing in Accra: Warfare and Citizenship in Precolonial Ga Society,” *The International Journal of African History* 35, no. 1 (2002): 39–60. In Kenya boxing represented a more respectable and organized form of activity to traditional wrestling or stick fighting, which European officers saw as violent and connected with “tribal” warfare. Matthew Carotenuto,

Officer, H.C. Creswell, a strong proponent of the sport, recruited professional trainers to provide boxing instruction at various social halls.¹⁴² By 1958, there was a boxing club in “each social hall” and 245 boxers were in training. The boxing club at Pumwani “won five Kenya titles and provided seven finalists in the 1958 Kenya Open Championships.”¹⁴³ The popularity of boxing activities at the Pumwani Hall became so extensive that the managers disallowed spectators and began issuing membership cards to approved patrons, in order to control numbers and raise revenue.¹⁴⁴

Football leagues likewise enjoyed tremendous success. Municipal officials, looking to curtail the freeform and improvised nature of African football, organized African footballers into clubs and professional leagues. Adam Hussein recalled the arrival of a “certain mzungu,” who began organizing a youth league and community tournaments.¹⁴⁵ The Nairobi Provincial Football Association consolidated the city’s various leagues and managed organized matches; the Coast Province Athletic Association, served a similar function for Mombasa. In 1956, Nairobi’s Municipal African Affairs Officer estimated over three-hundred league football matches between April and November; by 1958, there were at least seventy football teams playing regularly in Mombasa.¹⁴⁶ Through their participation in the football leagues, urban Africans formed new affiliations and social circles that extended beyond their respective ethnic groups. Adam remembered his participation in the football leagues as an important turning point in his enjoyment of the game; through the leagues, he attested, he developed relationships with athletes

“Crafting Sport History Behind Bars: Wrestling with State Patronage and Colonial Confinement in Kenya,” *History in Africa* 43 (2016): 289–321.

¹⁴² Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1956.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ E.R Harris, to Secretary Community and Development, December 3, 1956, KNA, AG/14/1.

¹⁴⁵ Adam Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, March 1, 2014.

¹⁴⁶ F.A Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department Report 1956; R.S. Winsor, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1958.

outside of Kibra.¹⁴⁷ Donald Mbotela, who competed for his company in Mombasa's municipal league, explained, "We were a mixed people, all the tribes, we didn't know whose tribe was what. We didn't know who tribe was what. We just knew the employees."¹⁴⁸

The desire of CDOs to make their programs well-utilized and popular places for recreation made them attentive to urban Africans' preferences, consumptive tastes, and social interests. When CDOs attempted to introduce what they saw as a more cultured selection of dramas and documentaries to the lineup of film showings at the social halls, audiences dwindled and the officers quickly returned to the standard program of westerns and action pictures that resonated more strongly with African audiences.¹⁴⁹ CDOs had a stake in accommodating the preferences and tastes of African audiences; with the right films, showings provided a mechanism for a steady, albeit modest, stream of revenue, with relatively little overhead.¹⁵⁰ For those who could afford it the cinema was ultimately the place to go for the best quality films.¹⁵¹ For many Kenyans, however, the cinema was too costly, and—in the case of Nairobi—required special permission from the cinema owners and local authorities to gain entry. Jackson Ochieno's father, a born-again Christian, believed that the films of the cinemas depicted immoral

¹⁴⁷ Adam Hussein, interview by author. Such opportunities also extended beyond national lines. Ismail Ramadan, for example, competed for Simba, a professional football team based in Dar es Salaam. Ismail Ramadan, interview by author.

¹⁴⁸ Donald Mbotela, interview by author.

¹⁴⁹ Binns, Annual Report African Social Center 1949.

¹⁵⁰ F.A. Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1953, August 27, 1954, KNA, UY/4/2; Charles Ambler, "Popular Films and Colonial Audiences: The Movies in Northern Rhodesia," *Journal of American History* 106, no. 1 (2001): 83. The consumptive practices of cinema in Africa has been a topic of growing discussion in recent scholarship. See Laura Fair, "'They Stole the Show': Indian Films in Coastal Tanzania, 1950s-1980s," *Journal of African Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010): 91–106; James Burns, *Cinema and Society in the British Empire, 1895-1940* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013); James Burns, *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); Thomas Burgess, "Cinema, Bell Bottoms, and Miniskirts: Struggles Over Youth and Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 2–3 (2002): 287–313.

¹⁵¹ Jackson Ochieno, interview by author; Mary Romtu, interview by author.

behavior and he prohibited his children from going.¹⁵² The films of the social hall provided Jackson with a viable, albeit less satisfying, alternative for entertainment. Kenyans, however, made the most out of the social halls' limited selections, tailoring showings to their own tastes and predilections. Ismail Ramadan attested that, while there was the occasional "cowboy" film, the Asian movies were by far the most popular among the Nubian community residing in Kibra. He vividly recounted intricate plot lines that featured Hindu or Pakistani heroes triumphing over Sikh antagonists.¹⁵³

In 1949, the Tonoka Social Center controversially began selling European beer to African patrons. While the provisional commissioners agreed in 1946 to sanction liquor sales, the opening of a beer garden reflected a signification incorporation of alcohol into a broader framework of state-sponsored leisure.¹⁵⁴ The decision came despite prevailing concerns regarding "drunkenness" and the moral ills of African liquor consumption.¹⁵⁵ C.E. Mortimer, expressing his concerns over the number of drunk Africans seen around Kisumui and Nyali during the weekends, hyperbolically decried that, "Excessive drinking will ruin the manhood of the African people."¹⁵⁶ Even the generally progressive Wilson compared "the African attitude to drink" to that of a visiting serviceman, explaining, "To drink one must become intoxicated and to have the pleasure of being drunk."¹⁵⁷ The inclusion of beer gardens as a feature of the social halls reflected a shift from a rigid policy of prohibition, to the creation of a legible and controlled mechanism for Africans to consume alcohol. E.K. Binns argued that the success of the beer

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ismail Ramadan, interview by author.

¹⁵⁴ Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa 1850-1999*, 150; Lewis, *Empire State Building*, 277. Such an integration of leisure and alcohol sales was controversial; local officers feared the pervasion of drunkenness within the social centers.

¹⁵⁵ E.K. Law, Senior Superintendent of Police to Chairman, MAAC, February 9, 1950 KNA, UY/1/7.

¹⁵⁶ C.E. Mortimer, to DC Mombasa, February 18, 1950, KNA, UY/1/7.

¹⁵⁷ Wilson, "Recreation and Leisure Time Activities of Africans in Mombasa," 2.

gardens, would dissuade patrons from looking elsewhere “in search of stimulants,” particularly the “illicit spirituous liquor” that was sold in the *majengo* villages.¹⁵⁸ Despite forebodings of alcoholism, rowdiness, and hooliganism, Binns described the behavior of Africans using the beer gardens as “generally excellent,” with “no serious incidents of rowdyism (sic) worth recording.”¹⁵⁹ The beer garden, he declared, “had done much to prove that beer-drinking could be a social enjoyment, rather than a social evil.”¹⁶⁰ Wilson, despite his own forebodings, conceded that the social center had created a “legalized and orderly method of providing beer for Africans.”¹⁶¹

By allowing for the sale of beer, CDOs succeeded in creating a large and sustainable draw to the social centers. The municipal beer gardens became the primary spaces where Africans went to consume alcohol by the 1950s.¹⁶² The sale of beer proved a financial boon for the social centers, becoming their primary base of revenue. In 1951, the beer garden contributed SH 205,901.35 out of the Tonoka Social Center’s total revenue of SH 291,725.27; in 1952, in a year of revenue decline for the center, beer sales made up nearly seventy-one percent of the center’s earnings.¹⁶³ The financial success of the beer gardens trumped moral anxieties; while the opening of the beer garden at Tonoka had represented a bold, if not controversial initiative, most social halls featured a bar or beer garden by the 1950s. When local officials planned for a new social hall on the outskirts of Nairobi, the Commissioner of Local Government warned that they were putting too much emphasis on the sale of beer, reminding the officials that “other services

¹⁵⁸ Binns, Annual Report of the African Social Center 1949.

¹⁵⁹ Binns, Annual Report of the African Social Center 1950.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Wilson, “Recreation and Leisure Time Activities of African(sic) in Mombasa,” 3.

¹⁶² Willis, *Potent Brews*, 141.

¹⁶³ E.K. Binns, Annual Report of the African Social Center 1952, c.1953. KNA, UY/4/12a.

should not have to wait for beer profits.”¹⁶⁴ Although Kenya’s settler population was not keen on supplying alcohol to African men, they were far less eager to pay for the state’s welfare projects.

While CDOs intended state recreational spaces to reaffirm stable, familial relations, they ultimately became predominantly homosocial spaces that emphasized the social activities of men. While sports, such as boxing, and the beer gardens gave urban men a clear purpose to use the halls, male CDOs were less imaginative in terms of establishing diverse activities that would appeal to female patrons. The colonial state identified cities as masculine spaces with women’s roles auxiliary.¹⁶⁵ As the state grappled with the crises of the 1940s and 1950s, moreover, it was young men that seemed the most viable threat to colonial authority.¹⁶⁶ The state did target women through welfare clubs, which emphasized domestic education, by which women would “learn to sew and knit, to care for babies and learn to read and write.”¹⁶⁷ Tom Askirth saw these projects as crucial to the identity of the social halls, concluding that the centers stood to benefit women the most. Women, he reasoned, had a particularly “dreary life” and the “weekly visits to the club,” gave them a “chance to sing and enjoy themselves.”¹⁶⁸ While women, with whom I spoke, recalled their occasional participation in such activities, few recounted frequent use of the social centers; rather they viewed the social halls as the places where their husbands met to discuss business and politics over beer, or play football.¹⁶⁹ Binns noted, with surprised delight, the occasional attendance of entire African families, adding that it was “particularly rare” to see

¹⁶⁴ Commissioner of Local Government to the Clerk, Nairobi District Council, March 11, 1946, KNA, JA/25/22; Letter was written in response to Report of the Subcommittee, January 15, 1946, KNA, JA/25/22. At the meeting E.D Emley emphasized the role of beer sales to pay for the proposed social center, as well as the “welfare for the estates.”

¹⁶⁵ Lisa Lindsay, *Working with Gender*.

¹⁶⁶ Paul Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age*, 35

¹⁶⁷ Tom Askirth, “Memories of Kenya, 1936-1951,” unpublished memoir, KNA, MSS/120/1.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Helena Wanjiro Kirari, interview by author, Nairobi October 10, 2015; Jane Kangethe, interview by author.

“married ladies taking advantage of the services of the center.”¹⁷⁰ For women like Helena Wanjiro Kirari, leisure time took the form of household visits with friends, attending church, or reading the bible.¹⁷¹

Women were essential to the hall in at least one major aspect: the weekend dances held by the various ethnic associations. Many respondents had fond memories of these dances, particularly those that featured live bands.¹⁷² “Any musicians coming to perform had to be a rhumba expert,” Ali Philip Njoro, who frequently attended these dances, told me.¹⁷³ Wilson, observed the existence of individuals who “made a reasonable living” by teaching ballroom dancing to their friends and neighbors.¹⁷⁴ Welfare officers attempted to entrench gendered ideologies of stable, respectable family life into these events. The welfare officer in Nairobi restricted dances at Pumwani Memorial Hall to only married couples, in an effort to curtail drunkenness and promiscuity.¹⁷⁵ R. Mugo Gatheru recounted the frustration of men to find a partner, stating that if a man “wanted to go to a dance in one of the African social halls, there was no girl to take with him—unless he had asked his girlfriend from the reserves to come for the occasion,” which was often unfeasible.¹⁷⁶ Jackson Ochieno did not attend his estate’s dances, attesting that they were strictly for “for married couples.”¹⁷⁷ Determined single men, however, found ways to gain entry to these functions. Mutulu Mwastoria recounted meeting his wife at a social dance, which he attended as a single man.¹⁷⁸ Mary Romtu also recalled weekend

¹⁷⁰ E.K. Binns Annual Report of African Social Center 1949.

¹⁷¹ Helena Wanjiro Kirari, interview by author.

¹⁷² Ibid. Mutulu Mwastoria, interview by author; Ali Philip Njoro, interview by author, Mombasa December 9, 2014.

¹⁷³ Ali Philip Njoro, interview by author.

¹⁷⁴ Wilson, “Leisure and Recreation in Mombasa,” 2.

¹⁷⁵ White, *The Comforts of Home*, 143.

¹⁷⁶ Gatheru, *A Child of Two Worlds*, 108.

¹⁷⁷ Jackson Ochieno, interview by author.

¹⁷⁸ Mutulu Mwastoria, interview by author

adventures attending such dances. At one such occasion she encountered a Kisii pharmacy student who eventually became her boyfriend and later fathered her first born child.¹⁷⁹ If dances were to be strictly for married couples, then single young men and women were unremittingly finding ways to access these venues.

Rather than merely reaffirming colonial hegemony through commitment to monogamous marriage, dances at social halls were spaces where young urban Africans explored the possibilities for social independence and sexuality. Parental and social regulations curtailed women's ability to attend dances in the countryside. Women like Mary—who came to Nairobi during the 1950s to study nursing—exercised their social independence by meeting their boyfriends or having a night on the town. While marriages derived from these dances, they could occur outside of the conventions of Christianity, or even ethnic tradition. As Mutulu told me, “My wife conceived before officially marrying her, and in our tradition you couldn’t (sic) pay for [bride] price when a woman was expectant, so I had to just marry her. My parents finished all the logistics after she had given birth.”¹⁸⁰ For Mutulu, the premarital pregnancy of his wife merely represented an alternative route to marriage, rather than a social scandal. Premarital sexuality and eloping certainly occurred in the rural areas; Africans living in the city, however, found independence from the supervision and control of parents that allowed them to normalize such relationships in their daily social lives.

Such practices underscore the ability of Africans to shape the function and identity of state recreational venues to serve their social needs and interests. Dedan Githengi, Nairobi’s Assistant African Affairs Officer, explained that social halls appealed to Africans because they presented them with opportunities to “become a real part of the machinery, while in other forms

¹⁷⁹ Mary Romtu, interview by author.

¹⁸⁰ Mutulu, Mwastoria, interview by author.

of welfare they are spectators.”¹⁸¹ By making the social halls appealing and resonant to Africans’ social interests, however, CDOs relinquished their exclusive control over the identity, ideologies, and direction of these spaces. Tom Mboya held court every Sunday at Makadara Hall, where he bedazzled visitors with his fiery oratory. Patrons of the hall responded to his speeches with “hopeful songs” and political chants.¹⁸² Revealing the limits of state supervision over the halls, Mombasa officials were stunned when they learned that several associations had held dances in the village halls without proper permits.¹⁸³ While reprimanding the organizers, local authorities decided to lower rental charges, in order to avoid future misuses.¹⁸⁴ Even football leagues exposed the limits of colonial control, as municipal officials could not keep rivalries and heated passions out of the stadium.¹⁸⁵ Nairobi’s Municipal African Affairs Officer, lamented incidents of fighting between players and spectators, athletes disobeying orders of referees, and fans rushing the fields at the end of matches.¹⁸⁶ When members of the Dock Workers Union in Mombasa went on strike in 1955, a crowd of 10,000 assembled on the football pitch at the Tonoka Social Center, a crowd far larger than any match at the municipal stadium.¹⁸⁷ CDOs had understood that, by establishing social halls and other institutions of recreation, they were creating public spaces on behalf of Africans; they, however, had wrongly presumed their

¹⁸¹ Dedan Githegi, “Talk to Community at Jeanes School Kabete,” May 14, 1954, KNA/14/1

¹⁸² David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: the Man Kenya Wanted to Forget* (New York: Heinemann, 1982), 80.

¹⁸³ Mombasa African Affairs Officer to Executive Director, Mombasa African Advisory Council, April 2, 1952, UY/1/12.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1958; Winsor, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1954-1956; F.A. Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1953, c. 1954, KNA, UY/4/2.

¹⁸⁶ Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1958.

¹⁸⁷ Mboya, *Freedom and After*, 40.

capability to determine the direction, identity, and ideologies that would emerge from these places.

During the apex of the Mau Mau emergency, the state began to see the social halls as a threat to its institutional order. Municipal authorities banned Kikuyu, Meru and Embu from accessing social halls, suspecting these groups of using these facilities as staging grounds for the organization of subversive activities.¹⁸⁸ Such fears were perhaps not entirely unfounded; during a police raid on a beer hall, officers found patrons singing Jomo Kenyatta songs and started a riot by arresting them.¹⁸⁹ The Provisional Commissioner even seized control of Pumwani hall, keeping it closed until the waning months of the Emergency.¹⁹⁰ Such actions were punitive, as colonial officials wanted to punish ethnic groups connected with the Mau Mau insurgency for their ingratitude. The closure of these halls, however, underscored the state's loss of control over the institutions it had designed.

The government took action against Africans use of open spaces as well, banning community events, parties, and dances on these spaces unless there was prior government notification.¹⁹¹ Respondents' testimonies, however, highlight that Africans often circumnavigated such restrictions, staging gatherings and dances in secret and in the face of threats of beatings, arrests, and police harassment.¹⁹² Wilson remarked that "one still finds in parts of the Old Town, and in the outlying areas of Tudor etc...native dances organized in the open spaces or under some large tree."¹⁹³ Recreational spaces, which had once represented

¹⁸⁸ Peet, Annual Report of the African Affairs Department 1955.

¹⁸⁹ Willis, *Potent Brews*, 159.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Mohamed Hassan, interview by author, Nairobi, October 2, 2014; James Mwangi Wenjohi, interview by author, Nairobi, March 10, 2014; Peter Kuria Kirima, interview by author, Nairobi, March 1, 2014.

¹⁹² Peter Kuria Kirima, interview by author; Mohamed Hassan, interview by author; Simon

¹⁹³ Wilson, "Recreation and Leisure Time Activities in Mombasa," 2.

possibilities for the state's constructive engagement with African populations, had become spaces in which Africans flauntingly challenged colonial authority.

The state created social halls, playing fields, and stadiums primary as a means to reassert control over rapidly changing urban centers. By creating healthy, organized forms of recreation, state social engineers believed they could nurture a particular type of citizen—a modern, respectable, townsmen. By creating social halls, however, the state unwittingly created public spaces which Africans used to both directly and indirectly challenge colonial hegemony. Africans certainly used the halls, but did so without subscribing to the ideologies and identities of the state's social engineers. The state's inability to maintain its ideological control over the social halls, open spaces, and stadiums, illustrated that its hold over the city was slipping from its grasp in the face of an expanding African population. Urban Kenyans demanded integration into urban space, but on their own terms, and in ways in which the European state was unprepared to accommodate.

CLUBS AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF URBAN SPACE

The state's attention to the urbanization of Africans created tensions concerning the cultural and racial boundaries of the city. While social halls, open spaces, reflected the role of the public realm as fulcrum for negotiations between Kenyans and the colonial state over the space of the city, such struggles also extended into domains of private leisure and entertainment. Despite the government's lip-service to principles of custodianship and multiracial cooperation, European clubs, hotels, and drinking establishments continued to exclude African and Asian populations from accessing their premises. Color bars operated under the base rationality that non-European races lacked respectability and dignity to participate in these institutions. While the state sought to promote an educated, politically prominent African bourgeois, it was not

committed to granting emerging African elites full social, economic, and political parity. As Africans in Nairobi and Mombasa won salary increases, access to education, and legitimate permanence in the city, they claimed the social status and rights to access these spaces.

Following the end of the war, the state sought improvement of social relationships between Kenya's different races, emphasizing its role to promote trusteeship and multiracial paternalism.¹⁹⁴ The appointment of Phillip Mitchell, who was a proponent of multiracialism, as the colony's governor portended a new direction towards multiracial harmony and cooperation.¹⁹⁵ The continued prevalence of color bars that prohibited Africans and Asians from patronizing European hotels, bars, and clubs, however, undercut these promises. Until the 1950s, Africans attending the cinema required special approval from both the Municipal Affairs Officer and the cinema owner before being receiving ticket.¹⁹⁶ R. Mugu Gatheru described the indignity of this procedure: "I never liked to go to the movies in Nairobi because, at this time, the Africans were required to have passes in order to buy tickets. These passes were given by the managers who owned the cinemas. The system was very irritating."¹⁹⁷ Passes, moreover, included patronizing language that instructed Africans how to properly dress and behave while seeing a film.¹⁹⁸ By the 1950s Africans and more progressive officials began to more explicitly challenge the prevalence of color bars as an impediment to positive multiracial relationships.

Tom Mboya described the color bar as an "irritant" felt across Kenya.¹⁹⁹ R.S. Winser, the

¹⁹⁴ Cooper, *Labor, Politics, and the End of Empire in French Africa*; Lewis, *Empire State Building*; Frost, *Race against Time*.

¹⁹⁵ Richard A Frost, *Enigmatic Proconsul: Sir Philip Mitchell and the Twilight of Empire* (London: Radcliff Press, 1992), 180.

¹⁹⁶ Frost, *Race against Time*, 118.

¹⁹⁷ Gatheru, *Child of Two Worlds*, 85.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Mboya, *Freedom and After*, 49.

African Affairs Officer for Mombasa, echoed this language when he described color bars as among “the more obvious irritants” to cooperation between the municipality’s races.²⁰⁰

The state, while discontent with the color bar, took no legal remedies to halt the discrimination of African and Asians from businesses, clubs, or establishments of entertainment.²⁰¹ Phillip Mitchell proved much more a political pragmatist than a transformer, and avoided measures that would generate bitterness among the European settler population and the business establishment.²⁰² The Colonial Secretary for African Affairs, while calling for reforms to end discrimination against Africans in terms of jobs, rights, and salaries, recommended no legal actions concerning the discriminatory practices of clubs, hotels, and other establishments of entertainment; he instead noted that it was “now possible for Europeans to invite Africans and Indians to dinner parties in a private room and most of the better class hotels in Nairobi.”²⁰³ Although the government regarded color bars as a detriment to positive race relationships, it nonetheless maintained that businesses had a right to uphold such customs. The color bar would be phased out naturally through constructive multiracial relationships, and the advancement of a more respectable African middle class.

Groups and individuals, meanwhile, undertook their own action to create integrated spaces for socialization and leisure. Madatally Manji, angered by his poor treatment by the management of a popular European night club, purchased the business and reopened it as a multiracial facility.²⁰⁴ In 1946, a group of liberal Europeans, several prominent South Asians,

²⁰⁰ Winsor, Annual Report of Department of African Affairs 1954-56.

²⁰¹ Frost, *Enigmatic Proconsul*, 218; John Lonsdale, “Kenya: Home Country and African Frontier,” in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas*, ed. Robert A Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 80.

²⁰² Frost, *Enigmatic Proconsul*, 218.

²⁰³ Secretary for African Affairs, “Racial Discrimination,” December 31, 1955, KNA, CQ8/18/16.

²⁰⁴ Madatally Manji, *Memoirs of a Biscuit Baron* (Nairobi: Kenway, 1995), 144.

and a handful of Africans agreed to form the United Kenya Club (UKC), with the purpose of creating a politically neutral space where elites could socialize, share meals and discuss ideas, regardless of “races, colors, or creeds.”²⁰⁵ During the club’s founding meeting, held at the home of Tom Askwith, members emphasized the need “for finding ways and means by which the relations of Europeans and Africans might be improved.”²⁰⁶ Members stressed political neutrality, stating that the club should be an “informal one,” devoting activities to the “social side of life,” and leaving controversial discussions of politics, race, and religion “to look after themselves.”²⁰⁷

By eschewing discussion of the acrimonious political issues of the era, members envisioned the UKC as an example of multiracial cooperation through social life. They elected Philip Mitchell, as the club’s first president. Tom Askirth recounted his role in forming the club as a project in improving relationships between the races, stating that, “From the beginning, the club was to be completely democratic and representative of Africans, Asians, and Europeans in equal proportion the members would be elected by a balloting committee to ensure that applicants were acceptable to all.”²⁰⁸ The club’s constitution affirmed that each race would have a stake in the club, stipulating that the “key positions of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer” would be “alternatively held by member of each race.”²⁰⁹ In another gesture towards racial inclusivity, members fixed the price of lunch at one shilling so that “African colleagues, who could not afford to pay for extravagant lunches of most clubs, could enjoy the

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 157.

²⁰⁶ Minutes Race Relationship Club, July 24, 1946, KNA, MSS/111/27.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Tom Askirth, “Memories of Kenya.”

²⁰⁹ Julius Simiyu Nabende, *The History of the United Kenya Club, 1946 to 1963* (M.A., University of Nairobi, 1990), 39.



Figure 4.5: United Kenya Club House in Nairobi, 1961. Kenya National Archives.

same facilities as everyone else who were more privileged.”²¹⁰

The state conveyed its support for the ideological goals of the UKC and provided the institution with an annual subsidy of £250 per year.²¹¹ Nearly a third of the club’s membership, moreover, were European senior-level civil servants.²¹² The club also received a \$10,000 donation from David Rockefeller, and a favorable loan from the government to move from its “old wooden hutment,” to a “fully fledged residential club,” with lodging facilities, a tennis court, “spacious sun-lounge,” and a “pleasant bar” (See Figure 4.5)²¹³ The institutional support of the UKC, reflected the state’s embrace of the club’s paternalistic vision of interracial harmony, and cooperation. According to the liberal historian Richard Frost, “The African

²¹⁰ Manji, 157.

²¹¹ Minister for Finance and Development, “United Kenya Club,” June 3, 1960, KNA, AZG/7/26.

²¹² Nabende, *the History of the United Kenya Club*, 13.

²¹³ Joseph Wigglesworth to John Cumber, August 18, 1961, KNA, AZG/7/26; “United Kenya Club Supplement,” *Daily Nation*, August 22, 1962.

Affairs Committee of the Electors' Union, the United Kenya Club, the Churches and various societies and organizations were beginning to bring leading members of the different races into touch with each other and so to create a background of understanding and goodwill which was essential for co-operative political advancement.”²¹⁴ European liberals, looking to contain the ideological fervor of growing African nationalism, regarded the UKC as an expedient initiative to improve relationships between the races by coopting, adopting, and assimilating elite Africans into their ideological camp.²¹⁵

The UKC, despite its strong institutional backing, struggled to achieve its primarily objective of providing a space for multiracial social interaction and discourse. While a handful of African elites supported the club at its inception, African membership was never substantial and almost negligible during the years of the Mau Mau emergency.²¹⁶ Although the club did attract some prominent figures, such as Tom Mbotela, Francis Khamisi or E.K. Binns, the club was unable to attract any of the leading personalities in African politics; Jomo Kenyatta, Oginga Odinga, Tom Mboya each examined the club’s agenda, but passed on membership.²¹⁷ By 1954, the UKC was facing extensive financial difficulties and low membership that threatened to close the club.²¹⁸ European members blamed the lack of African members on the conditions of the “draconian measures” of the Emergency, which “made it difficult for Africans to maintain their attendance.”²¹⁹ Shirley Victor Cooke, one of the founding members of the UKC, faulted the club’s African minority for stirring radical politics that alienated them from the institution’s

²¹⁴ Frost, *Race against Time*, 78.

²¹⁵ Nabende, *the History of the United Kenya Club*, 2.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

²¹⁷ Dominique Connan, “*La Décolonisation Des Clubs Kényans*”: *Sociabilité Exclusive et Constitution Morale Des Elites Africaines Dans Le Kenya Contemporain* (PHD, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2014), 41-42.

²¹⁸ Sunday Post Reporter, “Multiracialism on Trial,” *Sunday Post*, November 14, 1954: 9.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

European and Asian membership.²²⁰ Such squabbling underscored the failure of the UKC to maintain the balanced, multiracial social forum that its original leaders had envisioned. Winsor, offered a pessimistic appraisal of the club's affiliate branch in Mombasa, concluding that the UKC had "failed to attract the cream of the African community."²²¹ Of the Mombasa branch's 180 members in 1961, only thirty-eight were African, with twenty-one Europeans and the remaining Asians.²²² Evelyn Baring noted this shortcoming in his 1957 visit to the club, asseverating the need for an appeal "to non-Asians" to support the club.²²³

The UKC ultimately reflected an ideological vision that was inconsistent with the aims and demands of African political elites, who were embracing a more nationalistic and anti-colonial political agenda. The UKC, tacitly reaffirmed a late-colonial vision of shared power between Europeans and Africans, with Europeans maintaining their dominant role as paternalistic guardians of Africans' social and political interests.²²⁴ The club's rules that stifled political debate and discussion over controversial concerns, frustrated Africans who sought redress for extensive political grievances, such as alienation of land and discrimination in jobs and salaries; neither lunches nor afternoon cups of tea would resolve these concerns. The UKC, moreover, represented, at best, a comprise solution to Africans' far-reaching demands for inclusion in the city. The creation of specific zones for multiracial interaction hardly met the demands of African elites who sought inclusion in the bars, restaurants, and clubs where

²²⁰ Ibid. See also S.V. Cooke, "Letter to the Editor," *East African Standard*, October 6, 1959. Cooke maintains that the club's leadership allowed for political activism within the club, contrary to the club's original mission.

²²¹ Winsor, African Affairs Department Report 1954-156.

²²² Mr. D.G. Mehta, "Address to United Kenya Club," August 8, 1961, KNA, AZG/7/26.

²²³ PC Coast, "Notes for H.E. the Governor's Visit to the United Kenya Club on 27.8.1957, August 27, 1957, KNA, AZG/7/26.

²²⁴ Tabitha Kanogo, "Politics of Collaboration: Case Study of the Capricorn African Society," *Kenya Historical Review* 2, no 2 (1974), 127.

Europeans patronized. The UKC failed to offer the broad reconfigurations of urban space that Africans of all classes demanded.

By the waning days of colonialism, African nationalists turned their attention to the cultural legacy of clubs, deriding them as vestiges of an outdated colonial society. Months before independence, Oginga Odinga, the Minister of Housing and Social Services, issued a well-publicized circular to clubs that demanded revision of constitutions and bye-laws that contained racially exclusionary language:

I would like to bring to the notice of all managers of private and non-private clubs that the Government, in keeping with the spirit of creating a new national atmosphere in the country, wishes to advise against any discriminatory constitutions they might have at present. The government is of the opinion that any constitution which bars membership solely on the grounds of race, color, or creed, is out of step with the times. This advice is given to avoid further unpleasant incidents and it is hoped that managers of clubs will cooperate with the government in this matter.²²⁵

Odinga's letter, although not explicitly establishing new policy, sternly warned clubs that the incoming African government would regard racially exclusive clubs as relics of the past, and no longer maintain the backing of the state.

Odinga's pronouncement accompanied public protests and press campaigns that rallied against the racial exclusivity of clubs. A cultural critic from the *Daily Nation* condemned the club's policies proclaiming, "I want to live in a Kenya free from hostility between races. I do not want a country in which people suffer slights, hurts or hostility arising from differing skin pigmentations."²²⁶ On June 3, 1963, one hundred African cyclist converged on the "all white Nairobi Club" to challenge its racially exclusive policies. According to a report in the *Daily Nation*, the cyclists "sang Uhuru songs and later told a club member standing on the verandah

²²⁵ Oginga Odinga, "Circular #2 of 1963, Membership of Clubs," August 15, 1963, KNA, CEI/1/152

²²⁶ Ron Jones, "Keeping Up with the Jones," *Daily Nation*, August 18, 1963: 7.

that the club should be thrown open to non-Europeans.”²²⁷ Peter Kuria recalls he and his friends flaunting European patrons by having a drink at the New Stanley, which had recently opened its doors to non-European races; when European patrons began to harass them, Peter and his friends were saved by a passing police officer who rebuked the Europeans for their backwards thinking.²²⁸ The press also scrutinized the membership practices of South Asian community clubs, which built membership around identification with a particular section of the South Asian community. Ensing, a cultural columnist in the *Daily Nation* stressed that while there was “not the least doubt that in so far as visitors are concerned the Asians have welcomed non-Asians,” this did not translate to memberships.²²⁹ “There are many instances of very careful window-dressing in order to forestall criticism, but in effect a Muslim Club is ‘Muslim,’ a Sikh club is ‘Sikh,’ a Goan club is ‘Goan’ and so forth.”²³⁰

Clubs faced pressure to loosen racial restrictions on multiple fronts. First, the new African-led government was openly hostile to social anachronisms from the colonial era. Governments held the right to renounce wayward clubs’ recognition as a society, or even cancel their leases.²³¹ A few months after Odinga’s circular, the government threatened to cancel the registration of the upcountry Kitale Club as a society unless it changed its policies to allow non-European members.²³² Ted Ayers disclosed that the Nairobi Club extended its membership to African members after the club’s leadership heard rumors that the Kenyan military had plans to annex the club grounds and convert it into an officers’ club. The club’s committee determined

²²⁷ “Nairobi Club Siege,” *Daily Nation*, June 4, 1963.

²²⁸ Peter Kuria, interview by author, Nairobi, October 7, 2014.

²²⁹ Ensing, “How Many Asian Clubs Have African Members,” *Daily Nation*, October 14, 1962: 12.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ For a comparative example of West African clubs, see L. Proudfoot and H.S. Wilson, “The Clubs in Crisis : Race Relations in the New West Africa,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 66, no. 4 (1961): 320.

²³² Peter Nares, “Thirty Days Warning to Kitale Club,” *Daily Nation*, September 6, 1963: 1.

that the “best thing would be to throw free membership to officers in the military.”²³³ Clubs also were responding to broader discursive and public pressure towards racial inclusivity. European institutions encountered an African urban population that demanded equal social status, and an end to the indignities of colonialism. The sudden flight of European settlers from Kenya, moreover, left many clubs abandoned of their members.²³⁴ While city clubs generally sustained enough members to survive this initial exodus, a number of upcountry clubs folded within the immediate years of independence.²³⁵ Even city clubs, however, soon faced aging European memberships that needed replenishing. Eager to reclaim their membership, and stop the bleeding of subscription fees, clubs began to seek African members, particularly high-ranking government officials whom most immediately fit within their existing traditions of respectability and elite status.²³⁶

Despite public pressure in a newly independent Kenya, the racial integration of European clubs occurred through slow processes, rather than sudden transformations. Clubs while denying outright racial exclusivity, maintained their right to construct a membership around shared social and cultural interests, which Ensing dismissed as cleverly masking racial exclusivity. He complained, “The clubs have been the Europeans racial citadels all over the world. They have

²³³ Ted Ayers, interview by author, Nairobi, April 1, 2014.

²³⁴ Robert Maxon estimates the departure of over twenty percent of the former colony’s European population between the years 1962 and 1969. Robert Maxon, “Social and Cultural Changes,” in *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya*, ed. Bethwell A. Ogot and William Robert Ochieng’ (London: James Currey, 1995), 112.

²³⁵ See Minutes of Songhor Club, KNA, MSS/28/37; Suggestion Book, Gigil Country Club, KNA, MSS/28/38. In a July 14, 1963 meeting the club’s leaders explained to members that further loss of members and rising cost of labor would be problematic “as far as finance was concerned.” Club members agreed to open the club to all races, in an effort to attract new African members. In 1964, the committee attempted to boost membership by writing to several African government officials. Their efforts, however, were unavailing and, by July 26 of that year, the club membership decided to fold. Gigil Club suffered a similar fate. P. Parker, in an entry in the club’s suggestion book, recommended that long-time African staff receive a share of the club’s assets following the club’s eventual liquidation.

²³⁶ Akbar Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, January 7, 2014. Ted Ayers, interview by author.

stubbornly tried to defend them on the excuse that birds of a feather flock together, and must therefore be permitted to do so.”²³⁷ In 1965, Charles Njonjo, the Attorney General, attempted to reassure several frustrated members of parliament that private clubs were operating on a non-racial basis, proclaiming, “until I have evidence that there are clubs which are practicing a color bar as the hon. Member would have me believe, I am satisfied that these clubs are running satisfactory.”²³⁸ Membership lists of Muthaiga Country Club and Nairobi Club, the country’s two most prestigious clubs, showed almost exclusively European memberships in 1964 and 1966 respectively.²³⁹ Clubs adapted explicit racial provisions into a broader framework of respectability, dignity, and self-discipline. When the Mombasa Town Clerk publicly protested his denial of a drink at the Mombasa Sports Club, a column in the *Kenya Weekly News* rejoined that a club “was not a pub,” arguing that “any reputable person can join a club in Kenya today; most clubs are begging for members who will recognize the drill imposed by other members and by tradition.”²⁴⁰ He concluded that either this tradition remains, or clubs as we know them close their doors.” While Africans could technically become members of elite establishments, few “met” the vigorous economic requirements and vetting qualifications of elite social institutions.

Nonetheless the motion towards integration of clubs was in place (See Figure 4.6). After independence the Parkland’s Sports Club recruited two rising non-European tennis athletes,

²³⁷ Ensing, “How Many Asian Clubs Have African Members.”

²³⁸ Charles Njonjo, *Kenya National Assembly House of Representatives Report V*, June 3, 1965. Njonjo was responding to complaints raised by several members concerning the membership practices of several clubs, particularly the Soy Club near Eldoret, which they asserted were not approving qualified Africans for membership.

²³⁹ See Nairobi Club List of Members (1966), KNA, MSS/4/46, and “Muthaiga Country Club List of Members (1964), KNA, MSS/4/72. Membership lists of both the Muthaiga Country Club and the Nairobi Club (1966) show almost exclusively European names, with the exceptions of a few South Asian names on the Nairobi Club rolls.

²⁴⁰ “A Club is Not a Pub Incident,” March 7, 1979, *Kenya Weekly News*.



Figure 4.6: A multiracial Parklands Sports Club. Wambui Wamunyu and Simuyu Barasa, eds., *Parklands Sports Club: Centennial Anniversary Edition*. Nairobi, Parklands Sports Club, 2006.

Yasvin Shretta and Baldev Aggarwv, as members.²⁴¹ Rasik Patel was initially reluctant to join the Mombasa Sports Clubs, feeling embittered by the club's past treatment of Asians; he eventually joined and became a member of the balloting committee, a position which he used to bring other Asians and Africans into club.²⁴² Ballot committee minutes from the Nairobi Club during the 1970s show a trickle of African and South Asian members, predominantly doctors and business executives, developing into a steady steam by the later years of the decade. The process began with European and the club's handful of South Asian members introducing African professionals with whom they had good personal and business interactions. Years later, this initial cohort of African members began introducing their friends and business associates,

²⁴¹ Wambui Wamunyu and Simuyu Barasa, eds., *Parklands Sports Club: Centennial Anniversary Edition* (Nairobi, 2006), 44.

²⁴² Qtd. in Judy Aldrick, ed., *Mombasa Sports Club*, 35.

which gradually expanded the African membership.²⁴³ As African membership increased, scrutiny and public admonishment of clubs diminished; despite periodic complaints by MPs concerning their rejection from particular clubs, the postcolonial state showed little interest in interfering with clubs' internal affairs and balloting procedures.²⁴⁴ Elite Africans instead appropriated the club according to their own ontologies of respectability and success, naturalizing such spaces as the playgrounds for Kenya's postcolonial elite.²⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted the role of leisure in shaping the social transformation of Kenyan cities during the later years of colonial rule. During the 1940s and 1950s the colonial state asserted its interest in promoting leisure through the provision of social centers, open spaces, and stadiums. These interests derived from a post-war outlook in which the British administration sought to redefine its role as a colonial power through urban uplift, multiracial cooperation, and development. They also coincided with the expansion of an African urban presence in Nairobi and Mombasa, which the state could no longer ignore. The state, while giving tacit recognition to Africans' legitimacy within the city, sought to control African ideologies and practices that did not conform to its modernist vision of stability. By enhancing

²⁴³ Nairobi Club Balloting Committee, KNA, MSS/2/248. During the early 1970s, there were almost no regular African members of the Nairobi club. The first cohort of Africans generally consisted of doctors, as well as business executives for major corporations, such as Shell Oil, who had long standing social relationships with European members. For example, Nicholas Julius Muriuku, one of the earlier candidates that received approval from the balloting committee, was a manager at Shell Oil. He had known his European sponsor for fifteen years. In later years, ballot committee records highlighted an increase of potential African members, typically with fellow Africans as their sponsors.

²⁴⁴ J.J. Kanyama, *Kenya National Assembly LIV*, March 19, 1981. Kanyama declared, "What do you say where I, being an African, have to look for a European to introduce me there, and probably I am not going to get one European to get me into that club? Why do you not term that racism?" The Vice President and Minister of Finance, Mwai Kibaki, retorted that the Karen Country Club was open to all members and argued that Kanyama was making erroneous accusations.

²⁴⁵ Connan, *La Décolonisation Des Clubs Kényans*, 106-197.

standards of housing, welfare, and leisure, welfare officers believed they could transform Africans into respectable townsmen and colonial citizens.

While emerging out of an ideological vision of control, social halls, playgrounds, stadiums, and other sites of state recreation became sites of opportunity and negotiation for Kenya's urban African population. From the choices of films, to the type of sports and games offered, state welfare officers negotiated with African populations over the identity of the social halls. Urban Africans, moreover, used the halls to circumnavigate the constraints of generational authority and ethnic discipline, developing new leisure interests and forming friendships that transcended the contours of both ethnicity and colonial modernity. Even while achieving some successes in making the social hall and football leagues a resonate feature in the social lives of urban Africans, the state's paranoia concerning the activities occurring in these spaces during the Mau Mau emergency highlighted its inability to control African leisure.

The negotiations between Africans and CDOs over the social halls, underscored broader transformations concerning urban space and rights in Nairobi and Mombasa. Not only were African urban residents winning recognition from the state, but were beginning to shape and define the city according to their own terms. Europeans retreated to their clubs, which they maintained as bastions of European chauvinism and racial solidarity. Leisure was again a fulcrum for spatial negotiation; elite Africans used public protests and their new-found positions within the government to force change within these domains of private recreation.

These first three chapters have emphasized the creation and provision of leisure space in colonial Kenya. Multiple urban constituencies not only sought places to live in Kenya's burgeoning municipalities, but also aspired for places to play or find social relaxation. While the state's interest in leisure at first catered to the consumptive demands of its settler population,

through the provision of sprawling golf courses, cricket fields, and polo grounds, the state, driven by the demands of Africans' inclusion into urban space, came to recognize public outlets and institutions for leisure. Despite new playgrounds, social halls, parks, and public gardens, demands for recreational space extended into the post-colonial era. In 1962, Nairobi had nearly 1600 acres of designated open spaces; of this total, however, only 505.55 acres were publicly accessible, the rest held by private institutions and individuals.²⁴⁶ While Kenya's post-colonial elite eventually gained entry to predominant social clubs, the need for recreational space remained a pressing concern of Kenya's urban poor. The extensive urban growth, as Africans flocked to the city for promises of higher wages and social independence, created new pressures that effected urban recreational space. As the next chapters will illustrate, urban residents' demands extended beyond the creation of new spaces of leisure to protecting and maintaining existing amenities from privatization, crony capitalism, and alternative forms of land use.

²⁴⁶W.T.W. Morgan, *Nairobi City and Region* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1967), 108.

CHAPTER 4
A PLACE TO PLAY OR A PLACE TO STAY?
RECREATIONAL SPACE AND URBAN STRUGGLES POST-INDEPENDENCE

In 1985, R.H. Odera penned a letter to the *Daily Nation* describing the vibrant social and community life of Nairobi's Jericho-Lumumba Estate during the mid-1960s. Odera remembered "well-stocked reading rooms and libraries," with a wide selection of games, such as darts, badminton, and table tennis. Social halls, he declared, were "full of activities to occupy the young and old people of the estates," such as weekend dances where youth enjoyed the latest "boogies."¹ Odera also recalled lively football matches, occurring on two large playing fields within the estate.² Odera's reflections served to critique the conditions of Nairobi during the 1980s. Building on European anxieties connecting boredom with criminality, Odera professed that Nairobi's youth no longer had productive recreational occupations, declaring, "Our planners must check this crucial point in our development, as a lack of recreational facilities is a source of criminal elements among the youth in new estates in major urban centers all over the country."³

Odera's letter underlined dramatic changes concerning the development of recreational amenities in Kenyan urban centers after independence. At independence, state and municipal planners recognized recreation as a governing interest and priority; throughout the mid-1960s, Nairobi's municipal government, building on the work of European social engineers, established several new playgrounds and social halls, including the development of a large recreational amenity at the center of the city. By developing new recreational amenities, municipal governments sought to deliver the precepts of urban planning, while reaffirming the state's position as the paternalistic proprietor of its subjects' interests. Despite these advancements,

¹ R.H. Odera, "Leisure Centers Needed in the Estates," *Daily Nation*, December 5, 1955: 7.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

development of adequate recreational facilities stalled by the later decades after independence. Urban residents of both Nairobi and Mombasa experienced a scarcity of places where they could find outdoor relaxation, or take their children to play. These changes came as urban Kenyans increasingly regarded access to public recreational grounds as requisites of urban life and demanded such amenities from the state.

This chapter aims to examine the challenges of urbanization in Kenya after independence, transcending linear narratives of decline.⁴ This focus is not to elude the challenges of urbanization in post-independent Kenya, nor is it to dispel the felt sentiments of Kenyan urban dwellers concerning the unfilled promises of the city; rather my objective is to give fuller explanation to the specific aspects of city life that fell short, in the eyes of inhabitants, locating “decline” as a social experience.⁵ At Kenya’s independence, state officials and urban dwellers alike dreamed of successful metropolises, defined by modernity, mobility, cosmopolitanism, and access to opportunities for social life and leisure.⁶ By the 1970s, however, both state and ordinary actors had to weigh the promises of these aspirations against strained finances, expanding populations, and competing claims on the space of the city. The dissipation of these hopes was by no means predetermined, rather reflected the challenges of states to implement their objectives, as well as the competing claims, agendas, and priorities demanding urban space.

National and local officials faced with dwindling financial resources and rapidly growing populations embraced a framework of urban development based on new housing and infrastructure. These priorities, however, came at the expense of playgrounds, social halls, and

⁴ See James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1-37.

⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁶ Ibid., 14.

other recreational amenities that had given ordinary residents fulfilment of community life in the city. Through examination of interviews, newspaper editorials, and letters to the editor, this chapter highlights competing agendas for urban development, as ordinary residents responded to unfulfilled expectations for parks, gardens, playgrounds, and social halls. In addition to debates over the trajectory of development, the loss of community recreational spaces in Nairobi and Mombasa reflected competitions between ordinary residents, state planners, churches, and real-estate developers over urban environments and the physical production of the city. As the physical growth of African cities “far outstripped the capacity of urban resources and services,” competitions over resources led to “new, repeated ‘struggles for the city.’”⁷ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, an assortment of new actors, including real-estate speculators, landlords, businesses, and churches, jockeyed over dwindling plots, often using their shady connections to city hall to acquire land. The playgrounds and open spaces where community members once went to relax or take their children became viable and lucrative lands for commercial real estate, housing, and infrastructure.

“Good governance” is a term that has achieved prevalence during the era of neoliberalism; questions of governance, however, have long had significance to urban residents. Housing development, water-access, garbage collection, have each provided contexts for engagement between ordinary actors and various institutions representing the state.⁸ Crises of

⁷ David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, “Urban Africa: Histories in the Making,” in *Africa’s Urban Past*, ed. David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone (London: James Currey, 2000), 8.

⁸ See Garth Myers, *Disposable Cities, Garbage, Governance and Sustainable Development in Urban Africa* (Burlington, Ashgate, 2005), 9; Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2000). For housing see, James Holston, “Housing Crises, Right to the City, and Citizenship,” in *the Housing Question Tensions, Continuities, and Contingencies in the Modern City*, ed. Edward Murphy and Najib B. Hourani, (London: Ashgate, 2013), 255–69; Philip Amis and Peter Lloyd, eds., *Housing Africa’s Urban Poor* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

housing—i.e. the inability of new housing opportunities to keep up with growing demands—has been the predominant focus driving urban scholarship of Africa and much of the rest of the world.⁹ Housing crises, as recent literature has highlighted, constituted important sources of engagement between urban residents and their respective states.¹⁰ Edward Murphy, in his study of state housing in Chile, contended that the urban poor participated “in a kind of insurgency” that claimed housing as an essential right.¹¹ Murphy built on literature challenging the development-driven framework of scholarship which presumed the marginality of the urban poor. Richard Pithouse’s, research on the political mobilization of South African shack dwellers, likewise, affirmed the political agency of urban squatters.¹² From these studies, housing emerged as the primary focal point for conceptions of urban dignity, respectability, and legitimacy.¹³

This chapter, while building on this scholarship, calls for two significant revisions. Housing, while highlighting an important site of struggle, is also often the end point for explicating questions of rights and urban citizenship. I alternatively frame housing as one part of a much broader nexus of images, services, and amenities that inhabitants associated with emerging ideas of propriety, dignity, and domesticity. Constraints of urban land moreover, often

⁹ See Friedrich Engels, *the Housing Question* (New York: International Publishers, 1935); Charles Abrams, *Man’s Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World* (Boston: MIT University Press, 1964), 3; Edward Murphy, “Introduction: Housing Questions, Past, Present, and Future,” in *The Housing Question Tensions, Continuities, and Contingencies in the Modern City*, 1–19.

¹⁰ In addition to the works cited in the previous footnote, see Patrick Dunleavy, *the Politics of Mass Housing in Britain, 1945-1975: A Study of Corporate Power and Professional Influence in the Welfare State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 2-3.

¹¹ Edward Murphy, *For a Proper Home: Housing Rights in the Margins of Urban Chile, 1960-2010* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2014). See also James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 8.

¹² See Richard Pithouse, “the Shack Settlement as a Site of Politics: Reflections from South Africa,” *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 3, no. 2 (2014): 179-20; Richard Pithouse, “A Politics of the Poor: Shack Dwellers’ Struggles in Durban,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 43, no. 1 (2008): 63-94.

¹³ Murphy, *For a Proper Home*, 8; Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*.

made housing and recreational space competing priorities, compelling state planners and everyday residents to determine if a plot of land would be utilized as a place to play or as a place to stay. Secondly, scholars' tendency to identify agency in terms of organized movements risks privileging those narratives they find most empowering, eliding other mechanisms by which urban dwellers confronted the challenges of city life. Until perhaps the grassroots campaigns of Wangari Maathai—see chapter six—there were few mass movements to reclaim public recreational grounds in Kenya. The absence of mass movements, however, did not mean that issues of recreational space were not of concern to urban residents; the need for places to play featured heavily in the discourses and actions of ordinary city dwellers. When Kibera and Mathare residents organized limited community resources to erect goal posts on a soccer field, they affirmed recreation as an essential community requirement and viable utilization of land.¹⁴

The physical changes of Kenya's cityscapes contributed to social and cultural struggles. As playgrounds and municipal social halls declined, new spaces of entertainment and forms of leisure emerged in their place. These changes shaped generational and gendered debates and anxieties. My respondents communicated their concerns for youths through two distinct and somewhat contradictory narratives. The first was the reproduction of colonial era accounts of lazy, idle, and delinquent youths who, in the absence of viable alternatives to entertainment, wasted their days on drugs, liquor, and mischief. Such perspectives, as was the case before independence, were also gendered, emphasizing the failure of young men to fulfill their potential as successful breadwinners. The second narrative envisioned youths as driven by concerns of Western capitalism and wasteful consumption, thereby forsaking the traditions and mores of their communities. This latter narrative was particularly predominant in senior community

¹⁴ Abdul Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, February 27, 2014; Steven Muchoki, interview by author, Nairobi, December 2, 2013.

members' reflections of changing practices concerning wedding celebrations. Both of these narratives, however, correlated with changing urban environments, as the recreational and social outlets of the older generation faded and new expressions of leisure emerged in their place. These conflicts reaffirm the importance of understanding cultural and environmental change together, rather than as discrete categories. Cityscapes, as Garth Myers contended, are both "physical environments," as well as "social and culturally produced environments."¹⁵

URBANIZATION AND MIDDLE-CLASS LEISURE POST INDEPENDENCE

With independence, municipal power in Kenya transferred from Europeans to Africans. In 1963, Charles Rubia assumed office as the first African mayor of Nairobi; Msanifu Kombo assumed the corresponding office in Mombasa. Africans secured, for the first time, the majorities of seats on both municipal councils. Residential segregation laws in Nairobi, moreover, became defunct, legally allowing Africans to access areas of the city that were previously off-limits to them. Population growth accelerated in Kenya's already expanding urban centers; from the year 1975 to 1990, Kenya's urban population increased at an annual rate of between 7.9 to 8.6 percent.¹⁶ To put this in terms of numbers, an estimated 350,000 people lived in Nairobi in 1963; by 1990, three decades after independence, the urban population had nearly quadrupled to approximately 1,324,000 inhabitants.¹⁷ For many Kenyans, cities represented possibilities for higher wages, superior amenities, and new opportunities for leisure. Underlying these change were Africans' shifting views regarding the city. The state sanctioned estates and social halls that

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶ Garth Myers, *Disposable Cities*, 4.

¹⁷ Fernando Cruz, Kerstin Somer, and Ombretta Tempra, *Nairobi Urban Sector Profile* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2006), 7.

many urban Africans had eschewed during the 1930s and 1940s, became both hallmarks of the urban experience and expectations by the 1960s.

Kenyans had varied and often intricate reasons to migrate to the city.¹⁸ Paul Kibwabwa, who grew up in a small village outside of Migori, moved to Nairobi in the 1960s after a Maasai raid decimated his cattle and injured his mother. For him, the city offered an alternative to the “kind of life that was cattle rustling.”¹⁹ Christine Kaloki, a school teacher in Kibera, explained her move to Nairobi in terms of her struggles to meet the expectations of her rural communities, stating, “In the community, sometimes issues arise like when a neighbor’s child does well in school and is in need of assistance to get further education. The community comes together to raise funds and assist the child. Everybody has to contribute and if you don’t the community will not value you as one of them.”²⁰ The promises of higher wages, while certainly important to Christine’s account, mattered less than flexibility from the economic expectations of her rural community. When I asked Jane Kangethe, a Luo, why she moved to Nairobi, she responded with an intricate story of escaping harassment and threats from her fellow villagers after she married a Kikuyu man.²¹

Urban newcomers often depended on the support of familial and ethnic networks as they worked to establish a foothold in the city. Paul Kibwabwa lived with his uncle in Muthurwa Estate for nearly four years before he found a place of his own.²² When Elizabeth Okello came to

¹⁸ See R.A. Obudho, *Urbanization in Kenya: a Bottom-Up Approach to Development Planning* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 49. Obudho identified five different reasons for urban migration: shortage of agricultural viable land; rural unemployment and underemployment; reaction against constraints of tribal custom; the desire for social and cultural facilities; the “lure of the city, industrial wages, and “the good life.”

¹⁹ Paul Kibwabwa, interview by author, Nairobi, October 10, 2014.

²⁰ Christine Kaloki, interview by author, Nairobi, January 31, 2015.

²¹ Jane Kangethe, interview by author, Nairobi, October 21, 2014.

²² Paul Kibwabwa, interview by author.

Nairobi in 1964, she lived at her sister's home where she worked as a maid.²³ These accounts were not atypical. People who came to town often clustered in one location, staying with relatives, or people from the same village or district. Such clusters shaped the character and identities of estates. Godfrey Muriuki explained to me that Pumwani and Bahati were areas “where we had plenty of Kikuyus.” Luos and Luhya would be “mostly working the railway and you would find them at Makobeni.”²⁴ These accounts highlight that urban migration, far from the erratic and desperate depictions of development-driven literature, occurred through planned and rationalized processes by which migrants weighed the advantages of rural life against those of the city. Rural migrants, moreover, often had preexisting footholds in the city through familial and kin-based relationships.

Up-and-coming middle class Kenyans took advantage of the demise of residential restrictions to pursue a standard of housing consistent with their upward mobility. When Jane Kangethe and her husband moved to Pangani during the early 1960s, the estate was still almost exclusively occupied by Asian families. She recounted, “When we came in, we were the fifth Africans. We had forty-eight houses here, but we found only four other Africans... The rest were all Asians.”²⁵ Within a decade, however, the demographics of her estate had reversed so that there were only a few Asian families living amongst Africans.²⁶ Upward mobility was not limited exclusively to Africans; the exit of Asian families from Jane's estate underscored that they too pursued elevated living standards in the even more prestigious quarters of the city, which had been previously exclusive to Europeans. Akbar Hussein moved from Ngara to Parklands in

²³ Elizabeth Okello, interview by author, Nairobi, March 17, 2014; Juma Kajanda offered a similar account, reporting that he had resided with his brother, who had a job, when he moved to the city. Juma Kajanda, interview by author.

²⁴ Godfrey Muriuki, interview by author, Nairobi, October 7, 2014.

²⁵ Jane Kangethe, interview by author.

²⁶ Ibid.

1960, the first in a series of moves correlating with his upward economic advancement. He recounted, “Gradually, as our economic standards improved after I got married, we built a house in City Park area. And then in the 1980s we saw an opportunity to move up market and then we moved to the leafy suburb called Muthaiga. So it was more of an upgrading of our living standards and our environment.”²⁷

Homes signified accomplishment, respectability, and familial stability. A “house of one’s own,” as Karen Tranberg Hansen argued, constituted “a singularly important stake in the city.”²⁸ When Jane and her husband arrived in Nairobi they secured, through her husband’s government employment, a house on Jogoo road. When one of her cousins, a municipal employee, visited their home, he determined that it was of insufficient size and offered to find a “bigger house.” Jane and her husband accepted his offer and ultimately selected her present house in Pangani because of its proximity to town and accessibility by foot.²⁹ Gender also shaped Kenyans’ conceptualization of proper housing. Residents connected good housing to masculinity, particularly men’s ability to fulfill their expectations as heads of households.³⁰ When Jackson Ochieno married, he immediately moved from his flat in Tudor to his current home at Changanwe. He expounded on this decision, emphasizing the importance of a sizeable dwelling space to his social and family needs: “Tudor was a bachelor quarters. My neighbors used to have families, but it was a single room ten by ten feet. It all depended on preference. I didn’t want my visitors to come directly to my bedroom, because that would mean this room is the bedroom, as well as the sitting room, as well as the kitchen.”³¹ Jackson’s explanation exemplified the

²⁷ Akbar Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, January 7, 2014.

²⁸ Karen Tranberg Hansen, *Keeping House in Lusaka* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 15.

²⁹ Jane Kangethe, interview by author.

³⁰ For discussion of gender and housing, see Ayona Datta, *The Illegal City: Gender, Space, and Society* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 151.

³¹ Jackson Ochieno, interview by author, Mombasa, December 10, 2014.

correlations between housing and middle class Kenyans' aspirations for stability and respectability. The intimate and communal character of the Tudor flats, with their shared kitchens and lavatories, had well served Jackson's needs as a bachelor; such accommodations, however, were unsuitable for his expectations as a head of a household. His house at Changamwe provided greater privacy and superior amenities, which allowed Jackson to project himself as a stable, dignified, and respectable family man.³²

In addition to new opportunities for housing, respondents remembered the immediate years after independence as a period of many opportunities for leisure. During the 1960s, Jackson began a salaried position at Kenyan Petroleum Refineries, giving him disposable income to frequent dance clubs. He recounted, "When I started working, I was able to socialize, go to social places, buy alcohol, drink, and enjoy myself." Although he earned "peanuts," Jackson attested that his take home pay of around KSH 330 was more than sufficient for a bottle of beer, which cost around a shilling and forty cents. Donald Mbotela, who also began working during the mid-1960s, remembered Sundays as the night he and his friends went dancing at Mombasa's clubs. "We used to go very much to clubs because we were young men," he recalled, "Sunday afternoons, sometimes Saturday at night we used to go dancing."³³ Fatma Sheriff Hussein remembered her older brother taking her to the cinema, where she saw the latest films of American stars such as Cliff Richard and Elvis Presley. "I loved the English films, especially Cliff Richard and Elvis movies," she recounted, "Whenever I heard they were being shown, I

³² For discussion on connection between matters of domestic life and masculinities, see Stephan A. Miescher and Lisa A. Lindsay, "Introduction: Men: And Masculinities in Modern African History," in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, ed. Stephan F Miescher and Lisa A. Lindsay (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), particularly pg. 4; Luise White, "Separating the Men from the Boys: Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Terrorism in Central Kenya, 1939-1959," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (1990): 1.

³³ Donald Mbotela, interview by author, Mombasa, December 11, 2014.

would go and listen. Although I was not learned and did not understand English well, it reached a point where I began to slowly understand.”³⁴

Cinema outings or discos were avenues by which Kenyans expressed developing urban styles and class identities.³⁵ Aspiring middle class Kenyans regarded their forms of leisure as culturally elevated and superior to the pastimes of the past. Jackson delineated that consumption of beer was an important signifier of respectability over those whom were drinking less expensive palm wine—or *mnazi*. He told me, “If you were earning good money, you were not going for palm wine, or *mnazi*, you would go for beer. People who were earning a little bit more were looking down on those who were drunk off *mnazi*.”³⁶ Palm wine, in his view, was cheap, unrefined, and disreputable; beer, on the other hand, required one to be earning a steady wage and therefore connoted an elevated social standing.

Although film tickets and bottles of beer were not particularly expensive, they nonetheless linked leisure and entertainment with expenditure of wages and consumption. Ben, the protagonist of Meja Mwangi’s novel, *Going Down River Road*, ruefully relied on his lover for rents so he could spend his meager earnings at the bar: “Besides, the kind of money they made on the construction site was the type that unhinged your nut when your tried to budget. If he had to pay rent from it, Ben figured, he would then have to borrow the booze money from Wini.”³⁷ Joshua Makindi, who arrived in Nairobi as a student in the 1970s, attested that he never attended discos; he instead chewed miraa and smoked marijuana at an open field at Kariobangi. He asserted the moral superiority of the activities at Kariobangi over those at the disco, claiming

³⁴ Fatma Sheriff Hussein, interview by author, Mombasa, November 17, 2014.

³⁵ In using the term style, I borrow from Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*, 94-95. Ferguson uses the term style as a tool to “include all modes of action through which people place themselves are placed into social categories” (95).

³⁶ Jackson Ochieno, interview by author.

³⁷ Meja Mwangi, *Going Down River Road* (London Heinemann, 1976), 12.

participation in dances required unemployed youths to become hustlers or thieves. He declared, “In those discos is where the mugging started. It was those people who went [there]...Because you are an unemployed, it would force you to look for money from a bad angle. And that is what is happening now. It influences you to do something because you want money for disco, or to give to some girls.”³⁸ By not partaking in the discos, Joshua avoided temptations to steal, hustle, or otherwise engage in decadent means of acquiring money.

The 1960s saw the continued creation of new public, and freely accessible, spaces for recreation. The Kenyan government adopted a principle of reserving ten percent of urban land for recreational grounds.³⁹ During the early years of the post-colonial era, municipal authorities developed new playgrounds, social halls, parks, and other recreational amenities to provide for the needs of Kenya’s burgeoning urban populations. In 1965, the City Council of Nairobi (CCN) approved plans for the development of four new social halls in Eastleigh, Shauri Moyo, Dagoretti, and Kangemi, at a total expenditure of £26,000.⁴⁰ That same year, the council also developed new playgrounds at Desai Estate, Nairobi South, and Eastlands.⁴¹ The Caledonian Sports Club donated its stadium, located on the northwestern section of Kibera, to the CCN in 1968. The stadium, which had a large turfed football pitch and an indoor social center, became a source of recreation for Kibera’s residents.⁴²

³⁸ Joshua Makindi, interview by author, Nairobi, September 23, 2014.

³⁹ J.H. Chan, Director of Physical Planning, to Commissioner of Lands, June 20, 1982, KNA, RN/1/193.

⁴⁰ Minute 7, Social Services and Housing Committee, CCN, September 13, 1965, KNA, JW/2/39.

⁴¹ Minute 26, Social Services and Planning Committee, CCN, September 13, 1964, KNA, JW/2/38; Minute 10, Parks Committee, CCN, January 11, 1965, KNA, JW/2/38; Minute 13, Works Committee, CCN, December 1, 1965, KNA, JW/2/39.

⁴² Dennis Ooko, interview by author, Nairobi, February 2, 2014; Ezekial Arema, interview by author, Nairobi, February 2, 2014. There is a reference to this transaction in city council minutes. Minute 20, Social Services and Housing Committee, CCN, November 11, 1968, JW/2/43.



Figure 5.1: Nairobi's Uhuru Park: Kenya History 101.
<https://www.facebook.com/search/photos/?q=kenya%20history%20101>.

The government also undertook the development of a major park at the edge of the city's CBD (See Figure 5.1). The social significance of this park—named Uhuru Park to commemorate Kenya's independence—was evident to most residents and national leaders; municipal regulations had prevented Africans from freely roaming Nairobi's CBD until 1963.⁴³ The park's development, estimated at a cost of £160,000, included improvement of plantings, new pathways and terraces, and the installation of a ceremonial dias. The park's main feature was a large artificial lake, complete with a restaurant and boathouse.⁴⁴ National and local officials believed that the park would elevate Nairobi to the status of other global cities, such as London and New York, which each had a large centrally located recreational amenity. The park would also

⁴³ Hervé Maupeu and Nathalie Gomes, "Political Activism in Nairobi: Violence and Resilience of Kenyan Authoritarianism," in *Nairobi Today: The Paradox of a Fragmented City*, ed. Hélène Charton-Bigot and Deyssi Rodriguez-Torres (Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2006), 398.

⁴⁴ Acting Deputy City Engineer, Nairobi, to Asst., Town Clerk, May 12, 1967, KNA, RN/1/172; F.C. Turner to City Engineer, October 1, 1968, KNA, RN/1/172.

reaffirm the legitimacy of the state by providing a national space for ceremonies and presidential speeches.

Municipal authorities of Mombasa also oversaw the development of new recreational amenities, often in partnership with outside organizations. Months before independence, servicemen of the American Navy destroyer USS Van Voorhis visited Mombasa where they opened a playground, equipped with swings, see-saws, and a jungle gym.⁴⁵ In 1964, the Shell Oil Company donated a small playground near Tudor.⁴⁶ The Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) also accepted an offer from the Lions Club to “lay out an open space and equip a playground” on land adjacent to the Majengo Health Center.⁴⁷ Although Mombasa lacked the open terrain for a large central recreational amenity along the lines of Nairobi’s Uhuru Park, the Municipal Council controversially canceled the Mombasa Golf Club’s (MoGC) lease with the intention of establishing a new waterfront park on the south of the island. The cancellation of the golf club’s lease built on a hard-fought struggle by the council’s African and Asian members, to close the MoGC—long associated with European exclusivity—and establish a public recreational area for Mombasa’s residents. President Kenyatta, however, came to the rescue of the MoGC, decreeing that the council did not have “sufficient reasons” to justify the termination of its lease.⁴⁸ The local government managed to retain a significant portion of the golf club’s land, which it developed into Mama Ngina Drive Park—named after Jomo Kenyatta’s wife.

In addition to developing new parks and playgrounds, municipal councils affirmed their commitment to leisure by withstanding alternative uses of existing recreational spaces. In 1965, Juma Suleman of Kwale district wrote to Mombasa’s Town Clerk to request a plot of land on

⁴⁵“New Playground Opened at Coast,” *Daily Nation*, April 29, 1963.

⁴⁶ W.A. Oyango, Shell Kenya Limited, to Town Clerk, Mombasa, August 10, 1964, CPA, UY/20/80.

⁴⁷ Town Clerk to President, Lions Club, October 21, 1966, CPA, UY/9/41.

⁴⁸ “Golf Club,” *Daily Nation*, February 3, 1966: 3.

Bambui Beach. The Town Clerk promptly declined Suleman's request, informing him that the beach plot was an open space "for use of the public."⁴⁹ The CCN declined a similar request from a wealthy businessman to purchase a five to twenty acre plot on the basis that the requested land "was reserved for open space and recreational uses."⁵⁰ Community recreational grounds were subject to varying interpretations of land-use, as various actors and interests saw these spaces as viable sites for development; municipal councils, on the other hand, maintained the recreational utility of these areas.

The benefits of new urban amenities, including venues of leisure, were, however, contingent on incorporation into the formal city. The Nubians had for decades cultivated a vibrant community in Kibera, largely independent from municipal oversight. They at the same time participated in middle class forms of entertainment, such as golf. By the 1950s administrators labeled Kibera an "urban slum," and urged redevelopment of the area in accordance to standards of city planning.⁵¹ In a 1959 statement, government officials asserted control over the area, concluding that the "the time has come" for Kibera to "be re-planned, on modern lines compatible with its position on the city's boundaries."⁵² State planners called for redeveloping Kibera on the basis of White, Silberman, and Anderson's neighborhood unit framework, with modern housing, a school and clinic, shopping centers, social center, and playing fields (see figure 5.2). Such plans depended on the incorporation of Kibera into the Nairobi municipality, with the city's council assuming administrative and financial responsibilities over the area. In this regard, the CCN, proved an unwilling partner, viewing

⁴⁹Juma Suleman to Town Clerk, Mombasa, May 6, 1965, CPA, UY/9/41;
Town Clerk to Juma Suleman esq., May 20, 1965, CPA, UY/9/41.

⁵⁰ Town Planning Committee, CCN, February 15, 1966.

⁵¹ Ed Fox, DC Nairobi, Notes on a Prelim Nairobi, May 18, 1955, KNA, RN/7/3.

⁵² Public Statement on Kibera, c. 1959, KNA, RN/7/3.

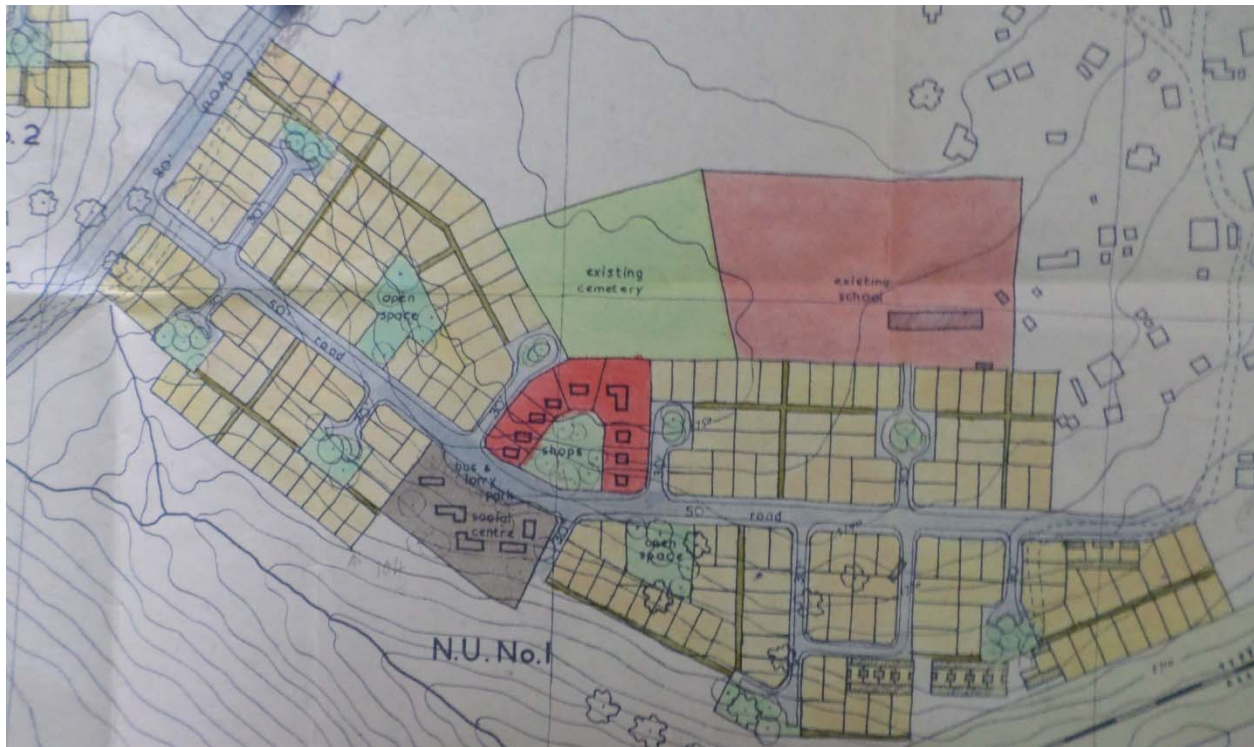


Figure 5.2: State plan for the development of Kibera. Space is demarcated for a social center and open space. Kenya National Archives.

Kibera as a financial and administrative burden. When Kibera residents petitioned the Nairobi municipality to “cut grass on the football-ground at Kibera,” councilors objected, “expressing anxiety that such an action would signal their willingness to take over “from the Central Government” responsibility of the area.”⁵³ Kimani Waiyaki, Nairobi’s Town Clerk, reiterated these concerns, citing the “pressure for the provision of social services to the area which this Council is not in a position to provide.”⁵⁴

Kibera residents’ struggles for trimmed grass underscores the limitations of the transformations taking place in Kenyan urban centers after independence. It was not that Kibera’s Nubian residents were resisting incorporation into the Nairobi municipality, as some

⁵³ Social Services and Housing Committee, CCN, June 8, 1964, KNA JW/2/37.

⁵⁴ Kimani Waiyaki, Town Clerk, Nairobi, to Private Security, Ministry of Local Government, July 21, 1965, KNA, RN/7/3.

may have in past decades; indeed, in this case, it was municipal officials who were obstructing Kibera's inclusion in the formal city. The racial segmentations that defined urban planning and resource distribution during the colonial era, evolved into new forms of fragmentation, as class began to increasingly define where Kenyans lived and where they played. Despite these stratifications, the 1960s were a period of mobility, as Kenyans, across ethnic and class lines, were participating in new possibilities for identity, domesticity, gender, and leisure. Kenyans viewed the city in terms of progress and elevation of social, economic, and cultural standards.

HOUSING CRISES AND DECLINING RECREATIONAL SPACE

While the early years after independence represented possibilities for nicer housing, better urban amenities, and superior forms of leisure, several emerging crises threatened to mire Kenya's local administrations by the end of the 1960s. First, the issue of finances overtime took their toll on local institutions of government, including municipal councils. Kenya's municipal governments were never particularly financially verdant institutions; financial pressures only expanded during the late 1960s and 1970s. According to Richard Stren, by the 1970s most African economies were stagnating, which resulted in significant cuts to urban services.⁵⁵ Secondly, the shortfall of municipal housing, which had vexed the colonial administration, continued to burden Kenya's local governments. Taken together, these crises had the consequence of forcing Kenya's national and local administrations to consolidate priorities for urban planning, turning emphasis to infrastructural development that would meet the exigencies of growing populations. Concerns of developing and maintaining recreational amenities, which had significantly shaped the work of late-colonial and early post-independence urban planners,

⁵⁵ Richard E. Stren, "Urban Local Government," in *African Cities in Crisis: Managing Urban Growth*, ed. Richard E. Stren and Rodney R. White (Boulder: Westview, 1989), 28.

became subsidiary concerns within this context. The government's emphasis on new housing had less appeal to existing residents who embraced a broader conception of domesticity and community life. Residents saw the decline of municipal amenities and venues of leisure as indicative of a trajectory of urban mismanagement and degeneration.

Municipal administration in Kenya swelled between the years 1961 and 1972. In 1961, the City Council of Nairobi (CCN) employed 4,259, individuals. A decade later, that number had increased three-fold.⁵⁶ Richard Stren surmised that, after the port, the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) was the largest employer in the city.⁵⁷ Expanded local administrations did not mean better results and services. In 1972, fifty-five percent of CCN expenditures went towards personnel and staff. Even minor repairs of roads and plantings often came at double their estimated expenses.

The financial burdens of local councils were further engorged by their complicated and mostly subordinate relationship with the central government. Following the tradition of their colonial predecessors, Kenya's national leaders embraced a framework of governance with most power in the hands of the national administration. The 1963 constitution gave the Minister for Local Government authority to approve municipal budgets, and even power to dissolve city councils. Charles Rubia, the Mayor of Nairobi, complained that the Minister for Local Government was "too ready to interfere in the City Council's business" and often delayed approving budgets and projects.⁵⁸ At the end of 1967, the central government significantly reduced Nairobi and Mombasa's share in Graduated Personal Tax (GPT) revenues, in an effort to

⁵⁶ Herbet Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study in Nairobi* (New York: Africana Publishing House, 1974), 160

⁵⁷ Richard E. Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa: Policy, Politics, and Bureaucracy in Mombasa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 45.

⁵⁸ Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 179.

enhance rural development.⁵⁹ GPT revenues had provided both Nairobi and Mombasa with a reliable source of funding for municipal services. The central government's requisition of these revenues dramatically curtailed councils' ability to deliver urban services and implement planning goals.⁶⁰

Local governments, moreover, were often coerced into financing lavish prestige projects on behalf of the national administration.⁶¹ The development of Uhuru Park, for example, fell into controversy when the Office of President Jomo Kenyatta pushed the installation of a national ceremonial ground as an essential feature of the park. The addition of the parade ground, which would be utilized for national celebrations and presidential speeches, pushed the budget of the park's development to over £200,000.⁶² The central government, at the same time, reneged on its commitment to share half the costs for developing the park, offering instead a fixed contribution of £77,000. Nairobi officials responded with outrage at both Kenyatta's insistence of creating a ceremonial ground and laying the costs on the municipality. "I am appalled at the Government attitude towards this ceremonial ground," Nairobi's exasperated City Engineer opined, adding that, "The Uhuru Park project itself, if my memory serves me right, was a request from the Central Government."⁶³

By the end of the 1960s financially strapped municipal councils were struggling to maintain existing recreational amenities. Members of the Works Subcommittee visited Bahati

⁵⁹ Ibid., 213; Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor*, 51. Stren provided a detailed explanation of the GPT, stating "Before independence, the government instituted a poll tax on Africans, remitting a portion of the tax in the form of grants to local councils." After 1964, the government instituted a GPT for everybody, with graduation above the minimum rate based on income.

⁶⁰ Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 213. For example, the CCN had to reduce by fifty percent its expansion program for housing development and was only able to finance thirty-four percent of its school building programs.

⁶¹ Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 177.

⁶² Ministry of Local Government to Town Clerk, Nairobi, June 16, 1967, KNA, RN/1/172.

⁶³ Acting City Engineer to Town Clerk, Nairobi, August 11 1967, KNA, RN/1/172.

Estate in April 1967 and “noted with alarm the hard wear and tear of the playground due to excessive use.”⁶⁴ In 1969, members of the Lions Club wrote to Mombasa’s Town Clerk to convey their dismay over the “deteriorated state of the park,” which it had laid out and donated to the city just a few years prior. When municipal officials visited the area they found the park in a “filthy” condition.” The Municipal Engineer reported, “the fence around the Park (sic) had been broken at several places. The swings were also broken. The surface of the Park (sic) was covered with grass and filth. The miniature railway station was being used for sleeping and storing pombe.”⁶⁵ The council agreed to allocate £210 to restore the park to a “reasonable standard.”⁶⁶ Municipal councils were never particularly financially verdant institutions; maintaining parks became among the many financial strains on local governments. Officials, moreover, could neither control the utilization of the recreational areas, nor compel residents to maintain these sites the way they wanted. Stolen plans, or cut barbed wire fencing, were glaring reminders that open spaces also had potential to become havens for thieves, transients, and pombe vendors.⁶⁷

Social halls also struggled to meet the needs of multiple people and groups vying for their use. After independence, Nairobi and Mombasa’s municipal councils relied on GTO revenues for the construction of new social halls and community centers. The decline of municipal shares in these revenues after 1968 significantly deterred councils’ ability to construct new facilities, or even maintain existing ones. In 1972, Nairobi’s Director of Social Services and Housing (the post-colonial version of an African Affairs Officer), forewarned that “welfare and recreational

⁶⁴ Works Committee, CCN, April 11, 1967, KNA, JW/2/41.

⁶⁵ Housing Estates and Gardens Committee, MCM, c. 1969, CPA, UY/9/41.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Stren, “Urban Local Government.”; Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 158-63.

⁶⁷ For a report on theft of plants, see Parks Visiting Sub Committee, Nairobi City Council, March 19, 1967, KNA, JW/2/41.

services were stretched to near breaking point.”⁶⁸ Sometime during the 1970s, the MCM, in an effort to make the halls profitable, began to allow paying groups extended use of social halls, for religious and other social gatherings. Churches immediately took advantage of this system, booking halls for entire weekends, or even—in some cases—on a permanent basis. The occupancy of churches left little opportunities for other uses. As Jackson Ochieno declared, “There has been a lot of change. Like this Changamwe social hall was for the residents of Changamwe for recreation. But now it has been taken over by churches and we no longer have access. I would say it is not there now.”⁶⁹ It was not that social halls had disappeared; rather they were becoming increasingly functional spaces that catered to specific organized activities, church meetings, and nurseries.

These changes had the consequential effect of pushing groups of users out of these spaces. Men continued to use social halls for boxing and weight training, although users overtime encountered limitations of available equipment.⁷⁰ Women, whose access to halls was tenuous even during the colonial era, perhaps experienced the most disadvantageous curtailment of their access. Belenta Kilonzo, who was part of a dance group with fellow women from her estate, used to hold practices in the social hall of Bahati Estate. She, however, recounted the difficulties of her dance group to secure space in the social hall for practices in recent decades:

These days the social halls are used as nursery schools during the day and are only available in the evening. Women cannot go for practices in the evening or at night because those times are for boxing or karate. And even over the weekends they are converted into churches so the halls no longer support our activities as women groups. These days, if we have to do our meetings, we have to sit under a tree.⁷¹

⁶⁸ C.N.W. Siganga, Director of Social Services and Housing, Nairobi, Annual Report for the Department of Social Services and Housing 1971, March 1972, KNA, JW/6/12.

⁶⁹ Jackson Ochieno, interview by author.

⁷⁰ Jimmy Litumi, interview by author, Nairobi, February 7, 2014

⁷¹ Benta Kalonzo, interview by author, Nairobi, March 17, 2014.

Belenta underlined the effects of mounting pressures of social halls to both accommodate diverse forms of recreation and fulfill multiple community services. As social halls became more functionalistic institutions within the community, groups such as women, who relied on these spaces for unstructured pastimes, struggled the most for access.

The mounting financial challenges of state and municipal authorities coincided with enduring housing shortages. In 1966, the wait list for municipal housing in Nairobi stood at a record 13,397 applications; by December 1970 that number had soared to well over 49,000 applicants.⁷² The government attempted to respond to the housing crisis, establishing the National Housing Corporation (NHC) in 1966 as the central authority for new housing development. The corporation received vastly more funds than its colonial predecessor, the Central Housing Board, and development of new housing units “soared.”⁷³ Despite these accomplishments, governments could not develop new dwelling spaces fast enough to meet rising demands. Nairobi’s District Commissioner (DC) observed that the average earnings of Nairobi workers were KSH 200, insufficient for even low cost schemes directed at the city’s urban poor.⁷⁴ Opportunistic speculators added to these woes, buying up several flats to lease for exuberant rents. The *Daily Nation* assailed the greed of landlords, accusing them of cramming “as many people as possible into their property without due consideration for comfort and hygiene.”⁷⁵ The government attempted to curb excessive rents by establishing rent restriction tribunals and requiring landlords to maintain “rent books” for rents exceeding £30 per month.⁷⁶

⁷² David Cook, “Demand for Construction of Houses During Last 5 Years,” March 26, 1971, KNA, KY/3/4.

⁷³ Ibid; Ministry of Housing, *Housing Policy for Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1966/67* (Nairobi: Government Press, 1966), 6.

⁷⁴ “Notes of a Meeting in the Office of the Minister of Housing,” April 16, 1971, KY/3/4.

⁷⁵ Editorial, “Housing in Need of Attention,” *Daily Nation*, December 3, 1972: 6.

⁷⁶ “Landlords Are Warned Over Rent Increases,” *Daily Nation*, May 25, 1979: 9.

Despite these hastily organized efforts, the state had lost the initiative to determine the standards and distribution of housing, putting lodging into the hands of renters and speculators.

The expansion of squatter settlements most exemplified the state's limited capacity to control the terms of housing development.⁷⁷ Mathare, originally a sparsely populated quarry, provided a refuge for several families displaced during the Mau Mau emergency. By 1971, Mathare's population had quickly expanded to over 156,190 inhabitants, residing in an estimated 3,500 structures.⁷⁸ "Illegal residence," as James Holston argues, has been a "common and ultimately reliable way" for the urban working class to "gain access to land and housing and to turn their possession into property."⁷⁹ Maurice Otieno, who came to Mathare in the 1990s, offered his explanation to the advantages of squatting, telling me, "When I came, there were people who had started constructing these high rise houses which were a bit expensive and were mostly in Huruma. But within Mathare there were no good houses, but at the same we settled in the shanties that we found, so long as we could sleep at night and wake up the following day and go to work."⁸⁰

For urban squatters the pursuit of housing outside of the state subjected them to the perpetual harassment and incursion of state authorities. Kenyan officials coopted colonial

⁷⁷ Frederick Cooper, "Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labor in Africa," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Luise White (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 8. The terms "urban squatters" and "squatter settlements," have been widely utilized in scholarship. See Murphy, *for a Proper Home*; Martin J. Murray, *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Garth Myers, *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2011). I use these terms to describe settlement in Kibera and Mathare because the occupants of these areas generally live there without state recognition. While this decision runs the risk of posing some definitional problems, it, in my view, provides a consistent term to highlight the particular forms of settlement in Mathare and Kibera and avoids the prejudicial connotations of the popular term "slums."

⁷⁸ Director of Social Services and Housing to Department Secretary, Ministry of Housing, April 16, 1971, KNA, KY/3/4.

⁷⁹ Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*, 207.

⁸⁰ Maurice Otieno, interview by author, Nairobi, December 14, 2013.

rationalities of sanitation and public health to justify evictions and deployment of bulldozers.⁸¹ In reality, aesthetics were the primary concern driving state policies; Kibera and Mathare with their mudbrick and corrugated roof houses stood as glaring reminders of the state's failure to deliver ordered, efficient, aesthetically balanced, and "self-contained urban" environments.⁸² In early 1971, municipal engineers forewarned a looming sea of "corrugated iron roofs," as they stressed the importance for Nairobi to "remain clean at all costs."⁸³ President Jomo Kenyatta took a direct interest in the eradication of squatter settlements, decreeing that, "Nairobi must not be turned into a slum."⁸⁴ State energies emphasized eradication of squatter settlements and made little effort to provide services such as water, sanitation, schools and clinics, or recreational facilities that would enhance the lives of the residents living in these areas. Kenyatta fiercely opposed schemes providing such services, contending that they would only "encourage the influx of people from the rural areas who had been misled into believing 'that their salvation lay in residing in towns or the City of Nairobi.'"⁸⁵

Demolitions, while presenting a good show of force, rarely achieved the effects they intended. Nairobi's DC observed the construction of new houses in Mathare during the dark of night, replacing those demolished during the day.⁸⁶ Occupants protested the state evictions, noting they were not only disruptive but accomplished little. In 1970, Wainaina Kiboro, an area chairman in Mathare, implored the Minister for Housing and Local Government to elevate

⁸¹ J.N. Oluoch, the Permanent Secretary of housing to J.N. Nichuki, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Treasury, June 9, 1969, KNA, K/3/6. Oluoch noted the high prevalence of cholera in the area.

⁸² For analysis on the role of aesthetics in urban planning see D. Asher Ghertner, *Rule of Aesthetics: World Class City Making in Delhi* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015); See also Edward Murphy, *for a Proper Home*, 30.

⁸³ "Notes on Meeting to Discuss Housing Development in Nairobi," April 17, 1971, KNA, KY/3/4.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Herbet Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 229.

⁸⁶ City Engineer to Minister of Housing, July 4, 1969, KNA, KY/3/6.

residents' standard of living, proclaiming, "We appeal to you on behalf of the 30,000 residents of Mathare Valley, and all the growing numbers of unemployed in Nairobi and other squatter villages, who cannot afford higher rents, to help us improve our villages now, rather than to burn us out or to continue to wait until we all have jobs, which may never happen."⁸⁷ By the mid-1970s, there were clear divisions within the government regarding the solution to Mathare, with an increasingly vocal faction arguing against demolitions. These officials presented their position in a 1976 memorandum, entitled "Proposed New Policy Toward the Nairobi Squatter Situation." The report emphasized that the government's "urban squatter policies" had proven "inadequate, short sighted, and potentially dangerous."⁸⁸ J.P. Mbogua, Nairobi's Town Clerk, was a vocal opponent of demolitions and advocated site and service schemes, which he surmised would give residents a stake in maintaining their property.⁸⁹

Although site and service schemes presented a superior alternative to demolitions, the state was ultimately unwilling or unable to regulate housing markets and curb speculation. In 1977, the state evicted approximately eighty families to create space for a NHC estate in Kibera. While the government promised evictees placement within the new Ayani Estate, few ultimately received accommodation. The NHC instead put the houses on the market, where real-estate speculators immediately bought them up. Abdul Juma recounted "After the construction you just heard them advertise and say that the houses were to be sold out. They charged very high prices for them, so that the original residents could not afford them. And people who had paid deposits

⁸⁷ Wainaina Kiboro to Ministers of Housing and Local Government, June 11, 1970, KNA, KY/3/6.

⁸⁸ "Proposed New Policy Toward Nairobi Squatter Situation", c. 1976, KNA, KY/3/6.

⁸⁹ J.P. Mbogua to City Engineer December 9, 1969, KNA, KY/3/6. The basis tenants of site and service schemes were to provide prospective tenants with a plot and access to basic municipal utilities (i.e. water and sewer hookup). Tenants would then oversee the development of the structure of the houses themselves. Residents would typically receive title deeds, granting them ownership over the plot. See Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 288.

would be refunded their money and then [the government] would sell the houses to the highest bidder, who would buy even three or five units.”⁹⁰ Displaced residents wrote a letter to the Minister of Home Affairs, claiming that out of the eighty households, only thirty-five had received houses at Ayani. The remaining 520 houses went to “*wananchi*”—Kenyan nationals—from outside of Kibera.⁹¹ Evictees relocated elsewhere in Kibera, where they built new structures on the premises of family and neighbors. State housing schemes, rather than improving living standards in Kibera, added to the area’s congestion by forcing low-income inhabitants to rebuild in already compressed spaces.

As housing crises subsumed the social and political discourse of Nairobi and Mombasa, establishment of new recreational amenities became subsidiary concerns that received less resources from national and municipal bureaucracies. The 1973 report of the Nairobi Urban Study Group, the successor planning manifesto to the *Masterplan for a Colonial Capital*, scarcely referenced recreational space, instead emphasizing concerns of population management, residential development, and traffic.⁹² Faced with mounting exigencies, post-colonial urban planners regarded the creation of playgrounds and social centers as a lesser concern, that lacked the urgency of housing and transportation. Nairobi’s Chief Planning Officer, evaluating the availability of school playgrounds, reported that “As the Nairobi population grows and higher residential densities come about, it becomes more and more difficult to find land to meet increasing educational requirements at current standards.”⁹³ He stressed the need for “joint use”

⁹⁰ Abdul Juma, interview by author, Nairobi, January 22, 2014.

⁹¹ Ahmed Padilala and Residents of Lomule Village to Minister of Home Affairs, February 13, 1979, KNA, KY/12/13.

⁹² Nairobi Urban Study Group, *Nairobi: Metropolitan Growth Strategy* (Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 1973). The World Bank commissioned this report; World Bank President Robert McNamara wrote a preface to the Urban Study Group’s findings.

⁹³ Chief Planning Officer to Town Clerk, November 12, 1973, KNA, RN/1/193.

of playing fields “between schools,” as well as multiple uses of existing open spaces in order to resolve competing demands. The planning officer’s recommendations underscored that the state’s policy focus had shifted from development of new playgrounds, social halls, and other recreational amenities, to the maximization of existing facilities. The *Daily Nation* printed an article, entitled a “Place to Play,” which profiled the conflicts between housing exigencies and residents’ recreational needs, observing, “the conflict of providing adequate housing and recreational facilities will become ever more acute. Right now, many Nairobi residents complain about the lack of recreation outlets in some areas. Those that were created some years ago have become too small for the fast growing population.”⁹⁴

By the later years of the 1970s, the promises of social advancement and freedom that cities represented had soured to sentiments of struggle, disappointment, and discontent. Meja Mwangi, writing in the mid-1970s, described Nairobi as a cold and socially detached cityscape, with miserable workers walking amidst the smell of human excrement: “The whole field was swarming with path-finders walking to their work stations. The cold wet wind that blew across is carried, in the same medium with the smell of shit, urine, the occasional murmur, the rare expression of misery, uncertainty, and resignation.”⁹⁵ Naaman Al Bashek, who was born in Mombasa during 1950s, remembered Mombasa as once a city with clean streets, and “enough spaces for games and rest.”⁹⁶ These days, he reported, “the streets are dirty and buildings have been constructed everywhere.”⁹⁷ Amira M. Said, my guide in Mombasa, echoed these sentiments, explicating that in the immediate years after independence, there were paved roads

⁹⁴ Fibi Munene, “A Place to Play,” *Daily Nation*, January 25, 1974: 17.

⁹⁵ Mwangi, *Going Down River Road* (London, Heinemann, 1976), 6.

⁹⁶ Naaman Al Bashek, interview by author, Mombasa, November 30, 2014.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

with fire brigades monthly washing filth from the streets. “But now what is a city?” she decried, adding, “I don’t think there is a city, maybe if the county calls it so.”⁹⁸

When estate dwellers spoke of decline, they often pointed to specific losses of services and amenities. One estate dweller, writing to the *Daily Nation* in 1968, lamented, “In our estate we lack almost every facility one can think of. We have no shopping center, no playing ground, no open spaces for recreation and no social hall. We have neither a nursery school nor a primary school. These are just a few of the essential things we do not have.”⁹⁹ George Ogwel, writing two decades later, bemoaned the condition of Desai Memorial Hall, describing it as an “embarrassment” when compared to its former state in the early years after.¹⁰⁰ John Odiambo, who lived in Karoleni Estate since at least the 1960s, called attention to the broken windows of the estate’s social hall and nursery (see figure 5.3). Comparing the hall’s current condition to the years after independence, he declared, “During that time they were being maintained by the municipality of Nairobi. And the things were good, well organized, and in a better position. Not like now days. Look at the windows broken through the nurse here! The main hall here! Things have changed from that time up to now.”¹⁰¹ Kibera residents I spoke with regarded the former sports ground of the Caledonian Sports Club—presently known as Woodley Stadium—as a shadow of its former self, with the grass torn up and fixtures broken.¹⁰² Abdul Hussein, a man who grew up in Kibera during the 1970s, compared the stadium’s present condition to the past, telling me: “When we were young we would go and see the matches. And in those days, the

⁹⁸ Amira M. Said, interview by author, Mombasa, November 13, 2014. By “county,” Amira referred to Mombasa County that was recently established after the ratification of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution.

⁹⁹ Michael J. Luchera-Viketi, “Complaint by Estate Dwellers,” *Daily Nation*, February 2, 1968, 9.

¹⁰⁰ George Ogwel, “Let’s Maintain our Environments,” *Daily Nation*, October 6, 1986: 7.

¹⁰¹ John Odiambo, interview by author, Nairobi, February 7, 2014.

¹⁰² Dennis Ooko, interview by author.



Figure 5.3: Present day Karoleni Social Hall with football fields. Photo by Paul Abonyo Odhiambo.

soccer fields were green, and well maintained. If you could get a picture from those days of how that field was and compare it to now...even those players who passed away a long time ago, if they were to come [there] today, they would start crying.”¹⁰³

These discourses, while conveying residents’ felt frustrations, also underlined the imagination of urban dwellers concerning the possibilities for life in the city; gardens, social halls, and playgrounds stood as widely held expectations for what urban life could deliver. Disappointments were so harrowing because residents had developed a stake in the city and recognized its potential as a site of progress, rather than declination. The dwindling of services and amenities, in their view, was a matter of municipal mismanagement and misdirected priorities, not one of predetermined failure. Letters to the editor identified playgrounds, social halls, and other venues of recreation as expected features of urban life, connected with a proper

¹⁰³ Abdul Hussein, interview by author.

standard of living. A.R. Salim, a resident of Mombasa wrote a letter to the *Daily Nation*, declaring that “Old Town continues to be neglected and one wonders if the Municipal Council will not seriously consider providing the amenities needed by his residents.” He identified “a clinic, a social hall, a nursery school, a children’s playground, a garden, and street lighting as among the various amenities that were “overdue.”¹⁰⁴ A 1981 editorial in the *Daily Nation*, entitled “Where Should Children Play?” decried the absence of viable recreational amenities in urban centers, professing, “One would imagine that vacations are not a problem both to parents and school children. Yet increasingly they are becoming one of the more serious national problems which has not been thought out properly. There are not enough recreational facilities for the young.”¹⁰⁵

For urban residents, access to playground was at the heart of domesticity and familial stability. Ali Cullens, a resident of Mombasa, lamented that the “real-estate” industry had “taken up” most of the city’s available “picnic sites.”¹⁰⁶ Ali responded to a previous letter in the *Daily Nation* which had chastised fathers who spent more time at the bars than with their children. “It is undeniable,” Ali argued, “that parents, particularly fathers, should spare some quality time to be with their children.” Fathers, however, had few “spots to take the family to that are ‘greener’ than a number of suburban hotels.”¹⁰⁷ Ali connected access to recreational space with men’s ability to meet their expectations as fathers and heads of households. City dwellers charted a vision of urban life that extended beyond housing; recreational space was one aspect, of a broader nexus of features and amenities that would promote community, dignity, and fulfillment of family.

¹⁰⁴ A.R. Salim, “Old Town Neglected,” *Daily Nation*, January 24, 1976: 7.

¹⁰⁵ Editorial, “Where Should Children Play?” *Daily Nation*, August 1, 1981: 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ali Cullens, “Nairobi has Few Recreational Spots,” *Daily Nation*, March 25, 1991: 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Inhabitants of Nairobi and Mombasa, through their letters to the editor and everyday discourses, established claims, demands, and priorities that diverged from the development-driven framework of municipal engineers. State planners emphasized management of urban expansion, through advancement of housing, transportation, and other infrastructure that would satisfy the basic needs of growing populations. Residents, on the other hand, had expectations for city life that extended beyond the basic requisites of access to shelter; they aspired features, services, and amenities that would provide them semblance of community and familial stability. A *Daily Nation* editorial pronounced that, while the nation's elite had abundant resources for entertainment in the country clubs, cinemas, golf courses, and discos, there were few amenities catering for the working class. "It is all very well to provide for this strata of the population," the editorial opined, "but the low salaried workers should not be forgotten."¹⁰⁸ The editorial affirmed the rights of all Kenyans to a viable space for leisure, regardless of their economic station. In his letter to the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Wainaina Kiboro, did not limit his appeal to security of tenure; rather, he asked for "land for community services," such as schools, hospitals, and playgrounds, which they he claimed would elevate the area's standard of life.¹⁰⁹ Kiboro, a Mathare headman, underlined that expectations for recreational amenities were not limited to residents of the formal city, rather they represented priorities to which even Nairobi's poorest inhabitants aspired.

If having access to a playground or recreational space signified dignity, self-respect, and legitimacy, then the absence of these facilities reified sentiments of state neglect and marginalization. Mohamed Shalo, a local community activist in Mombasa, angrily condemned

¹⁰⁸ Editorial, "Planning Ahead," *Daily Nation*, April 5, 1968: 6.

¹⁰⁹ Wainaina Kiboro to Minister for Housing and Local Government.

the loss of community recreational grounds in Mombasa, characterizing it in terms of marginalization:

The simplest sport is football, the game of the people. You just have the ball and space to kick the ball. But every time you need a good ball and every time you need a good space to develop that sport. Now we have grabbing here. Now people are playing in the dirty streets here, with shit oozing. That is what I call marginalization. When you marginalize you are dehumanizing them. You dehumanize them to bring them down. You are taking livelihood out of them. That is the worst scenario you can do to your common man.¹¹⁰

Mohamed connected the decline of playgrounds in Mombasa's Old Town community with a trajectory of neglect and marginalization of the urban poor, as well as the area's Swahili population. Children kicking around a soccer ball in the street was certainly not a novel concept. In the absence of viable formal football pitches, however, it connoted marginality.

The trajectory of Kenyan cities after independence was not one of fixed and predetermined decline, rather one of multiple and coinciding struggles as states and non-elite Kenyans negotiated the constraints of urban planning and development with their aspirations for the "cities yet to come."¹¹¹ State officials and urban dwellers grappled with the effects of expanding populations, limited finances, and conflicting priorities for development. The state's turn to a development framework based on expedient and cheap roads, industry, and housing in the 1970s marked a departure from previous decades, in which urban planners established parks, playgrounds, and social halls that would contribute to making cities appealing places for people to live. Latter-day planners emphasized the city as a functional space, that would fulfill the basic requisites of urban life. Residents, however, had come to expect more. For many, the city was a place that they had come to view as their home. In addition to a right to a place to live, residents continued to regard their access to a playground or social hall as integral to their dignity and

¹¹⁰ Mohamed Shalo, interview by author, Mombasa, December 1, 2014.

¹¹¹ AbdouMaliq Simone, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

legitimacy within the city. These goals and aspirations importantly extended beyond the contours of the formal city, also influencing the struggles and demands of urban squatters.¹¹² If urban Kenyans were socially and geographically connected through their common aspirations during the 1960s, they continued to find connection through their shared struggles in the later decades after independence.

“BUYING UP NAIROBI”: RECREATION AND LANDUSE STRUGGLES

By the early 1980s, most of the undeveloped urban land in Nairobi and Mombasa had been exhausted, precipitating an era of politically charged land-grabbing—i.e. the selling or allocation of state land to private individuals to develop or sell.¹¹³ Of the average 9,300 residential sites or plots created annually in Nairobi during the 1980s, only one tenth were plots allocated through official channels, such as the Ministry of Lands, the National Housing Corporation (NHC), or the City Council of Nairobi (CCN). The remaining plots derived from private sector efforts, much of them illegal.¹¹⁴ The Nairobi Urban Study Group assessed values of undeveloped land in Nairobi between £200 and £500 per hectare, reaching £1000 per hectare in some parts of the city.¹¹⁵ These statistics, however, were from the early 1970s, a time in which there was still ample available sanctioned land for development. As urban land in Kenya became a lucrative commodity, public land became open for privation and real-estate speculation. As one

¹¹² I borrow this term from Datta, *The Illegal City*, 5. Datta use the term “formal” city to connote those aspects of the city and their residents with state recognition and access to social services. The informal or illegal city, she argued, represent “places of urban poor, of non-existent services, of marginalization and largely located in the rapidly globalizing metropolises of the south.”

¹¹³ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

¹¹⁴ Saad S. Yahya, “Residential Urban Land Markets in Kenya,” in *Residential Urban Land Markets in Kenya*, ed. Philip Amis and Peter Lloyd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 158.

¹¹⁵ Nairobi Urban Study Group, *Nairobi: Metropolitan Growth Strategy*, par. 58. In current currency values this equated to \$3484.56-\$8711.4, extending to \$17422.79.

respondent proclaimed, “Now everybody is buying Nairobi.”¹¹⁶ Joshua Makindi, who was himself a former city councilor, expounded on the market for urban land, declaring, “People want to grow richer quickly. They want to enrich themselves very fast. And it goes from the top, people who are in the government and officers [down] to houses. It has gone to even families now. The wife wants to own her own property...The child wants to have her own business property.”¹¹⁷ As publicly held lands, community open spaces and playgrounds became convenient and accessible locations for commercialization and real-estate development. Many respondents were able to identify two or three playgrounds that had been lost overtime due to development of infrastructure or commercial interests.¹¹⁸ Encroachment of such spaces was geographically far reaching, effecting both residents of the “formal city” and urban squatters residing in Kibera and Mathare.

The politically charged grabbing of community playgrounds and open spaces underlined contestations over urban space as competing interests, priorities, and perspectives of land-use vied for constricting territory. As Donald Moore has argued, “the outcome of cultural struggles remains crucially dependent on the diverse ways land comes to be inhabited, labored on, idiomatically expressed and suffered for in specific moments and milieus.”¹¹⁹ Although the term “land-grab” connotes the seizure of land by politically powerful elites, a wide range of actors, including urban squatters, lower-rung government officials, and start-up churches, also participated in the acquisition of community open spaces. The open quality of playgrounds and open spaces—many of which were more undeveloped areas where children played than

¹¹⁶ Barack Obat Blasto, interview by author, Nairobi, November 18, 2013.

¹¹⁷ Joshua Makindi, interview by author.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.; Peter Kuria, interview by author, Nairobi, October 7, 2014; Mary Romtu, interview by author.

¹¹⁹ Donald Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 2.

formalized recreational amenities—allowed for multiple interpretations regarding the use of these spaces. The means by which Kenyans could acquire public land, moreover, was by no means singular. In the formal city, municipal councils, particularly planning departments, had official jurisdiction over allocation of urban plots. The ministries of land and local government, in addition to the district and provincial commissioners, however, also had sway concerning dispensation of land. The variability of authority over land-access was even more pronounced in the squatter settlements of Mathare and Kibera, where area chairmen and elders also granted individuals and organizations permission to erect structures, in addition to the actors of the state.

By the end of the end of the 1970s, corruption had become rampant within Kenya's city councils. Municipal governments, which were less visible to international observers and had lower accounting standards than national administrations, engaged in embezzlement, extortion, land re-zoning and illegal allocations.¹²⁰ Widespread allegations of corruption contributed to the decisions of the Minister for Local Government to dissolve the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) in 1977, the same year as the start of a lengthy probe into the procurement practices of the City Council of Nairobi (CCN).¹²¹ The Minister for Local Government eventually dissolved CCN in 1983, establishing the Nairobi City Commission (NCC), which reported directly to the Minister for Local Government and the Office of the President.¹²² While the establishment of the NCC produced some immediate improvements in municipal administration, the years of the “unanswerable” commission became defined by broadening mismanagement, graft, and allocation of public lands.¹²³ During its nearly decade long span, the NCC saw five different

¹²⁰ Hornsby, *Kenya*, 314 & 445.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹²² Stren, “Urban Local Government.”

¹²³ Hornsby, *Kenya*, 445.

chairman, each a close political ally to President Daniel arap Moi and each eventually ousted as corruption and mismanagement continued to escalate.

Urban estate dwellers experienced the tumult of Kenya's changing municipal administrations, through a gradual yet enduring decline of estate playgrounds and community open spaces. At the conclusion of our interview, Jane Kangethe took me outside to show me the location of the former playground of her estate, on which several trucks have occupied for several decades. Jane claimed that the trucks belonged to a single wealthy businessman who was operating a tea factory near Pangani. "He found it useful to park vehicles here," she expounded, "so he went to the [city] council and got authority."¹²⁴ With cash and access to city hall, individuals acquired community playgrounds and open spaces, even in some cases receiving title deeds to the plots. Jimmy Litumi, who was a former municipal employee, cited the example of Harambe, one of the estates that the CCN established in the late 1960s. "Harambe was constructed by the city council," he decried, "You can check with the library and can get the African Estates Development Plan. You will see that there is an area earmarked for social facilities, but they were taken. That was the biggest problem which we had in Kenya. People took that land."¹²⁵

Struggles over land use have been at the forefront of social and community conflicts in Kenya's squatter settlements. In these areas the state has been conspicuously absent in regards to the provision of resources and services, as well as the quotidian affairs of inhabitants. The lack of state presence, however, has meant that many conflicts concerning land have been contested and resolved at the neighborhood level.¹²⁶ Eli Odhiambo Onguku, a local area chairman in Mathare,

¹²⁴ Jane Kangethe, interview by author.

¹²⁵ Jimmy Litumi, interview by author.

¹²⁶ Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Nairobi's Self Help City* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 10. Hake quite accurately depicted Mathare and Kibera as their own "self-help" cities, in that residents have

told me that most conflicts concerned encroachment, as expanding families sought to build new structures and extend their compounds.¹²⁷ Eli stressed his role of area chairman as that of a mediator, working to amicably resolve disputes between different families. Tom Onyango, another area chairman, stressed the importance of community procedures for building new structures, “There are procedures to be followed before someone can be allowed to put up a structure here...not any stranger can be allowed to grab land.”¹²⁸ Unlike residents of the formal city, who relied on city councils for services, Kibera and Mathare residents have utilized multiple and local avenues of authority, in the form of area chairman or committees of elders (in the case of Kibera), to respond to community concerns or mediate disputes over land.

On the other hand, the territorial autonomy of urban squatters reached only so far. The state has been ever looming presence, periodically threatening residents with evictions and reallocation of space to political cronies.¹²⁹ When President Daniel arap Moi wanted to expand the playing fields of a private secondary school bearing his name, he did so by evicting hundreds of Kibera tenants, forcing them to relocate without compensation. “That was a whole village!” Jamaldin Yahya angrily exclaimed, as he recounted the displacement of the people living there during the early 1980s. He argued, “the President just woke up one day and said ‘I don’t want to see this village here anymore. This land is reserved for the school.’”¹³⁰ Rukia was among those evicted by this directive. She rebuilt a house on undeveloped land of a relative who lived on the other side of the wall protecting the current school grounds.¹³¹

themselves maintained distribution of scarce land and resources, as well as responded to the needs of community members.

¹²⁷ Eli Odhiambo Onguku, interview by author, Nairobi, December 4, 2013.

¹²⁸ Tom Onyango, interview by author, Nairobi, December 14, 2013

¹²⁹ See Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006), 50-70.

¹³⁰ Jamaldin Yahya, interview by author, Nairobi, February 3, 2014.

¹³¹ Rukia, interview by author, Nairobi, February 2, 2014.



Figure 5.4: View of present day Kibera, taken March 8, 2014. Photo by author.

While the pupils of the secondary school—many of them originating from wealthy families from outside of Kibera—certainly benefited from expanded playgrounds, the eviction of hundreds of residents contributed to the congestion of the area and the contraction of available space for community gatherings and leisure (see figure 5.4). “The fact that made this more painful,” Jamaldin Yahya exclaimed, “was the fact that Kibera had already been encroached so much, that there was no more land for these people to build. They were forced to come to this place which was a river, a very unhealthy place. They were forced to come there and build their houses there... and that is what has created this slum here.”¹³²

Unlike the municipal estates of Nairobi and Mombasa, most community playgrounds in Mathare and Kibera did not derive out of formal planning mechanisms; residents rather self-organized such spaces in their homesteads or vacant plots. Yusuf Diab recalled the existence of

¹³² Jamaldin Yahya, interview by author.

plenty of spaces where he and his age once mates played football in Kibera throughout the 1950s and 1960s, telling me, “The issue of space did not actually arise because we had our homesteads where we had a family home, with a big yard for our own use, and the whole vast land outside here.”¹³³ Leisure space, in this context, was mostly self-organized with Nubians using vacant land in their homesteads for games and relaxation. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, structures slowly began to replace many of these playgrounds. He explained, “you see because of the demand for housing in Nairobi, you can get away with everything. You can put up very bad shanty houses and people would rent them because of the pressures of housing.”¹³⁴ The new housing structures and estates that blossomed through Kibera throughout the 1980s and 1990s, subsumed the grounds where Nubian community members had gathered to offer sacrifices that would bring an end to droughts, epidemics, and shortages of food. “The culture is being killed,” Ismail Ramadan decried, explaining, “The ceremony they used to conduct for lack of rain is no longer happening because you can’t even mobilize the community because everybody is scattered and there is no piece of land...So naturally there was no place to exercise that.”¹³⁵

As available land for new housing development declined in the formal city, the frontiers of landlordism and speculative real-estate shifted to Nairobi’s squatter settlements.¹³⁶ By cramming tenants into cheaply built, multi-storied structures, slum real-estate became “significantly more profitable, per square foot, than other forms of real-estate development.”¹³⁷ Simon Kimani attested, “there was no place designated as playground because there were very

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Yusuf Ibrahim Diab, interview by author, Nairobi, February 27, 2014.

¹³⁵ Ismail Ramadan, interview by author.

¹³⁶ Davis, *Planet of Slums*, 85 & 87.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 86.

few open grounds and even those were quickly grabbed and built.”¹³⁸ Simon, who lived in Mathare since the 1960s, remembered the area had such facilities in the past, but that various interests from outside the community had established structures on these locations. He exclaimed, “Sometime back we had many spaces where kids could play. There was a ground down the road from here where someone just came and said that it was his land and was not willing to leave it for leisure. The land went like that and the guy put up structures on it.”¹³⁹ The ambiguity of these spaces informed Simon’s perspective; whether the aforementioned plots were actually a playground or just an underdeveloped field was unclear. Simon, however, identified them as the places where local youths and community members were using for football scrimmages or social relaxation.

Outside collusion between corrupt municipal officials and wealthy speculators, according to Simon, ultimately determined the character of the plot in favor of infrastructural development. He proclaimed, “You know some people are smart. They collude with the officials in the Council Land Registry and transfer ownership to themselves. Then they come and evict people and put up their own structures.”¹⁴⁰ When Bob Munro, a Canadian former adviser to the United Nations Environment Program, began scouting potential fields for the Mathare Youth Sports Association in 1987, he quickly learned that he was an unwittingly accomplice to land speculators:

We were out there playing on every little piece of ground we could find. We would try to find out who owned it. If it was public land, we would go to the District Development Committee and say “We found this land. Can we do an arrangement where you give us the right to manage it? And within a month to two months, all of a sudden, that land disappeared, and was grabbed. We realized that we were just being used as scouts for corrupt local leaders.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Simon Kimani, interview by author, Nairobi, December 14, 2013. “Simon Kimani” is a pseudonym for an elderly Kikuyu man I interviewed. He asked me to omit his real name from the study.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Bob Munro, interview by author, Nairobi, March 18, 2014.

Munro's experiences highlighted the precarious position of playgrounds and open spaces within Nairobi's squatter settlements. Such spaces typically lacked goalposts, equipment, plantings, and other fixtures that had formally demarcated such spaces for recreational use in other areas. Consequentially, politicians and businessmen viewed these spaces as both attractive and attainable sites for housing development or other economic activities.

By the mid-1980s, houses and estates had subsumed Kibera's local golf course, where Nubian golfers and caddies had honed their talents on the fairways.¹⁴² Residents regarded the closing of the local golf club as a turning point that marked the game's decline in the area. Although some of the wealthier residents and local professionals had existing memberships in private golf clubs, such as the Railways Golf Club or the Royal Nairobi Golf Club, the price of maintaining memberships to these institutions was untenable for most Kibera residents. Adab Rajab, the son of one Kibera's most acclaimed professional golfers, was himself rising through the ranks of the sport at the amateur level. He, however, "retired" before turning professional because the costs of maintaining memberships made continuing the game no longer possible. He explained, "I joined Royal in 1976 as a junior member. During that time junior fee was 120 schillings per month. Now it is very expensive. You have to spend half a million."¹⁴³ With the loss of the public course, golf faded as a recreational activity in Kibera. Abdul Juma declared, "For us we are poor, we can't afford that [membership], so our golf died, just like that."¹⁴⁴

While housing and real-estate development dominated debates over land use, churches likewise competed for space in Kibera and Mathare. Since the early 1990s, Pentecostalism has swept through Kenya, taking over "almost every public space in towns and cities for daily prayer

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Adab Rajab, interview by author, Nairobi, February 24, 2014.

¹⁴⁴ Abdul Juma, interview by author.

meetings, Sunday services, and regular mass revivals.”¹⁴⁵ According to Daniel Branch, the rise of Pentecostalism coincided with several economic crises and public scandals during the early 1990s.¹⁴⁶ The Pentecostal message of the 1990s emphasized themes of “victory, success, and achievement, with health and finance prominent.”¹⁴⁷ The popularity of African Pentecostalism, with its decentralized character, precipitated a profusion of start-up churches, often meeting in small, congregated metal structures.¹⁴⁸ In late 2007, Kenya’s Attorney General estimated over 8,250 registered churches in the country, with 6,740 pending applications for new churches.¹⁴⁹ For the founders of these congregations, running a church also represented a form of livelihood. Christine Kaloki’s husband, for example, found work in Nairobi first as a Sunday school teacher, and then as a pastor. He eventually, however, formed his own church and school, which he and Christine have run on a plot bordering the Royal Nairobi Golf Club.¹⁵⁰ In addition to their spiritual roles, churches have been important to the social lives of their members. When Luka Mbatia moved to Mombasa from his Kamba village shortly after independence, he found an immediate social connection within his neighborhood’s Pentecostal church where he became a Sunday school teacher and a choir master. Luka emphasized that he avoided attending dance halls, believing such activities to be sinful; it was through the church rather that he found “social entertainment,” and eventually met his wife.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, 233.

¹⁴⁶ David Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, 233-235.

¹⁴⁷ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Politics, and Public Life in Kenya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 119.

¹⁴⁸ Joel Robbins, “Anthropology of Religion,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 162; the expansion of African Pentecostalism has been an important area of interest for scholars of religion. For an excellent synthesis of this literature, see Birgit Meyer, “Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 447-74.

¹⁴⁹ Gifford, *Christianity, Politics, and Public Life in Kenya*, 109.

¹⁵⁰ Christine Kaloki, interview by author.

¹⁵¹ Luka Mbatia, interview by author, Mombasa, December 11, 2014.

Churches, however, were also sources of community conflicts concerning land use and space. Bob Munro recounted the process by which several churches in Mathare took over community playgrounds throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, declaring “they start by putting up a little tent on some public ground. Then they put up a bigger tent, and a bigger tent, and a bigger tent. And then they start putting up some wooden walls over the tent and then those wooden walls become brick walls. And then, before you know it, they have a structure on there and the land is theirs.”¹⁵² When a local pastor attempted to establish a congregation on a popular football field in Kibera, youth enforced the recreational role of the space by tearing down the tents and driving the churchgoers away.¹⁵³

Such conflicts were not limited to interests of recreation. During my conversations with Grace, a sardine vendor in Mathare, she disclosed recent persistent rumors that a well-connected pastor was colluding with government officials to acquire the *kijijichechewa* ground, one of the few remaining open spaces in the area. Grace and other vendors had their own intentions for using the space; she disclosed that she had sought to establish an open-air market on the grounds, but the “politicians” had “shortchanged them.”¹⁵⁴ These examples illuminated contestations over the physical environment of Kibera and Mathare, as churches, markets, and recreation each vied over dwindling territory. The open, undeveloped quality of open spaces allowed for multiple forms of use. Conflicts arose when particular groups, individuals, or community interests sought to impose a single function onto these spaces. While providing for the social and spiritual needs of their respective congregations, churches closed off other possibilities for utilization, such as football scrimmages or open air markets.

¹⁵² Bob Munro, interview by author.

¹⁵³ Clement, interview by author, Nairobi, October 11, 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Grace, interview by author, Nairobi, January 29, 2014.

Struggles over land use also underlined cultural tensions concerning the value of leisure. In terms of land use, recreation contributed little in terms of commercial value or economic development. Some of my respondents even characterized leisure as a trifling concern against the broader demands of work, business, and housing. When I asked Peter Kuria, a Kikuyu, about his pastimes, he insisted he had none, rejoining, “What leisure time do you really need? They were very busy. Whenever they come home they are tired.”¹⁵⁵ Peter Kirima, another Kikuyu, echoed these sentiments, contending that games were primarily the affairs of Luos. “Us Kikuyu,” he declared, “were not into games, we were more eager to make money and get rich faster and own lots of property.”¹⁵⁶ Peter Kirima and Peter Kuria were both working class and neither had themselves acquired open spaces. Their perspectives, however, offered explanation to how playgrounds and open spaces would have rationally fallen into the hands of businessmen and developers. For state officials and wealthy entrepreneurs—who perhaps cared less for the trivialities of soccer—playgrounds and open spaces represented, lucrative, easily developed, and *available* land for economic advancement.

The dilemmas of determining whether an open space would function as a place to play or a place to stay (or a place to pray) underlined the tensions between meeting the basic requisites of urban livelihoods and the variable features that made life in the city fulfilling. Hillary Omala told me, “That is a difficult thing, the same people who want to protect against encroachment are the same who need space for housing.”¹⁵⁷ When I asked George Oluoch how he spent his time, he candidly replied that such “time is not allowed.” He expounded on this answer, stating, “You are always looking for money. You are looking to pay for the family.”¹⁵⁸ For him, leisure--or its

¹⁵⁵ Peter Kuria, interview by author, Nairobi, October 7, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Kuria Kirima, interview by author, Nairobi, March 1, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Hilary Omala, interview by author, Nairobi, February 27, 2014.

¹⁵⁸ George Oluoch, interview by author, Nairobi, November 23, 2013.

Kiswahili translation “starah” —was a luxury for the city’s wealthy elites, such as Mwai Kibaki and his cohort of golfers at the nearby Muthaiga Golf Club.¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, occupants connected access to a recreational space with the promises of a higher standard of living. Access to playing fields, Francis Achar explicated, made the difference between “a house and a home,” a house being a physical structure where one slept in, while a home connoting a spacious compound, with ample room for his children to play.¹⁶⁰ Domesticity was important to his distinction; a home represented permanency and place, both rooted in the family.

In the mid-1990s, a German NGO, affiliated with the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, began a “upgrading” project in Mathare. The scheme sought to improve housing, clear space for roads, install electrical and water hookups. The most enduring accomplishment of the initiative, according to respondents, was the construction of a community school and playground near the center of Mathare. The playground has become an important recreational feature for the area’s inhabitants. Respondents told me that when the school was out of session, the space was available for community members to use for football scrimmages. Grace and her women’s dance group would also use the space for their late-afternoon practices.¹⁶¹ Maurice Otieno, who came to Mathare during the 1990s, recounted, “When I came, the life was hard here. There was no life of leisure and we were so busy looking for jobs. But now, with these open spaces, even those who don’t go to work can go and spend time in the field.”¹⁶² The creation of the school grounds required the removal of several families. According to Maurice, these families “agreed” to vacate when the NGO promised to give them compensation or alternative housing.¹⁶³ Community

¹⁵⁹ Francis Achar, interview by author, Nairobi, November 23, 2013; Barack Obat Blasto, interview by author; Simon Mbuga, interview by author.

¹⁶⁰ Francis Achar, interview by author.

¹⁶¹ Grace, interview by author.

¹⁶² Maurice Otieno, interview by author.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

members protected their school playgrounds from “intrusion or invasion” by constructing a fence and installing goal posts.¹⁶⁴ The installation of a goal post had the effect of transforming the open space into a dedicated leisure area for community members, deterring potential speculators.

The informality of squatter settlements ultimately gave their occupants a certain degree of autonomy over their territory, in ways that residents of the formal city lacked. Through their creation of a school playground residents took the production of a dedicated space for leisure into their own hands, erecting fences and concrete goal posts to geographically demarcate the spaces for play. These opportunities to define spaces are singularly available to residents in the squatter settlements, where local institutions of authority and NGOs often supplant the state. Urban squatters, on the other hand, have experienced the territorial power of the Kenyan state in other ways, through forced evictions and reallocation of community leisure grounds. Space has been contested, as residents, planners, real-estate speculators, and national officials vied for control over increasingly dwindling urban territory.

GENERATIONAL CONFLICT AND CHANGING CULTURAL SPACE

An underlying thread of this chapter—and this dissertation—has been that questions of space and territory have been integrally connected to leisure and cultural production. In the late colonial era and early years after independence, urban Kenyans cultivated a conceptualization of leisure connected to accessible playgrounds, open spaces, and social halls. The gradual contraction of these spaces, beginning in the 1970s and accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s, necessitated reconceptualization of how urban Kenyans viewed leisure. This section examines multiple sites of entertainment and social life that grew out of the decline of playgrounds and

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. Barack Obat Blasto, interview by author.

social halls. These included *pombe* and *miraa* vendors, makeshift pool-halls, and hired-wedding halls. While these spaces represented wide-ranging forms of leisure, two unifying themes connected these spaces. First, these venues operated to varying degrees on a business model, connecting leisure to entrepreneurship and consumption. Secondly, the development of these spaces contributed to intergenerational debates concerning the boundaries of acceptable forms of leisure. While alcohol consumption and *miraa* use were always sites of contentious struggle over respectability, these issues converged with concerns over waste and conspicuous consumption of wealth. Since the early 1980s, inflation in Kenya has been steadily increasing, diminishing the purchasing powers of most Kenyans' wages.¹⁶⁵ As the commercial sphere has increasingly taken a prominent role in shaping urban Kenyans' pastimes, particularly those of youths, older community members have regarded both excess money, as well as time, spent on consumption of brews, *miraa*, and lavish weddings as indicative of the decadence and waste of the younger generation. These issues highlight that urban Kenyan's were negotiating changing meanings of leisure in relationship to a city map that was also changing.

Many urban dwellers particularly perceived the trajectory of city life after independence in terms of loss of cultural values and respect for generational authority. Generational tensions, as Gary Burgess and Andrew Burton have argued, underlined Africans' struggles for control of urban space, as youths, through their social relationships and pastimes, asserted independence from generational authority.¹⁶⁶ "These days, the youths are rotten," Helena Wanjiro Kiari

¹⁶⁵ Hornsby, *Kenya*, 356.

¹⁶⁶ Gary Thomas Burgess and Andrew Burton, "Introduction," in *Generations Past: Youth in East African History*, ed. Andrew Burton and Hélène Chaton-Bigot (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 3. Scholarship on age, and generation conflict is abundant. For some notable contributions to this literature see Paul T.W. Baxter and Uri Almagor, *Age, Generation, and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 1-36; Richard Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa," *Journal of African History* 47, no 1 (2006): 77-92; Deborah Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa," *Anthropological Quarterly* 73, no 3. (2000): 113-20.

asseverated, explaining that in her time, women would not “even where long trousers.”¹⁶⁷ Albert James Marafa echoed such frustrations, declaring, “These day’s children will do whatever they want, they don’t have any rules to live by. We lived decently and our children copied our lives.”¹⁶⁸

The image of morally rotten, disreputable young men wasting away their days with the bottle was certainly not a novel one, illustrating the resonance of colonial-era discourses connecting boredom with social delinquency. After independence, youths continued to represent a threat to social stability and order, particularly as Kenya’s national leaders sought to legitimize their political authority through their own claims to senior status¹⁶⁹ Jomo Kenyatta stylized himself with the title *mzee*—the Kiwahili term for a senior person. State concerns, however, were ultimately distinct from those of ordinary seniors; while racial anxieties drove colonial youth development programs, senior community members described their concerns for youths in terms of cultural sustainability, responsibility, and deference to their authority.¹⁷⁰ As Hamza Ahmed exclaimed, “During our time, because we had respect, I could not pass somebody who was older than me. I had to respect them and say hello to them. My father’s age mate, my mother, I had to respect them and give them food. But nowadays they just pass you.”¹⁷¹

Intergenerational tensions reflected changing communities that often put people of different ethnic groups in close proximity to each other. Some parents sought to restrict the

¹⁶⁷ Helena Wanjiro Kiari, interview by author, Nairobi, October 10, 1964.

¹⁶⁸ Albert James Marafa, interview by author, Mombasa, December 12, 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Paul Okobock, *An Uncertain Age: Making Manhood, Maturity, and the Elder State in Kenya* (Forthcoming, Ohio University Press), 351-382.

¹⁷⁰ See Waller, “Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa,” 78; Andrew Burton, “Urchins, Loafers, and the Cult of the Cowboy: Urbanization and Delinquency in Dar es Salaam 1919-1961,” *Journal of African History* 42, no 2 (2001), 199-216; Laurent Fourchard, “Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920-60,” *The Journal of African History* 47 (2006): 115-37; Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000).

¹⁷¹ Hamza Ahmed, interview by author.

activities and social relationships of their children—i.e. the type of people and circles with whom they interacted—but children, as Mohamed Hassan indicated, ultimately did what they wanted.¹⁷² Ismail Ramadan directly blamed the denigration of Nubian youths on outside groups, contending, “Delinquency came from the outside and was not homegrown. As the population grew in Kibra, many other people came in. They might have been undesirable characters from their own area. They came here and, because of interaction, they influenced people around to get involved in whatever they were doing.”¹⁷³ The scarcity of accessible community spaces, moreover, altered the performance of events, gatherings, and celebrations that reaffirmed bonds and structures of community. Hamza delineated this connection when she told me, “When they build the houses there was big spaces for the children to play, and when there was wedding there was a big place for people to sit outside...But now there is no space. It is squeezed.”¹⁷⁴

As opportunities for state-driven leisure declined, new facilities and venues aimed at providing youths with entertainment emerged in their place. My research assistant Paul and I encountered several temporary canopy structures in Mathare, with signs identifying them as “social halls.” Unlike the municipal social halls, private entrepreneurs owned and managed these facilities. When we looked in, we saw a number of young men in their late teens and twenties playing billiards. Signs outside listed Nigerian films and up-coming English Premier League matches with their respective show times and prices. Many of these venues also had barred-windowed kiosks, displaying bottles of Tusker, wine, or Kanyagi for purchase.

While these make-shift social halls offered youths alternatives to declining football pitches and playgrounds, senior community members viewed them apprehensively. When I

¹⁷² Mohamed Hassan, interview by author, Nairobi, September 27, 2014.

¹⁷³ Ismail Ramadan, follow-up interview by author, Nairobi, September 17, 2014.

¹⁷⁴ Hamza Ahmed, interview by author.

asked Maurice Otieno about these halls, he rejoined, “We do not consider that part of leisure because we think those video shows are where thieves hide during the day and terrorize people at night. So we do not like the idea of a video show.”¹⁷⁵ Maurice’s remarks underscored broader anxieties concerning the pastimes of youths. Seniors linked these sites to the sale of drugs and illicit brews, which they saw as degenerating the youth of their communities. “They never used to drink or smoke,” Ismail Ramadan bemoaned, “but you find that these days, there are some who might be Muslims. They drink alcohol and they smoke.”¹⁷⁶ Noting the proliferation of establishments selling Nubian gin, he stated, “In Kibra now there are a lot of illicit brews all over. It is not difficult to find them in Kibra, particularly in the evenings.”¹⁷⁷ Tobias Dennis Akumu, in a letter to the *Daily Nation*, castigated “imbibers” of chang’aa, declaring that “they take this illicit brew gluttonously.” He opined that most of the consumers of the brew were “bread winners,” subjecting their families to “all sorts of harassment.”¹⁷⁸ “What makes these poor people so addicted to the drinks!” Mwalifi Nzioka of Nairobi opined, “Is it the low price! Has their availability drawn these victims into such waste!”¹⁷⁹ On the coast, Muslim respondents conveyed similar consternations towards the popularity of stands where men sit to chew *miraa*. *Miraa*, known elsewhere as Khat, is a type of plant that, when chewed, functions as a stimulant. Local Muslim leaders have denounced the use of the drug, associating it with wastefulness and idleness.¹⁸⁰ On the same page of the *Daily Nation* in which Mwalifi Nzioka decried the effects of “cheap brews,” Abdul Salam Baradie, a Mombasa resident, denounced the “evils” of miraa use,

¹⁷⁵ Maurice Otieno, interview by author.

¹⁷⁶ Ismail Ramadan, follow up interview by author.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Tobias Dennis Akumu, “Chang’aa is Bad for Health,” *Daily Nation*, September 5, 1989: 7.

¹⁷⁹ Mwalifi Nzioka, “Victims of Cheap Brews,” *Daily Nation*, October 6, 1986: 7.

¹⁸⁰ Hamid Yusuf Hamid, interview by author, Mombasa, December 1, 2014; Hafswa Hussein, interview by author, Mombasa, November 17, 2014.

arguing, “It has led to broken homes, lost jobs, interrupted schools, laziness and mental illnesses especially among the young.”¹⁸¹

Chang’aa, miraa use, and other activities, while certainly not new facets to city life, built on existing trepidations regarding how youths, particularly young men, spent their pastimes. Such activities, according to Akumu’s letter, hindered moral development and reduced young men to unemployed idlers rather than productive bread winners. Participation in these activities meant the expenditure of allowances that would otherwise go to supporting families. These anxieties transcended ethnicity and religion, felt both among coastal Swahili Muslims and up country ethnic groups. Discursively speaking, the effects of miraa were not much different from those of distilled alcohol; both resulted in decadence, corruption and wastefulness, and were symptoms of a broader moral crisis effecting the young.

These anxieties, rooted in generational and cultural tensions, were not removed from material struggles over the physical transformation of cities, particularly in regards to the loss of the community spaces and recreational grounds.¹⁸² Pool halls, miraa stands, and pombe vendors have operated within physical structures, or even street corners, that easily blend into Nairobi and Mombasa’s increasingly congested estates and neighborhoods. Unlike social halls and playgrounds, these spaces do not require the allocation of dedicated space and can be easily transferred to alternative locations when local authorities or senior community members force their closure. Senior community members regarded the waywardness of the young as connected with the loss of spaces for positive and productive forms of leisure. Abdul Juma explained, “Even when they were demarcating the estate they did not designate grounds for playing. This has really affected games and the youth just sit idle and only think of robbery and other petty

¹⁸¹ Abdul Salam Baradie, “Miraa is Evil,” *Daily Nation*, October 6, 1986: 7.

¹⁸² Gary Thomas Burgess and Andrew Burton, “Introduction,” in *Generations Past*.

crimes.”¹⁸³ Expounding on the social effects of the loss of playgrounds on Mombasa’s youth, Mohamed Shalo declared, “If you don’t tame the power of the youth for useful activities, then then what happens?” They go out of control.”¹⁸⁴

Senior community members also identified a decline of community gatherings, traditions, and rituals. Respondents saw these events as important to maintaining culture and reaffirming community connections. Victor Turner argued that rituals present a “a moment in and out of time” that reveals recognition of a “generalized bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties.”¹⁸⁵ Christmas and Easter festivals in Kibera brought together Nubians together from across East Africa.¹⁸⁶ These festivals included dances, parades, brass band music, frequently culminating in a friendly match of football.¹⁸⁷ Weddings were more frequent occasions, generally occurring on weekends.¹⁸⁸ Weddings traditionally were large-scale events that involved most of the community. “Everybody, *everybody* in the community would be called, especially the women,” Yusuf Diab recounted.¹⁸⁹

Space was a crucial aspect of these celebrations; most weddings occurred either at the homestead of the bride’s family, or on a large community ground. Jamaldin Yahya recounted, “we had a big open ground down here where the marriage ceremony would be done outside. The mothers would cook on one side, just in the open. We normally used to do everything in the

¹⁸³ Abdul Juma, focus group by author, Nairobi, February 1, 2014.

¹⁸⁴ Mohamed Shalo, interview by author.

¹⁸⁵ Victor Turner, *the Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 96.

¹⁸⁶ Yusuf Ibrahim Diab, interview by author.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Yusuf Ibrahim Diab, interview by author. Hamza Amed, interview by author, Nairobi, February 4, 2014.

¹⁸⁹ Yusuf Ibrahim Diab, interview by author.

open. Our home was this empty ground, so everybody would come together and we would prepare food. And you didn't need an invitation. This was part of our society and how we lived.”¹⁹⁰

The decline of open spaces in Kibera altered how Nubians experienced these celebrations. The contraction of homesteads and the loss of viable community grounds meant that families looking to host weddings have had to hire venues. Rukia, who grew up in Kibera during the 1950s, told me, “In our days we had free access to the open grounds and we would dance during the weddings until dawn. Now there are no grounds and people have to hire and it's the bride who has to get the money to hire the ground.”¹⁹¹ Many families have hired the grounds of a local primary school for hosting wedding celebrations. Hamza Ahmed estimated the cost of hiring the school ground to be around KSH 7000. This price, Hamza noted, was a relatively inexpensive when compared to other venues in Nairobi, which range up to KSH 20,000-40,000.

192

Holding a wedding at a hired ground, rather than at the home, effected these celebrations in multiple ways. First, renting a hall created significant logistical and financial obstacles on families. Secondly, families have condensed weddings, which traditionally took place over the span of a week, to a single day. As one woman stated, “these days the ceremonies are very brief and a lot of things have been made to conform to the demands of the modern world.”¹⁹³ Weddings also become private affairs, with guests limited to family, or people intimately connected to the bride and groom. “You have to write the cards to invite,” Hamza noted,

¹⁹⁰ Jamaldin Yahya, interview by author.

¹⁹¹ Rukia, interview by author.

¹⁹² Hamza Ahmed, interview by author. According to current conversion rates, this amount equates to approximately USD 70, and USD 200-400 for some of the other venues in the city.

¹⁹³ This perspective came from a focus group I did with a group of women in Kibera, April 24, 2014.

referring to the invitation cards that engaged couples now send to close friends and relatives.¹⁹⁴ Also important, however, has been the perceived dislodgement of wedding ceremonies from the home, exemplifying Nubians' discernment of their declining fortunes. The "ideal Nubian traditional" family, Habiba Ali explained, would have a "very big compound" to host weddings and other social gatherings. She observed that although the Nubians "still practice their culture," it is not "as it used to be."¹⁹⁵

Weddings in Mombasa have undergone similar transformations since independence, particularly in the last two decades. Margaret Stroble, in her seminal study of Muslim women in Mombasa, observed that weddings "reflect broad patterns of social change," emphasizing the effects of assimilation of slaves into Swahili culture.¹⁹⁶ As was the case with the Nubians of Kibera, the home was an important setting where Swahili weddings occurred. Mishi wa Abdala described the various practices of wedding celebrations in her account to Stroble and Sarah Mirza, stating, "The kungwi put the bride on her shoulders and went to the bathroom. You returned with her celebrating and spent the day at the house."¹⁹⁷ Habiba Kaim used to perform at weddings, singing and leading dances. She recounted, "During those days, we didn't have many halls so we had the celebration at home. It was inside a room so we just decorated the house. There was no tape recording too, so only the people present sung."¹⁹⁸

By the early 1990s, however, most weddings were occurring in hired halls across the city. The increased density of neighborhoods, however, has required families hosting weddings to rent

¹⁹⁴ Hamza Ahmed, interview by author.

¹⁹⁵ Habiba Ali, focus group by author, Nairobi, April 24, 2015.

¹⁹⁶ Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 8.

¹⁹⁷ Mishi wa Abdala, in ed. Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel, *Three Swahili Women: Life Histories from Mombasa, Kenya* (Bloomington: University of Indian Press, 1989), 84.

¹⁹⁸ Habiba Kaim, interview by author, Mombasa, November 19, 2014.

halls. As Ushi Bakari explained “There is not enough space at home. Buildings are everywhere and there are not enough fields at the home.”¹⁹⁹ Aswilia Rashid, the chairwoman of a local women’s group, corroborated this explanation, telling me, “Now buildings have come up. We used to have grounds for doing weddings within our own home area, but where the ground was, there have been built houses. So that is why we take them to the halls.”²⁰⁰ Concerns of gender, particularly the visibility of women in public, also shaped the popularity of hiring halls. As mostly Muslim communities, both Swahili and Nubian weddings were gender segregated; men congregated at the mosques, while women engaged in dancing, songs, henna, and other activities at the bride’s home. The gender exclusivity of the weddings and other ceremonies gave women freedom to dance and socialize uninhibited.²⁰¹ The outgrowth of population and the intimacy of urban space, however, hindered many of the mechanisms that maintained privacy and separation between genders. As one community elder in Kibera explicated, “According to our Muslim affiliation, ladies are regarded as being very sacred. They were not supposed to sit in the open and were not supposed to be seen. But now due to congestion, the situation has become the opposite.”²⁰² Amira Said contended that the close proximity of houses in Old Town made female guests visible to male onlookers. By moving weddings to halls, she explained, women were able to restore privacy, declaring, “It changed because there were a lot of men, who did not want their women to be seen. We had to respect the culture and religion.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Ushi Bakari, interview by author, Mombasa, November 19, 2014. This explanation came up in multiple interviews: Zuleya Abdulla, interview by author, Mombasa, November 18, 2014; Said Suleiman, interview by author, Mombasa, November 10, 2014; Nassr Ahmed, interview by author, Mombasa, October 14, 2014.

²⁰⁰ Aswila Rashid, interview by author, Mombasa, November 18, 2014.

²⁰¹ Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa*, 9.

²⁰² Ibrahim Ali, focus group by author, February 1, 2014.

²⁰³ Amira M. Said, interview by author.

Women connected the growing importance of hired halls with changing cultural practices and social mores. Halls, as Mumira Khalid explained, allowed guests more freedom to move and dance with the music. “The younger generation wants more space to play, they want to enjoy themselves, she elucidated, “At homes like this, it is crowded here. They don’t like this. You can’t make that round circle where people move around.”²⁰⁴ Mombasa presently has a variety of halls that correspond with families of varying levels of income. “Every hall has its price,” Amira Said explained.²⁰⁵ She estimated that the price of holding a wedding at Rosea, a popular venue located near Old Town, to be KSH 12,000, while Levan House, another popular venue in Old Town, cost KSH 15,000 to rent.²⁰⁶ Mombasa, however, had a number of higher end halls, such as Jubilee, which had a price upwards of KSH 20,000. While some families have continued to hold weddings at the home, such celebrations, Zuleya Abdullah claimed, have been indicative of a lower economic position.²⁰⁷

Senior women within the community saw these shifts as emblematic of a broader and troubling trajectory of “Westernization,” by which youths gravitated towards a culture of capitalism and conspicuous consumption.²⁰⁸ “Traditional weddings were better compared to the present day wedding,” Fatma Sheriff Hussein postulated, explaining, “The cost has gone so high, people emulate the Western culture. We used to have traditional dances, there were songs just at

²⁰⁴ Mumira Khalid, interview by author, Mombasa, November 14, 2014.

²⁰⁵ Amira M. Said, interview by author.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Zuleya Abdullah, interview by author, Mombasa, November 10, 2014.

²⁰⁸ Such tensions and generational concerns regarding consumption and wedding celebrations have not been unique to Kenya. For recent scholarship on these issues, see Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 166-205; Sasha Newell, *the Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d’Ivoire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Beth Anne Buggenhagen, *Muslim Families in Global Senegal: Money Takes Care of Shame* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2012); Emily Riley, “Teranga and the Art of Hospitality: Engendering the Nation, Politics, and Religion in Dakar, Senegal” (Michigan State University, 2016).

home, no halls, but these days it's done away from home.”²⁰⁹ Fatma's assertion rested on the notion that concerns of fashion, convenience, and display of wealth—not Islamic observance or cultural practice—had come to define performance of wedding celebrations among the young. “We are copying the Western style,” bemoaned Aswila Rashid, “We are not doing our own weddings these days. We are copying the Western styles.”²¹⁰

The changing practices of community rituals, ceremonies, and gatherings underlined Kenyans' responses to changing urban environments. As homesteads and community open grounds diminished as viable locations for social and community events, new venues in the form of hired grounds and halls have become important for the sustainability of culture. Access to these spaces, however, required residents' participation as paying consumers. It is therefore not surprising that residents connect the popularity of these new venues with the denigrating values of western capitalism and conspicuous consumption. As Mariam Hassan of Kibera lamented, “in our time, planning a wedding took time. The planning took almost a year and it was a very much observed procedure. But now the couples plan everything themselves and only invite people for tea to inform them of their intentions.”²¹¹ Her depiction of wayward youths, driven by expediency, rather than obedience to custom, underlined the worries of residents, as cultural traditions, as was the case with leisure, have become consumable commodities rather than products of community and familial engagement.

CONCLUSION

Generational anxieties concerning wedding celebrations, video halls, and *chang'aa* use, underlined the importance of space to understanding social and cultural struggles, issues that

²⁰⁹Fatma Sheriff Hussein, interview by author, Mombasa, November 17, 2014.

²¹⁰ Aswila Rashid, interview by author.

²¹¹ Mariam Hassan, focus group by author, Nairobi, April 24, 2014.

have been at the heart of African historical scholarship. The reshaping of urban landscapes also reshaped urban styles, as inhabitants of Nairobi and Mombasa negotiated their aspirations, as well as their pastimes, within both the “possibilities and constraints” of city life.²¹² The proliferation of social halls, grounds-for-hire, and makeshift recreational centers highlighted the sustainability, not the demise of culture and community. Such cultural changes, however, were contested, as senior community members connected their trepidations concerning wayward youths with perceptions of declining opportunities for housing, employment, and social life. The decline of community open spaces and sportsgrounds often served as a metaphor for the decline of communities themselves, as youths turned to drugs, alcohol, and conspicuous consumption to fulfill the absence of nurturing culture. These narratives were not far removed from the colonial-era imaginations of “detrified” urchins.

The purpose of this chapter, however, has not been to recite old refrains of urban chaos, decline, or state failure; rather it has been to highlight the tensions, struggles, and negotiations of urbanization, particularly in regards to their effects on the social lives of Kenyans. Even as they faced a contraction of both urban space and services, residents demonstrated their resilient commitment to the city through their letters to the editor, efforts to restore community open spaces, and production of new outlets for leisure. Kenyan officials assumed power with the intention of implementing the master plans of their colonial predecessors. Such plans envisioned modern cities with abundant green parks, playgrounds, and social halls, which would provide for the social and recreation needs of urban inhabitants. These planning mechanisms, however, “melted into air,” in the face of rapid population growth and competing demands for the space of

²¹² Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 167–96.

the city.²¹³ As urban land became a scarce—and lucrative—commodity, many state officials cashed in, propelling a political culture of crony capitalism based on landlordism and speculative real-estate. As a result of these factors, culture, leisure, and social life, issues driving the work of early social engineers, became subsidiary concerns. The urban poor faced the brunt of these changes. While the country clubs, golf courses, and other private recreational venues of the colonial era—mostly absent from this chapter—maintained their land through leases and amicable relationships with the government, public lands of leisure, in the form of open spaces, football pitches, and community playgrounds became lucrative commodities, quickly dispensed to high-paying bidders.

The loss of public recreational amenities, however, came as urban residents of Nairobi and Mombasa increasingly expected such facilities as a basic standard of urban life. Kenyans, embracing emerging ideals of domesticity, saw access to recreational spaces as indicative of propriety, dignity, and ultimately urban legitimacy. As state and municipal institutions grappled with how to create legitimate urban housing and curtail the development of squatter settlements, residents themselves negotiated the spaces of the city, delineating priorities distinct from those of post-colonial urban planners. Their struggles will be the focus of the final two chapters, as this dissertation turns to specific case studies highlighting non-elite residents' efforts to reclaim recreational spaces. The trajectory of urbanization in Kenya, as these case studies will demonstrate, has been one not of linear, monolithic decline, but one of struggle, as the state and ordinary residents negotiated the physical environment of the city and the direction for urban planning.

²¹³ Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1982).

CHAPTER 5

MODERNIZING MAKADARA GARDENS: DEVELOPMENT AND THE SPATIAL CONFLICTS IN MOMBASA

In 1971 President Jomo Kenyatta and the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) announced a major renovation of Mombasa's Makadara Gardens, an approximately two-acre open space bordering the city's Old Town neighborhood. The park was popular among the city's Swahili and South Asian communities. While the government may have expected accolades for its efforts, it instead encountered protests, including the harassment of workers undergoing the park's renovations. The *East African Standard* reported the discovery of "a sacrifice of doves which had been slaughtered and their blood spilt over a number of new pots and left scattered around the area."¹

The acrimony of the park's restoration, which planned for newly planted trees and flowers, benches, swings and see-saws, and a ceremonial dais, underscored the politicization of Kenya's dwindling public urban recreational and social spaces.² President Kenyatta and municipal authorities regarded the park's upgrade as symbolic of a clean, efficient, and modern city. The local Muslim population, who had used Makadara Gardens for their annual religious festivals, perceived the restoration as a challenge to their access to the park and their "rights to the city."³ Modernizing Makadara Gardens meant the removal of these popular festivals from this location. By "beautifying" and "improving" Makadara Gardens, the government excluded the local population, for whom the park was intended to benefit.

¹ "Gardens in Mombasa Closed by Vandals," the *East African Standard*, February 18, 1971.

² "Makadara Gardens Closed to Public After Vandalism," *Daily Nation*, February 18, 1971.

³ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 63-184.

As space for leisure and socialization declined, urban Kenyans put increasing demand on the few remaining sites of socialization and leisure. Local residents and government officials struggled to control access and define the function of these remaining spaces. The 1971 conflict over Makadara Gardens emerged from a broader contest between factions of the community who desired an aesthetically pleasing garden, and others envisioning the park as a multipurpose recreational space for lively football matches and community gatherings. By looking at the politics of Makadara Gardens, this chapter connects seemingly local contestations over the use of this space to global themes of modernity and neoliberal exclusivity.⁴

Parks have been places of dynamic “social dramas” where exchanges between local and global ideologies took place.⁵ Setha Low’s study of plazas in Central America underscored the importance of “integrating the social production of the built environment with the daily routines and ceremonial rituals of the cultural realm and the phenomenological experience of individuals.”⁶ This chapter emphasizes how state and various local actors struggled to control the meaning and identity of one particular park, Makadara Gardens. The conflict over the use of Makadara Gardens revealed alternative expressions of urban conflict that transcended scholarship’s emphasis on class conflict and capitalistic subjugation.⁷ The “right to the city,”

⁴ For the study of space I draw heavily on David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 2000); Setha Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). For modernity see James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). For neoliberalism see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Martin Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg After Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008); Setha Low, “The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear,” *American Anthropologist* 103, no. 1 (2001): 45–58.

⁵ Christine Walley, *Rough Waters: Nature and Development in an East African Marine Park* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6; Setha Low, Dana Taplin, and Suzanne Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

⁶ Low, *On the Plaza*, 36.

⁷ For an elaboration of this critique see Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

despite its democratic allure, presumes homogeneity within the urban underclasses, and subsequently does not give adequate attention to how “encounters of difference” have been negotiated and resolved.⁸ “In the city,” as Don Mitchell argues, “different people with different projects must necessarily struggle with one another over the shape of the city, the terms of access to the public realm, and even the rights of citizenship.”⁹ Classist subjectivities, I add, were not always the dominant thread in these struggles. Postmodernists’ attention to “other voices” does not necessarily preclude “confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power”; they instead have shown how alternative subjectivities—e.g. race, gender, religion, generation—coexist within a capitalist system and shape the production of space.¹⁰ Diverse cultural and generational fragments of Mombasa society, each proclaiming their own rights to the city, advanced conflicting agendas regarding the use and identity of Makadara Gardens. An examination of the conflicts regarding the identity of the park reveals the “right to the city” as contested processes of political claim-making and negotiation, rather than an implementable political platform.¹¹

Kenya, like other post-colonial states in Africa, endeavored for membership in a global community by embracing a “grand scheme of modernity,” which Donald Donham defined as “the march of advance nations, followed by backward ones, along a continuum defined by different groups’ success in applying knowledge and science.”¹² The idea of modernity was “to

⁸ Low, Taplin, and Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks*, 121.

⁹ Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Right to Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 18.

¹⁰ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989), 117. For example see Doreen Massey, *Space Place and Gender*.

¹¹ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 4-5.

¹² Donald Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 25; James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1998), 89-90.

use the accumulation of knowledge generated by many individuals working freely and creatively for the pursuit of human emancipation and the enrichment of daily life.”¹³ For James Scott, urban modernity signified a sense of “geometrical order,” which was manifested through linear boulevards and a grid-like topography.¹⁴ Scholars of Africa, however, have criticized this monolithic and Eurocentric depiction of modernity, with some even abandoning the concept itself.¹⁵ Lynn Thomas, while maintaining the usefulness of modernity as an analytical concept, challenged scholars to better address how Africans themselves employed the idea “to make political claims and envision different futures.”¹⁶ A historicist approach, she argued, would contribute “to often highly abstract discussions of modernity by demonstrating just how diverse and dynamic definitions of the modern have been, and how those definitions have emerged from specific material relations, strategies of rule, and social movements.”¹⁷ Modernity for Africans, as Thomas alluded and recent scholarship has illustrated, was a lived, felt, and ideologically contested experience.¹⁸

For state leaders and urban Kenyans, modernity was often less a precisely used term, rather an allusion to a series of idioms, images and ideologies, intricately related to how they saw their place in a broader world.¹⁹ Images of designer gardens, complete with concrete pathways,

¹³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Post Modernity*, 12.

¹⁴ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 56-57.

¹⁵ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, Calif., 2005), 113–149; See also John D. Kelly, “Alternative Modernities or an Alternative to ‘Modernity’: Getting Out of the Modernist Sublime,” in *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*, ed. Bruce M. Knauft (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2002) 258–286.

¹⁶ Lynn M. Thomas, “Modernity’s Failings, Political Claims, and Intermediate Concepts,” *American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (June 2011): 734.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Laura Fair, “‘Drive-In Socialism: Debating Modernities and Development in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania,” *American Historical Review* 118, no. 4 (2013): 1077–1104.

¹⁹ See Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 21.

lightings, benches, and play structures for children, circulated the globe and shaped urban planners' conceptions of an ideal city.²⁰ States, of course, touted their own particular brands of modernity, which they enforced as the most rational and valid applications of the concept.²¹ States, however, were themselves comprised of various individual actors—national leaders, bureaucrats, and municipal councilors—who were conscious of Africa's presumed position in the world and the expectations for leading their nations into a progressive new age.²² Such actors looked to the paved, well lit, and landscaped gardens of London, Chicago, and Vienna as templates for what an open space should aspire to become. The allure of modernity, moreover, became a way in which states and other actors substantiated their spatial authority. By modernizing parks, state and local agents asserted their exclusive right to control and define the character of these spaces.

The state's control over the park, however, was incomplete at best. Through a series of community debates and contestations, Makadara Gardens emerged as a multipurpose, interethnic, and intergenerational space that accommodated the diverse recreational interests and community functions of the city's diverse population. Ordinary residents had their own visions for the park, which they expressed through a range of mechanisms. Mombasa's town clerk became an identifiable emissary who connected leaders to the concerns of the city's residents.²³

²⁰ For deeper discussion of the origins and history of these images see William H. Whyte, *The Last Landscape* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1968); Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1988); Robert Rotenberg, *Landscape and Power in Vienna* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

²¹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 223-61; Donham, *Marxist Modern*.

²² This globally outward prospective was certainly not specific to Kenya. See Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern*, 25-41; Ferguson, *Global Shadows*.

²³ Richard E. Stren, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa: Policy, Politics, and Bureaucracy in Mombasa* (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), 59. According to Stren the position of Town Clerk in Mombasa derived from the English model. The Town Clerk was "the chief administrator of the Council for both staff and technical matters, representing the Council officially to local citizens and to other levels of government."

When official correspondence did not produce desired outcomes, citizens appealed to administrators higher up in the bureaucratic food chain, or alternatively used newspaper letters to the editor to express their discontent. While officials advocated for their particular vision of modernity, they nonetheless reconciled this agenda with the day-to-day requirements of political legitimacy. Urban citizens' advocacy and their use of the mechanisms of political engagement available to them, put the state into positions of mediation and compromise.

SOCIAL DIVERSITY AND NEGOTATION OF URBAN SPACE

Makadara Gardens, like other parks, was not a “neutral space,” rather was “socially constructed, with a complex history.”²⁴ While only two acres in size, the park was centrally located on the south-western boundary of Mombasa's Old Town neighborhood (See Figure 6.1) and has been among the largest open spaces of the area. Swahili Muslims are the most predominant group living in Old Town, but the area also has a significant population of Asian communities, including Hindus and Goans. Diverse interpretations regarding the history and the social function of Makadara Gardens led to contestations regarding the use of the park.

While the precise history of Makadara Gardens itself was unclear, Kalandar Khan, the Director of the Old Town Conservation Society, extrapolated that the space was originally part of a settlement of former Baluchi soldiers who had served the Omani Sultanate, stating, “The garden itself was where the Baluchi community started. Somehow that garden was left open and

²⁴ Low, Taplin, and Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks*, 146.

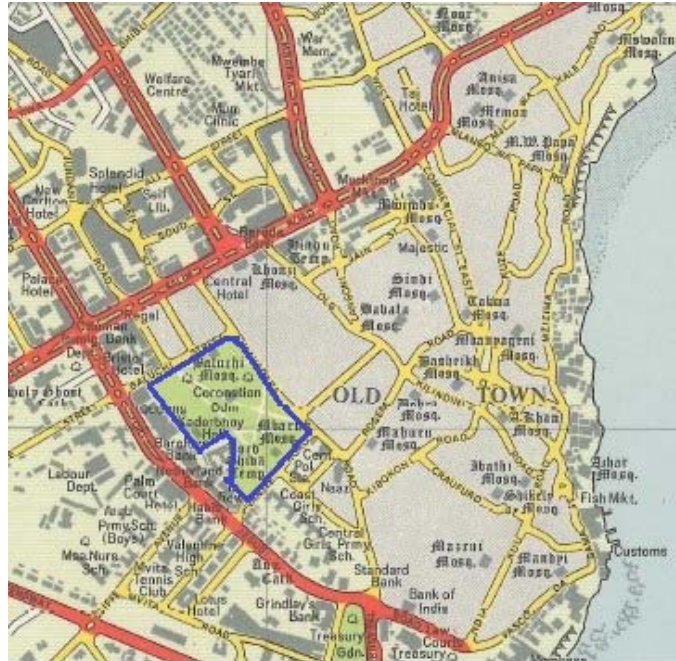


Figure 6.1: Map of Old Town Mombasa with Makadara Gardens area outlined. Survey of Kenya, 1963.

it is why it is open today.”²⁵ The site of Makadara Gardens most likely belonged to the Baluchi Mosque. Mosques commonly included open spaces for their congregations’ social and community gatherings.²⁶ A letter to the Town Clerk, requesting that the Baluchi mosque be “excised from the open space,” indicated its former connection with Makadara Gardens.²⁷ By 1938, local officials had officially designated Makadara Gardens as a public open space.²⁸ The

²⁵ Kalendar Khan, interview by author, Mombasa, December 11, 2014.

²⁶ Ibid. For comprehensive discussion of traditional urban planning in East African cities see John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 54-84.

²⁷ M.C. Satchu and A.C. Satchu to Town Clerk, Mombasa, January 6, 1950, CPA, UY/20/117. The mosque attempted to secure a title deed, but was informed by the register that their mosque was located within a public open space. The mosque’s attorneys, Satchu and Satchu, requested that the area of the mosque be excised from the open space, which would allow them to attain a title deed. A subsequent letter reflected that the council agreed to the request. Town Clerk, Mombasa, to M.C Satchu and A.C. Satchu, February 8, 1950, CPA, UY/20/117.

²⁸ The park’s status as a public open space is referenced in a letter concerning a request to use the park for industrial storage. In 1938, municipal authorities denied an “application for a portion of Coronation Gardens for storing building materials,” on the basis that “a public place could not be set apart for other

area surrounding the park developed into a space of religious plurality, catering to diverse congregations and places of worship. A map of the area (See Figure 6.1) shows numerous religious establishments, including the Baluchi Mosque, Mbaruk Mosque, and the Lord Shiva Temple that encompassed the park. Urban planners in 1938 stressed the area's role as a multifunctional public space, meant to cater to the various cultural and religious communities of Mombasa's Old Town.²⁹

In 1948, the municipal government formalized the area as a public open space and proposed construction of fence that would surround the perimeter of the park. Religious leaders from the Hindu community, however, objected to this proposal, arguing that it would block their eastern access to the nearby temple (closest to Old Town), forcing worshipers to walk around the perimeter of the fence and enter the building from the southern side. T.J. Inamdar, President of the Hindu Union, wrote to the Town Clerk to stress the importance of his congregation's continued access to the temple. Inamdar contended that, according to religious customs, Hindu temples should be entered by only the eastern or northern sides, imploring "There should be some grace and dignity for the access to a public religious institution and the said lane was never intended to be an access to the Hindu temple."³⁰ Inamdar's protests helped maintain the openness of the Makadara area, making the park a walkway for worshipers on their way to the temple or the neighboring mosques. The Works Committee of the Mombasa Municipal Board (MMB) resolved to form a sub-committee that would specifically address Inamdar's concerns.³¹ The committee, which consisted of the Municipal Engineer, H.M. Jetha, and the Chairman of the

purposes other than public purposes under Sec 44 of the Local Government (Municipalities) Ordinance of 1928."See L.G. Tidy to Commissioner for Local Government, January 25, 1940, CPA, UY/20/117.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ T.J. Inamdar, President of the Hindu Union, to the Municipal Engineer, Mombasa, February 3, 1948, CPA, UY/20/117.

³¹ Minute 264, Works Committee, MMB, February 9, 1948, CPA, UY/20/117.

MMB, Mbarak Ali, demarcated boundaries that would preserve the entrance to the Hindu Temple, as well as the Baluchi Mosque.³² The proposed plan also provided for entrance gates to facilitate children's access to nearby schools.³³

As early as 1922, youths of the community were using the grounds for football games.³⁴ Footballers divided the grass area of the park to create multiple pitches, with the older, "wazee," players occupying one field and the youth taking another.³⁵ Hydet Kindy, in his memoirs of growing up in Mombasa, recollected spirited football matches taking place between the city's football clubs. Kindy described these matches as informal, with players inventing their own rules and roles for each position. Matches were very competitive and had potential to become raucous. Kindy reported that "forwards" often charged and even kicked the goal keepers in an effort to make them drop the ball, leading to "nasty incidents."³⁶ Respondents, however, maintained that despite impassionate gameplay, footballers were most-often cordial and full-fledged fights rarely broke out.³⁷ Football matches at the park attracted youth across the racial and ethnic divisions of Old Town. Hamid Yusuf Hamid recalled, "We were from mixed cultures... We used to play with everyone, Arabs and Africans."³⁸ Football allowed for Africans, Arabs, and Asians, who often attended different schools, to socially interact, share common interests, and develop friendships.³⁹

³² MMB, Report of the Access to the Hindu Temple Subcommittee, May 17, 1948, CPA, UY/20/117.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Hyder Kindy, *Life and Politics in Mombasa* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972), 95.

³⁵ Kalendar Khan, interview by author.

³⁶ Kindy, *Life and Politics in Mombasa*, 95.

³⁷ Ibid. Twalib Swali, interview by author, Mombasa December 4, 2014.

³⁸ Hamid Yusuf Hamid, interview by author, Mombasa, December 1, 2014.

³⁹ Twalib Swali, interview by author. For similar examples of football as a space where Africans negotiated ethnic and racial differences, see Laura Fair, *Past Times and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post Abolition Zanzibar, 1890-1945*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 226-272.

During the 1950s segments of the town's population complained of youths' use of the garden for football. L.S. Shah wrote a letter to the town clerk complaining that every day he had witnessed "Africans and Arabs playing football in Coronation Gardens, which space is really meant for the recreation of the general public."⁴⁰ Shah accused the youths of hooliganism, proclaiming, "If members of the public sit in the open space, these footballers remove them and sometimes beat them if they do not make room for them to play."⁴¹ Shah sent a second, more stringently expressed, letter that challenged the competency of the government for their failure to "stop these Arabs and Africans from playing football in a public place or garden."⁴² The government's obligation to preserve the identity of the park as a "place of recreation for every citizen of Mombasa," required protecting "individuals passing by the grounds from being assaulted by these hooligans and those who sit there."⁴³ Footballers, Shah believed, monopolized the gardens and precluded the enjoyment of others. Shah regarded the production of a serene and aesthetically pleasing environment as contingent on the removal of other activities and people from the grounds. Racial and generational tensions colored Shah's appraisal; he singled out young Africans and Arabs for hooliganism and discordance in the grounds. Conversely, his proposal to make Makadara Gardens exclusively an urban garden, would curtail youths' access to the park, in favor of grown-up forms of leisure.

The municipal government responded to Shah's petitions by sending an official, Haydan Williams, to investigate his claims. Through the span of almost a week, Williams sat in the park, observing the various activities taking place. His report offered a vivid account of the various ways by which community members were using the space:

⁴⁰ L.S. Shah to Town Clerk, Mombasa, February 21, 1956, CPA, UY/20/117.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² L.S. Shah to Town Clerk, Mombasa, March 23, 1956, CPA, UY/20/117.

⁴³ Ibid.

On arrival, I counted nine groups of between four and six elderly persons, Muslim and Hindus, playing card games on the grass. Three groups of children, aged about twelve years, were also card playing. During the course of time groups of card players arrived. A short sharp rain storm sent all groups of players into the bandstands where the games continued. NO MONIES WERE SEEN AT GAMES

...Only a few were occupied by persons, singles and in pairs, throughout the duration and only one appeared to be a cripple. No women were seated.

Two groups of African and Asian children aged eight to fourteen years played football. One group of fourteen children were thirty yards distant from the second group of eight children AND AT NO TIME DID THE PLAYERS INTERFERE WITH THE PLEASURE OF OTHER USERS, although many Hindu, Bohra women and children crossed the width or the length of the garden some on the way to the temple, others out walking. At 6pm, a third group of fifteen children aged about seven to thirteen years, arrived, and played football with absolutely NO INTERFERENCE to others. Few cyclists were seen, but again no interference with people's pleasure can be recorded.

At 6:20pm, the rain ceased and players remained in the bandstand and more elderly persons occupied several more concrete benches. Only one coffee seller was seen doing a brisk business in the gardens.⁴⁴

William's report underlined the identity of Makadara Gardens as a space catering to diverse functions and users. The practices of the park's users defined, in real time, the space's identity; Makadara Gardens constituted a "community in place," formed by the social interactions and cooperation between diverse users.⁴⁵ Williams continued to observe the park for three additional days, and found nothing to substantiate Shah's allegations of hooliganism and intimidation.⁴⁶ The use of the park conformed to state ideologies regarding morally appropriate expressions of leisure. Park users enjoyed card games, but did not gamble. Football players, likewise, conducted themselves with sportsmanship and camaraderie.

Women were notably absent from William's description, only appearing as passing strollers on their way to the temple. Nadi Hussein explained to me that parks in Mombasa were

⁴⁴ Haydan Williams to Town Treasurer, May 23, 1950, CPA, UY/20/117.

⁴⁵ Low, Taplin, and Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks*, 202.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

generally masculine spaces, as cultural and religious conventions of the community restricted respectable women from sharing public space with men.⁴⁷ Women's presence as strollers, however, indicated that they too found a way to use the park—for quiet walks between their homes and places of worship—and contributed to its identity as a multipurpose open space.

Debates regarding Makadara Gardens, intensified the following year, as a broader constituency demanded the government take action to remove the footballers. An editorial in the *Kenya Daily Mail*, a predominantly Asian publication, assailed the use of the park as a children's playground, proclaiming, "Unfortunately watotos, or urchins, finding the ground suitable, have turned it into a soccer ground much to the shocking annoyance and inconvenience of those who come for rest or recreation."⁴⁸ The editorial lamented that "In spite of the fact that the Makadara Ground having, come into its procession for over twenty years, and in spite of the fact that it was termed with the high name of Coronation Garden, it has failed to develop it as a proper garden."⁴⁹ The *Daily Mail's* editorial appeared in conjunction with a petition sent to the local government to "take due course to avoid this sort of nuisance to maintain the worthy name of 'Coronation Garden' and to allow the public to peacefully enjoy the recreation on this coronation garden."⁵⁰ The petition included over 127 signatories, mostly from members of the town's Asian communities.⁵¹ Makadara Gardens, in the petitioners' view, failed to meet a global standard of how a "proper garden" and urban environment should resemble. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson called on scholars to consider global, rather than exclusively local, ideologies from

⁴⁷ Nadi Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, April 16, 2014.

⁴⁸ "Editorial," *Kenya Daily Mail*, April 10, 1957, 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ghelabhai Samat to Town Clerk, Mombasa, March 15, 1957, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁵¹ Ibid.

which people imagined spaces.⁵² Karim A. Karimji, a signatory of the petition, evoked Mombasa's place within a global community when he caustically declared, "In all other countries public gardens and grounds are provided by the municipality to help people take advantage of fresh air but in Mombasa this seems to have escaped the attention of municipal authorities."⁵³ Advocates for the development of the Makadara grounds looked towards a global imagination of a city consisting of greenbelts and well-groomed gardens that would offer a break from the congestion of urban life.⁵⁴

Newspaper letters to the editor opened a forum where Mombasa citizens debated the identity of Makadara Gardens. An argument from somebody stylizing him(her)self "Garden Lover" expressed the viewpoint that footballers were a nuisance to the public's enjoyment of the park, proclaiming, "This sort of nuisance is a menace to the public and the authorities concerned should have their attention drawn towards this for the sake of the public."⁵⁵ Another writer, using the pseudonym "Grit," responded weeks later and defended the children's access to the park, arguing, "I can't understand how the teams of boys that play football there caused inconvenience to the public. I have been to the garden several times, and it is a real pleasure to watch the boys playing. They only occupy a little part of the garden to amuse themselves. And the rest of the garden is left to the public."⁵⁶ "Grit" stressed the importance of athletics to the community, proclaiming, "These boys whom we object to playing may later on become professional players and Mombasa would be great to have them at the time."⁵⁷ The "Garden Lover," in a second

⁵² Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6-23.

⁵³ Qtd. in "Coronation Garden," *Kenya Daily Mail*, May 27, 1957.

⁵⁴ Whyte, *the Last Landscape*, 135-136; Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 86-135.

⁵⁵ Garden Lover, "Letter to Editor," *Mombasa Times*, June 4, 1957.

⁵⁶ Grit, "Letter to the Editor," *Mombasa Times*, June 7, 1957.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

letter, reasserted the children's' disruptive conduct, proclaiming, "Often the football hits some passer and either hurts or spoils his clothes, and if the passer gets irritated at this, then the whole team of the players gets ready for a quarrel. The Hindu ladies and children going to and from temple near the garden, very often get disturbed and scared by this football."⁵⁸ The "Garden Lover," responding to "Grit," retorted that while "sport lovers had already been allocated with sufficient sports ground," so-called "garden lovers" only had "two small gardens" where they could find entertainment.⁵⁹ The "Garden Lover" framed the removal of the children as a matter of fairness. "Sports lovers," who "already have many grounds to amuse them," were forsaking the pleasure of those wishing to use the park as a quiet place of relaxation and aesthetic enjoyment.⁶⁰

Both sides of this debate evoked the limitation of viable open spaces in Mombasa to substantiate their claims to the park. By the 1950s, Mombasa had a variety of football pitches, in addition to the Municipal Stadium. Many of my informants also recounted playing football at a small pitch behind Fort Jesus during their childhoods.⁶¹ Treasury Gardens provided a venue for people requiring quiet relaxation. The efforts of "Grit" and "Garden Lover" to claim Makadara Gardens as the only place where people could find relaxation or recreation, reflected the space's significance to Mombasa's Old Town community, as the largest and most proximate public park. The Municipal Stadium was a distant walk from Old Town and even the pitch at Fort Jesus offered little room for footballers to have a serious match.⁶² Treasury Gardens, while not particularly distant from Old Town, was located outside of the neighborhood within the city's

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Garden Lover, "Letter to Editor," *Mombasa Times*, June 1, 1957.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Hamid Yusuf Hamid, interview by author; Naaman Al Bashek, interview by author, Mombasa, November 30, 2014.

⁶² Kalendar Khan, interview by author.

European financial district. Makadara Gardens, on the other hand, represented a neighborhood park with social connection to the people living in the area. Public perceptions of limited open spaces also enhanced community contestations and debates concerning the uses and accessibility of this park. Multiple racial and generational constituencies saw Makadara Gardens as a viable open space that would accommodate their needs and interests, while viewing alternative activities as a threat to their access.

Faced with competing directions for the park's identity, the local government sought a compromise. In June 1957, the MMB recommended to develop most of the park as a garden, but allocated a small, fenced off, area for a children's playground.⁶³ Advocates for removing the footballers, however, found even this compromise unacceptable. Ghelabhai Samat protested the proposal, stating that the park's intended function was as a public garden. Samat called attention to the trees, concrete benches, and domed bandstand, which he argued were evidence that the MMB intended the area to serve as a garden space.⁶⁴ "Now we cannot understand the reasons," Samat proclaimed, "which would lead the board to retreat from this long cherished plan."⁶⁵ Letters to the local government continued to protest the continued nuisance of the footballers. A young girl wrote to the Town Clerk alleging that, while walking through the grounds with her mother, she was "badly hit by a ball on the face," causing her to lose her glasses.⁶⁶ The local government, however, held firm in its position "to permit a portion of Coronation Gardens to be used as a small playing field," regarding the park as performing a valuable function of providing the city's African and Arab populations with an outlet for

⁶³ A.V. Ratcliff to Ghelabhai Samat, May 28, 1957, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁶⁴ Ghelabhai Samat to Town Clerk, Mombasa, June 3, 1957, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ E.B. Harry to A.V. Ratcliff, Town Clerk, Mombasa, September 28, 1957, KNA, UY/20/3.

“positive” recreational activities.⁶⁷ With limited available land on the island, the government was averse to curtailing access to Makadara Gardens. While ‘sports lovers’ may have lauded their continued access to the park, ‘garden lovers’ saw the government’s position as an impediment to their rights of access to public space. The MMB, by refusing to address their concerns with the football players, failed to provide a “leisurely evening environment” for its citizens.⁶⁸

The state’s eventual proposal to renovate Makadara Gardens, and the ensuing conflicts, did not occur from within a vacuum. Even prior to the events of 1971, when the state launched the restoration of Makadara Gardens, the park’s identity was a site of political contestation. Mombasa was not comprised of a single underclass demanding its “right to city,” a diversity of cultural and generational constituencies, rather, jockeyed for urban space to accommodate their needs. Makadara Gardens, as one of the few public open spaces on the island, became an arena where these interests interacted and conflicted. Throughout the 1950s a vocal constituency emerged within the Mombasa community, advocating for the transformation of the park into a proper garden space. Their demands, however, relied on a particular vision for the park that excluded other forms of uses and other users. Struggles between everyday citizens over the identity of Makadara gardens underscored conflicting claims of the “right to the city.” The rights of footballers challenged the aspirations of individuals who desired a relaxing and scenic venue to pass time. Many of the latter group were from Asian communities who themselves faced prejudice and exclusion from the city’s European clubs, hotels, and bars. Parks were among the few viable places where Asians in Old Town could spend their pastimes.⁶⁹ Their desire for a

⁶⁷ A.V. Ratcliff, Town Clerk, Mombasa, to E.B. Harry, October 22, 1957, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁶⁸ “Editorial,” *Kenya Daily Mail*, July 16, 1958.

⁶⁹ Regarding the color bar in colonial Kenya see Robert G. Gregory, *Quest for Equality : Asian Politics in East Africa, 1900-1967* (Hyderabad, A.P: Orient Longman, 1993); Robert Maxon, *Struggle for Kenya : The Loss and Reassertion of Imperial Initiative, 1912-1923* (Rutherford NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993).

peaceful environment for relaxation was no less real than the interests of the footballers. The state and local government, by mediating these competing agendas, asserted its prerogative to determine the identity and function of the park.

IDD FESTIVALS AND REGULATION OF PARK SPACE

Beginning in the late 1940s, the local Muslim Association used the park to host community gatherings and festivals, donating the proceeds of admission and raffle sales to local charities. These events occurred around major holidays within the Islamic calendar, such as *Idd* festivals and *Mawlid-al-Nabi*, and were highly anticipated occasions that shaped the social and cultural life of Mombasa's Muslim community.⁷⁰ The rights of the Muslim Association to host the celebrations shaped existing contestations and debates over the use and identity of Makadara Gardens. Proponents of developing the park into a proper garden space saw the large gatherings as disruptive occasions that damaged the area's grass, trees, and plantings. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, a growing faction within Mombasa's municipal government advocated for greater regulation over the park and its activities; concerns over the park's maintenance coincided with competing claims by both the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) and various factions within the community to control the festivals.

Celebrations of Muslim holidays at Makadara Gardens were particularly popular within the local population. "During *Idd*, everyone went to Makadara; every family went there for the celebrations," Hamid Yusuf Hamid proclaimed, adding, "it was something new, everybody

⁷⁰ According to many Muslim traditions, there are festivals to commemorate the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan and the start of the Hajj—pilgrimage to Mecca—season. These are respectively called *Idd-ul-fitr* and *Idd-ul-Hajj*. Most East African Muslim communities, moreover, sanction celebrations for *Mawlid-ul-Nabi*, i.e. the anniversary of the Prophet Mohammed's birth. For this chapter, I use local spelling for the names of these holidays.

enjoyed being at Makadara.”⁷¹ By “something new,” Hamid meant that religious festivals were memorable events that broke the routine of everyday life. Nadi Hussein, drawing from his memories as a child, explained that *Idd* festivals were special occasions where children met their school mates “at a different setting other than school itself,” and were the only time during the year that children would be allowed outside of the house past dark.⁷² Social independence shaped Mumira Khalid’s recollection of the festivals: “The person who used to take us was my cousin, who later became my husband. We used to wait for him at four o’clock after *asef* prayers. He used to take us there until six when we returned home.”⁷³ For Mumira the celebrations were among the few times where she, as a young Muslim woman, had permission to be in public without parental supervision.

Attractions that stood out in people’s memories of the celebrations were merry-go-round rides, sweets, and displays of animals.⁷⁴ “There were camels and horses and people would ride on them,” Zuleya Abdullah fondly recollected, “Makadara was full of fun.”⁷⁵ Ushi Baraki remembered rides and merry-go-round costing around fifty cents. Before leaving for the festivals, she would ask her parents for a small amount of money to experience the rides and sweets, stating, “Every time children go to Makadara, they must have money to buy something.”⁷⁶ Hamid Yusuf Hamid particularly enjoyed the unique spectacles that the festivals featured. “What I liked most,” he told me, “was when the whites would bring lions and bikes to

⁷¹ Hamid Yusuf Hamid, interview by author.

⁷² Nadi Hussein, interview by author, Nairobi, April 16, 2014.

⁷³ Mumira Khalid, interview by author, Mombasa November 14, 2014. Mumira and other respondents indicated that at adolescence, parents restricted women to the home. See Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

⁷⁴ Amira M. Said, interview by author, Mombasa, November 13 2014; Mumira Khalid, interview by author.

⁷⁵ Zulehah Abdullah, interview by author, Mombasa, November 10, 2014.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Makadara. It was a new thing.”⁷⁷ Children and young adults anticipated the festivals throughout the year. As Mumira explained, “Nowadays children go to beaches, and there are many social places. But in our time we used to wait for *Maulidi*, and *Idds*.”⁷⁸

Despite the popularity of these festivals among the town’s Muslim population, individuals concerned with the park’s upkeep, saw the celebrations as an obstacle to the proper development of the grounds. The *Daily Mail* complained that it took the MCM several days to clean the park, and clear it of “Makutis and other refuse,” following the conclusion of the festivals.⁷⁹ The festivals, being large social events, disrupted the park’s maintenance. Tents left holes in the ground and flowers were occasionally damaged during the course of the celebrations.⁸⁰ Because of the festivals’ potential for damage, municipal officials were disinclined to invest in the park’s development. The Parks Superintendent explained, “I feel that unless and until the Gardens cease to be used as a fair ground it would be a waste of public money to undertake any landscape gardening.”⁸¹ In a controversial council meeting, members debated a resolution to preserve “the character of the gardens as a site for religious festivals and a playground.”⁸² Councilor J. Nyaya, a Hindu member of the council, proposed an amendment that would remove the essential phrase, “as a site for religious purposes and a playground,” replacing it with language that affirmed Makadara Garden’s general benefit for all children and adults. Several Muslim members on the council, including Alderman M.A. Rana, who was also chairman of the Muslim association, vehemently protested Councilor Nyaya’s proposal. Nyaya

⁷⁷ Hamid Yusuf Hamid, interview by author.

⁷⁸ Mumira Khalid, interview by author.

⁷⁹ “Editorial,” *Kenya Daily Mail*, July 16, 1958.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ A. Kincaid Lennox, Parks Superintendent to Municipal Engineer, January 13, 1960, UY/20/3.

⁸² “Future of Coronation Gardens,” *Mombasa Times*, August 4, 1960.

withdrew his amendment and the council subsequently passed the resolution affirming the continued use of the park for religious festivals.⁸³

Throughout the 1960s, complaints of the festivals' destructiveness compiled, as officials blamed the celebrations for the park's aesthetic decline. A.V. Ratcliff, the Town Clerk informed the Municipal Engineer that the fence around the gardens had been "broken in places and that cars are being parked in the gardens."⁸⁴ Ratcliff contended that the destruction of the fence "was at least in part due to action taken by the Muslim Association in conjunction with their *Idd* Fete, when lorries have entered the ground and the fence has not been properly reinstated."⁸⁵ Despite restrictions on the use of loudspeakers, residents complained of the noise during the festivals. M.H. Abdullah suggested that the MCM's support of the *Idd* festivals allowed the Muslim Association to "rob the residents around the garden of peace," declaring that "the loud speakers at the fete blast at full volume until about midnight for four consecutive days, making life of the residence around the area a real hell."⁸⁶ Advocates for the development of the Makadara grounds as a "proper" garden regarded the festivals as a nuisance that robbed the park and the surrounding neighborhood of a peaceful and orderly environment.

Segments of the Muslim community also questioned the Muslim Association's control over the festivals. The Muslim Association, as the officially recognized social society of the Muslim community, had gained the exclusive rights to host the celebrations during the colonial era. After independence alternative societies emerged and contested the Muslim Association's

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ A.V. Ratcliff, Town Clerk, Mombasa, to Municipal Engineer, April 13, 1962, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ M.H. Abdullah to Town Clerk, Mombasa, February 28, 1963, KNA, UY/20/3; see also Minute 175/69, Housing Committee, MCM, February 6, 1969, KNA, UY/20/3. The council discussed a letter from H.A. Jaffer "complaining of noise emanating from *Idd* fetes." His request to "require the organizers of the *Idd* Fetes to discontinue the use of loudspeakers" was "not acceded to."

control over the religious festivals. Khwana Juma Wembley, the General Secretary of the Swahili People's Party, warned his counterpart of the Muslim Association that "the time has turned, and the wind is already changed in the mind of the people. And so please, from now on the aforementioned Makadara Coronation Garden and bandstand must be entrusted to our Swahili People's Party for the forthcoming *Idd-il-Fitr* fete and festivals usually performed by your association."⁸⁷ Wembley asseverated that the Muslim Association was a relic of colonialism; his Swahili People's Party, he argued, would be more representative of the interests of Mombasa's Muslim community in the postcolonial era. The secretary of Harambe Masjid, a separate organization with links to KANU, likewise challenged the Muslim Association's control over the popular Idd festivals, stating, "My Committee members are of the opinion that the fares are to be entrusted in the hands of reliable KANU members and they should be in the persons to account for all incomes and to utilize them in the manner suggested as above."⁸⁸ The secretary's appeal underscored the underlying financial stakes of the popular religious festivals. The celebrations were lucrative, producing substantial revenues for the Muslim Association to distribute to various local charities. The rights to host the popular celebrations also meant the power to distribute funds on behalf of the city's Muslim community. The benefits of hosting the religious celebrations, however, extended beyond control of their revenue; the provision of social entertainment held long-standing connections with East African traditions of reciprocity and network building.⁸⁹ By hosting the popular *Idd* festivals, associations could claim legitimacy as the primary representative of Mombasa's Muslim community.

⁸⁷ Khwana Juma Wembley to General Secretary, Muslim Association, January 23, 1964, KNA UY/20/3.

⁸⁸ Secretary, Harambe Masjid to Town Clerk, Mombasa, January 4, 1968, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁸⁹ See Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888*. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995), 139.

In October 1966, the Lands and Estates Committee, affirming its commitment to developing “open spaces in order to beautify the town,” endorsed a proposal by the city’s Architecture and Planning Officer to restrict religious occasions to particular sections of the park so that landscaped areas would “not get damaged on such occasions.”⁹⁰ He proposed to “develop the parameter of Coronation Gardens Muslims and grow grass in the central portion which was utilized by the Muslim Community for religious functions.”⁹¹ His recommendations also called for planting flowers along the park’s perimeter and the installation of “a few swings for children.”⁹² Muslims in the community and on the MCM protested the scheme. A letter to the town clerk conveyed the concerns of local Muslims that development of the grounds would preclude its use for the popular festivals. He asked, “Taking into consideration the fact that the Garden is on a number of occasions used by the Muslim Community to hold religious celebrations, and there is no other alternative ground for them, would the Council give an assurance that only a certain portion of the Garden would be left as intact as possible for the purposes mentioned?”⁹³ Councilor Assad Basaddia likewise declared that “the development suggested by the Municipal Engineer would interfere with the religious functions organized by the community.”⁹⁴ Basaddia added that “as the portion of the coronation gardens east of the bandstand was used by the Muslim community for religious functions, the council should develop the west portion of the Gardens only.”⁹⁵

Basaddia’s perspective reflected the anxieties of the Muslim community that a major renovation of Makadara gardens would exclude them from the park. The council, reluctant to

⁹⁰Minute 1605/66, Lands and Estates Committee, October 14, 1966, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁹¹ Minute 417/67, Lands and Estates Committee, March 17, 1966, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ahmed Sadhqi Salim to Town Clerk, Mombasa, September 27, 1963, KNA, UY/20/3

⁹⁴ Minute 417/67, Lands and Estates Committee.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

alienate the city's Muslim constituency, deferred final action until the Municipal Engineer had an opportunity to "consult concerned communities" and to "submit revised plans and estimates for landscaping the coronation gardens."⁹⁶ While the Muslim Association again prevailed at protecting its right to use Makadara Gardens, the council affirmed its interest to eventually develop the park. Political support on the MCM had shifted towards implementing plans to bring Makadara in line with global standards regarding open spaces.

The local government meanwhile continued to assert its control over the park's activities. The Kenyan Betting Control and Licensing Board (KBCLB) gave the Swahili People's Party permission to hold a tombola—a form of raffle—at the park during the 1968 *Idd-ul-Hajj* festival. These events were a popular attraction of the Idd celebrations.⁹⁷ The KBCLB stipulated that only "prizes in the nature of merchandize could be given," banning monetary prizes and held the tombola's organizers responsible for enforcement of these rules.⁹⁸ The approval was granted over the objections of the MCM and the Town Clerk who conveyed his objections to the Executive Officer of KBCLB: "I very much regret that I cannot allow Makadara Ground to be continued to be used for the purpose of holding Tombola on the foresaid date. I also take opportunity for requesting you not to approve in the future any applications for the holding of Tombola on the Makadara Grounds, as the Makadara Grounds is an open space and not meant for this purpose."⁹⁹ The Executive Officer did not receive the municipal leaders' objections in time, and the tombola was allowed to take place. The Executive Officer, however, noted the town clerk's disapproval and suggested that "any applications in the future would be denied."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Naaman Al Bashek, interview by author.

⁹⁸ Executive Officer, Betting Control and Licensing Board to Secretary Swahili People's Party, February 26, 1968, KNA, UY/20/3.

⁹⁹ Town Clerk, Mombasa, to Executive Officer, KBCLB, March 19, 1968, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁰⁰ Executive Officer, KBCLB, to Town Clerk, Mombasa, March 21, 1968, KNA, UY/20/3.

The Town Clerk, writing to the Secretary of the Swahili People's Party, conveyed his disapproval of the KBCLB's authorization of the tombola, but allowed the event to carry forth in light of the error.¹⁰¹ The 1968 tombola was indeed the final; the council denied the Swahili People's Party's subsequent requests, including one that same year to "recover losses from the previous tombola."¹⁰² Municipal authorities' rejection of the proposed tombola reflected their efforts to enhance their control of the park. While the intent of the tombola was to fundraise for various local charities, municipal authorities regarded these events as a form of gambling, which diverged from their vision for a respectable public garden.

MODERNIZATION AND DEBATES OVER ACCESS

In 1971, the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) embraced the vision of "garden lovers" to transform Makadara Gardens into a "properly developed" garden space for community relaxation and aesthetic enjoyment. The decision, however, was not the result of a resolution of community debates over the space, rather derived from a directive from Kenya's central government and President Jomo Kenyatta. James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta delineated the means through which states created, "through mundane and unmarked practices, a "powerful impression of vertical encompassment of the local."¹⁰³ The "policing of the border," they declared, "is intimately tied to the policing of Main Street in that they are acts that represent the repressive power of the state as both extensive with the territorial boundaries of the nation and intensively permeating every square inch of that territory."¹⁰⁴ By restoring Makadara Gardens,

¹⁰¹ Town Clerk, Mombasa, to Secretary the Swahili People's Party, March 8, 1968, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁰² R.H. Katana, Town Clerk, Mombasa, to General Secretary Swahili People's Party, December, 20, 1968, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁰³ James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 4 (2002): 989.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 984.

the state asserted its sovereignty and “spatial claim to authority” over the park and its surrounding community.¹⁰⁵ The encompassment of the park by Kenya’s national government, however, threatened to curtail the diversity of uses that had made the space a resonant feature of community life in Mombasa’s Old Town district. This section also looks at the efforts of local Muslim to restore the popular celebrations to the park. Rather than legitimizing the state’s authority and vision of modernity, the renovation of Makadara Gardens affirmed coastal Muslims sense of marginalization by an upcountry ruling elite.

Efforts to renovate Makadara Gardens materialized under the direction of the central government, with President Jomo Kenyatta himself taking a direct interest in the parks renovations. President Kenyatta’s office stipulated that the Makadara grounds “must be developed into a town square to incorporate, inter alia, a bandstand, permanent dais, and a parade ground on which a guard of honor could be mounted.”¹⁰⁶ The Municipal Engineer stressed the “urgency of the scheme” and asked for immediate approval of an additional £6000 to renovate the park.¹⁰⁷ President Kenyatta’s instructions regarding the renovation of Makadara Gardens were part of a broader program to restructure the urban environment of Mombasa by improving the “cleanliness and attractiveness of the town.”¹⁰⁸ In a 1971 speech, Kenyatta directed Mombasa residents and local leaders to “keep your town clean,” asserting that the “thing of cleanliness was the thing that caused Mombasa to lag behind” the rest of country.¹⁰⁹ Kenyatta blamed Mombasa’s economic challenges on the moral failure of its citizens to maintain the upkeep of the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Municipal Engineer to Town Clerk, Mombasa, January 5, 1971, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Facelift for Makadara Grounds,” *East African Standard*, January 19, 1971: 16. For comparison see Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern*, 30.

¹⁰⁹ “Keep Your Town Clean Mzee Calls at Mombasa,” *Daily Nation*, September 1, 1971: 3.

city.¹¹⁰ Clean avenues, tidied store fronts, and landscaped gardens “signaled good city etiquette and civility,” values which Kenyatta wanted his nation to project on the global stage.¹¹¹

“Mombasa being an important town,” Kenyatta proclaimed, “should have such places where people can relax. Also being the country’s major gateway, it must look beautiful to foreigners.”¹¹² Kenyatta, like many other African heads of state, looked towards foreign investment and tourism to facilitate economic growth, and enhance his nation’s perceived standing in the world.¹¹³ Makadara Gardens and Mombasa were props for the state to advance an image of a culturally modern Kenya; the values, social interests, and cultural vitality of the local community were subordinate concerns.¹¹⁴ Reaffirmation of state legitimacy also shaped President Kenyatta’s agenda for the park. The addition of a permanent ceremonial dais, and parade ground would produce an official space for presidential speeches and state spectacles.¹¹⁵

Under guidance from the President’s office, local authorities changed the park’s name from

¹¹⁰ Evelyn Sharon Ruppert, *Moral Economy of Cities: Shaping Good Citizens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 128.

¹¹¹ Christina Jimenez, “From the Lettered City to the Sellers’ City: Vendor Politics and Public Space in Urban Mexico, 1880-1926,” in the *Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics and Everyday Life*, ed. Gyan Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 224.

¹¹² “Mombasa Told to Clean Up,” *East African Standard*, September 1 1971: 3.

¹¹³ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya a History Since Independence* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2012), 5-6. Also see Devin Smart, “‘Safariland’: Tourism, Decolonization, and the Marketing of Kenya in the Post-Colonial World, unpublished paper, May 2014. For examples outside of Kenya see Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern*, 30-31; Ferguson, *Global Shadows*.

¹¹⁴ Urban planners’ emphasis on aesthetics was not unique to Kenya. For comparative discussion of the role of aesthetics in the cultural production of cities see Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995), and *Landscapes of Power: from Detroit to the Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Zukin emphasized the symbolic connection of cultural consumption and economy of theme parks, such as Disney World, with the production of urban environments (1995: 7). See also Michael Sorkin, “Introduction,” in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), xi – xv.

¹¹⁵ See David Harvey, “Moral Economy of Public Spaces,” in the *Politics of Public Space*, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2006), 24; For an example of the state’s use of space to promote political legitimacy see Gary Thomas Burgess, “Mao in Zanzibar: Nationalism, Discipline and the (De) Construction of Afro-Asian Solidarities,” in *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Christopher Lee (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 196–234.

Makadara Gardens to Jamhuri Park—*jamhuri* being the Kiswahili word for republic. This name change signified the national state's encompassment of the local park. Makadara Gardens became a state park—in the truest sense of the term—reifying the legitimacy of state sovereignty and regulation of space.¹¹⁶

Local residents and community leaders protested that the state's plans constituted little more than a land grab. After, the government began the park's "facelift," the Muslim community was directed to move the *Idd* celebrations to an alternative location in Ziwani, a neighborhood distant from Old Town. Hafswa Hussein Abdullah, a retired school teacher, recounted, "The celebrations were transferred from Makadara to Majengo and people complained a lot. People were not happy and they refused to go. It was not a good place."¹¹⁷ The events outlined in the introduction of this chapter illustrated that the Muslim community of Old Town resented their removal from the Makadara grounds. A.H.M. Nasser, the Assistant Town Clerk reported the uprooting of plants and flowers that were "recently planted by the Council" and that "certain people have told workers employed on the site that they would sabotage the efforts of the council in improving the gardens."¹¹⁸ Nasser deplored the "acts of vandalism" and "threats to undo what the Council is doing to beautify the open space."¹¹⁹ Kalendar Khan, himself an architect, remembered Muslims' umbrage regarding the proposed renovations:

I was angry when they revamped it. I was really angry. Most of my colleagues and my age mates were angry because at that time they revamped it, they pushed all the *Idd* celebrations to another area where we could not even go because people have been mugged there, there were a lot of hooligans and we were young people. People would steal from young boys and girls, some were kidnapped. So with the *Idd* celebrations gone people did not want to use it.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶See Paul Rabinowe, "Ordonnance, Discipline, Regulation: Some Reflections on Urbanism," *Humanities in Society* 5, no. 3–4 (1982): 267–78.

¹¹⁷ Hafswa Hussein, interview by author, Mombasa, November 17, 2014.

¹¹⁸ Assistant Town Clerk, Mombasa, Statement to Press, February 18, 1971, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Kalendar Khan, interview by author.

The distance of Ziwani made it difficult for the Old Town community, most of whom did not own cars, to bring their children to the celebration. As Mumira Said recalled, “Not many from here would go there. It was very far, during night to come back. It was not good.”¹²¹ Residents regarded Ziwani as an “unsafe” neighborhood, generating fears among Swahili parents of robberies and kidnappings.¹²² During the rainy season, the grounds in Ziwani would become flooded, making it a poor environment for the popular *Idd* festivals.¹²³ For these reasons many Muslims residing in Old Town stopped attending these celebrations.

Following the transformation of Makadara Gardens into Jamhuri Park, the area fell into disuse. Government surveyors measured the park and “found it short of required space” to function as a presidential parade ground and selected an alternative location “in front of the PC's office and new town hall.”¹²⁴ The park’s renovations also affected the activities of footballers. Khan, who used to play football on the grounds, stated that the installation of concrete pathways removed several viable playing fields that he and his friends had used, compelling them to move their games elsewhere.¹²⁵ By attempting to transform the park into a world-class garden space, the government had removed the traditional users and social activities that gave the space its vitality.¹²⁶ The use of Makadara Gardens “had died,” according to Khan, explaining that “you should revamp a public place with the expectation that people actually want it revamped and they want to use it. These people [the government] they revamped it and nobody used it.”¹²⁷

¹²¹ Mumira Khalid, interview by author.

¹²² Nassr Ahmed, interview by author, Mombasa, November 14, 2014.

¹²³ Kalendar Khan, interview by author.

¹²⁴ E.M. Waihiu to Office of President, July 19, 1971, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹²⁵ Kalendar Khan, interview by author.

¹²⁶ Low, *On the Plaza*, 193; William H. Whyte, *the Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (New York: Project for Public Places, 1980).

¹²⁷ Kalendar Khan, interview by author.

Between 1971 and 1980, the Muslim Association made several appeals to the municipal administrations to restore the celebrations to the Makadara grounds. The Minister for Local Government's dissolution of the MCM in late 1977 presented an opportunity for the Muslim Association to reclaim its stake in the park. The chairman of the Muslim Association, Msengesi Baraka, appealed to the chairman of the newly established city commission, professing, "During the existence of the former council, our ever constant appeal to hold the *Mawlid* Celebrations fell into deaf ears. It is therefore a general feeling that the dissolution of the Council and the establishment of your commission will bring to the Muslims, in particular, and the populace in general, justice and fairness to all, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background."¹²⁸ Baraka framed the exclusion of the festivals from Makadara Gardens, as an expression of state discrimination against Muslims. Baraka also called for the return of *Idd* celebrations to the Makadara grounds, explaining that the alternative site at Ziwani "was not only far from the center of town, but it is also unsafe in that it is often frequented by rogues."¹²⁹ Hassanally Mussa Jetha, Baraka's successor, reiterated dissatisfaction with the Ziwani site in his appeal to the Mombasa MP, Francis Tuva. The Ziwani site, Jetha argued, lacked proper drainage, and cost the Muslim Association KSH 10,000 to "erect electric poles and improve surrounding at the time of fairs."¹³⁰ Jetha added that, since the renovations, use of the park had substantially declined and the return of the festival would rejuvenate the vitality of the park: "We would point out that there is no longer a saluting base at Makadara Grounds, and it is not used by many people. We feel that having the fun fair there would not be an inconvenience, but instead bring happiness to many

¹²⁸ Msengesi Baraka to Oselu Nyalick, Chairman, Mombasa City Commission, January 24, 1977, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Hassanally Mussa Jetha to Francis Tuva, March 1, 1979, KNA, UY/20/3.

people.”¹³¹ Baraka and Jetha’s letters each conveyed the Muslim community’s desire for a return to fairness in regards to Makadara Gardens. The removal of the popular festivals from the grounds had denied the Muslim community their rights to the city. By returning the festivals to Makadara Gardens, they posited, the local administration would reestablish principles of justice to Mombasa society, as well as restore vitality to the park.

Local authorities remained obstinate in regards to protecting its financial stake in the renovations. Although the central government had abandoned its commitment to the grounds, the council had invested nearly £10,000 towards the park’s restoration.¹³² Officials were averse to allow the use of the park for festivals, believing such occasions would be destructive to the area by “digging up the ground and inviting too many people for the vegetation to bear.”¹³³ The MCM determined in a resolution that because of the “considerable expenses” put into the Makadara grounds in 1971, it “was not possible to use it for *Idd Fetes*.”¹³⁴ In 1979, officials reiterated these sentiments, with the town clerk conveying that: “it was felt impossible for the type of festivities described above to be staged without damage being caused to the grass, plants, and shrubs within the garden.”¹³⁵ The city even declined the Muslim Association’s offer to compensate the government for damages on the basis that “the growing of the plants and shrubs is a lengthy exercise which cannot be achieved easily.”¹³⁶ Local officials did not exclusively prohibit Muslim gatherings, denying a request by a Christian organization to use the park for Christmas carols.¹³⁷ A letter from a citizen, moreover, criticized park guards for accosting users

¹³¹ Ibid.; See Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*.

¹³² Minute 142/77, Housing Committee, MCM February 1977, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹³³ E.B. Kingi, Parks Superintendent, to Town Clerk, Mombasa, January 13, 1975, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹³⁴ Minute 38/75, Housing, Estates, and Gardens Committee, MCM, March 15, 1975, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹³⁵ B.P. Kubo, Town Clerk Mombasa, to Hassanally Mussa Jetha, September 20, 1979, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Town Clerk, Mombasa, to Reverend G. Cooper, November 26, 1971, KNA, UY/20/3.

for “sitting on grass,” even “taking them to the police station” for these minor “offenses.”¹³⁸ The local government’s aggressive regulation of park users’ activities underscored its resolve to maintain the prime quality of the renovations. The MCM, not the central government, had assumed the financial cost for President Kenyatta’s scheme and sought to protect its investment in the park’s upgrade. These priorities, however, conflicted with the aspirations of many of the park’s users, who desired more from the space than a garden.

Private developers, meanwhile, expressed interest to develop Makadara Gardens into a world class hotel and shopping center. In early 1976 the council approved an invoice for expenditures incurred for a luncheon between councilors and representatives of the firm Covell, Matthews and Partners concerning the “development of Jamhuri garden.”¹³⁹ The firm proposed to “completely redevelop the whole of the gardens and car park areas with shops, cinemas, a casino, and 22-storey hotel.”¹⁴⁰ D.J. Carter, a representative of Covell, Matthews and Partners, suggested that the Council had given approval for the redevelopment for the park, but plans had not materialized due to lack of “availability of outside loan capital.”¹⁴¹ According to Carter, “it was agreed that the Council would surrender the land to the Central Government for a consideration by way of equity in the company to be established in the development.”¹⁴² Carter’s correspondence illustrated that Makadara Garden’s status as a public open space was tenuous throughout the mid-1970s, as local officials entered into negotiations and made lucrative unofficial agreements to transfer the park to private developers.

¹³⁸ A. Essa to Town Clerk, Mombasa, May 26, 1972, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹³⁹ Minute 104/76, Finance and General Purposes Committee, MCM, January 22, 1976, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁴⁰ D.J. Faocett, Chief Valuer, to Town Clerk, Mombasa, May 18, 1979, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁴¹ D.J. Carter, to Town Clerk, Mombasa, September 27, 1979, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁴² Ibid.

In 1979 local officials entertained a second proposal from the Kenyan Tourist Development Organization (KTDO), to construct an “international class hotel” on large sections of Makadara gardens. G.G. Njoroge, the General Manager of KTDO, outlined the benefits of a hotel on the site, arguing that a hotel would provide a much needed tourist destination on the island. He added that, “there is a steady traffic of businessman from Nairobi and elsewhere who have few suitable places to stay in Mombasa. At present they are being forced out of town, staying mainly at Nyali Beach Hotel and Mombasa Beach Hotel. The latter really being too far out to be convenient.”¹⁴³ Njoroge argued that the hotel would enhance the value of the park, proclaiming, “The fact that the proposed hotel would be adjacent to a public park is considered to be an advantage both to the hotel in terms of a nice environment, and to the public in terms of a public facility. Please note that this is not exclusively tourist hotel. Besides catering for foreign visitors, it will also cater for local visitors.”¹⁴⁴ The proposals of these schemes allured officials who wanted to alleviate the local government’s responsibility for maintaining the park. Developers promised to assume responsibility for maintaining the park and upgrading its amenities. Makadara Gardens, however, would function primarily for the hotel’s interest by providing tourists with a scenic setting, while drawing in local residents, who would presumably pay to access the amenities. Such an agenda underscored the susceptibility of parks and public places to an agenda of neoliberal privatization. Parks, like other social needs, became consumable commodities, with control transferred to private stake holders who assumed

¹⁴³ G.G. Njoroge, to Commissioner of Land, May 23, 1979, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁴⁴ G.G. Njoroge, to Physical Planning Officer, Mombasa, July 6, 1979, KNA, UY/20/3.

financial and managerial responsibility over their upkeep.¹⁴⁵ These stakeholders, however, held enhanced power to restrict and ultimately exclude community access to these spaces.¹⁴⁶

Despite the government's interest in KTDO's proposals, plans to redevelop the Makadara grounds as a luxury hotel never materialized. Local officials expressed concerns that the size of the Makadara grounds was "inadequate for the purposes of a luxury hotel" and that the project would create traffic congestion problems within the central business district.¹⁴⁷ Officials were also apprehensive of the effects of a large hotel on the local population and users of the park. "A hotel in this area," one administrator argued, "would drive away the people who enjoy the few amenities of the park."¹⁴⁸ L.K. Karani, the Coast Planning Officer, emphatically affirmed the importance of the park to the local community, proclaiming, "Jamhuri Gardens are popular to all groups of people including office workers, job workers, tourists, and school children who relax here amid the teeming heat of Mombasa. And it will be a serious denial of this facility to residents of this area, were these gardens to be developed into a hotel."¹⁴⁹ While scholarship tends to presume the prevalence of neoliberalism in shaping state policy, in this particular instance local considerations mitigated these trajectories. The MCM, while initially giving substantial consideration to developers' proposals, voted to decline offers to redevelop Makadara Gardens on the grounds that the land was "vested in the council as an open space," and the late President Kenyatta's wishes that the area "remain an open space."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ See Dolores Hayden, "Building the American Way: Public Subsidy, Private Space," in *The Politics of Public Space*, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35–48; Setha Low, "How Private Interests Take Over Public Space: Zoning, Taxes, and Incorporation of Gated Communities," *ibid.*, 50–75.

¹⁴⁶ See Smith and Low, "The Imperative of Public Space," 1; Low, Taplin, and Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks*, 16; Mitchell, *the Right to the City*, 140.

¹⁴⁷ P.H.K. Kinyanjui, for Physical Planning Officer, to G.G. Njoroge, June 7, 1979, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ L.K. Karani, Provincial Planning Officer, to Commissioner of Lands, April 3, 1980, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

A few weeks after officials had conclusively declined developers' proposals, the council voted to allow the *Idd* celebrations to return to Makadara Gardens. Its decision came at the urging of Councilor Aisha Busaidy to "covert Makadara gardens into a public park so that it could be used for public festivals and gatherings."¹⁵¹ The Municipal Engineer objected to the plan and reiterated the festivals' potential to damage to trees and flowers.¹⁵² The committee, however, resolved that "subject to approval of the Minister of Local Government and Urban Development, Makadara Gardens be converted to a public park."¹⁵³

In August 1980, after nearly a decade long ban, the Muslim community celebrated their *Idd-ul-Fitr* at the Makadara grounds. The celebrations met with substantial public fanfare. According to an account in the *Standard*, "some 50,000 joyful Muslims, including many children looking smart in their new clothes" converged on Makadara Grounds "for its official opening by the Mayor, Councilor Rajab Sumba, on the afternoon of the *Idd-Ul-Fitr*."¹⁵⁴ The festival offered a "potpourri of attractions," including acrobats, documentary films, a stunt motorcyclist, live bands, limbo dancers, stilt walkers, fire eaters and many stalls (see figures 6.2 and 6.3).¹⁵⁵ A hit of the festival was the magician "King Power," who, "draped in a red satin robe," demonstrated "his strength in many ways, which included stopping a five-ton van from moving and letting it run over his chest."¹⁵⁶ Despite a bout of bad weather, the *Standard* concluded that the "*Idd Fete* remained a most joyous event during this very festive time on the coast."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Minute 425/80, Town Planning, Works, and Housing Committee, April 18, 1980, KNA, UY/20/3.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ "Idd Fete Returns to Makadara," *Standard*, August 20, 1980: 11.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.



Figure 6.2: Group of children at the reopening of the Idd-ur-fitr festival at Makadara Gardens in 1980. East African Standard, August 20, 1980.

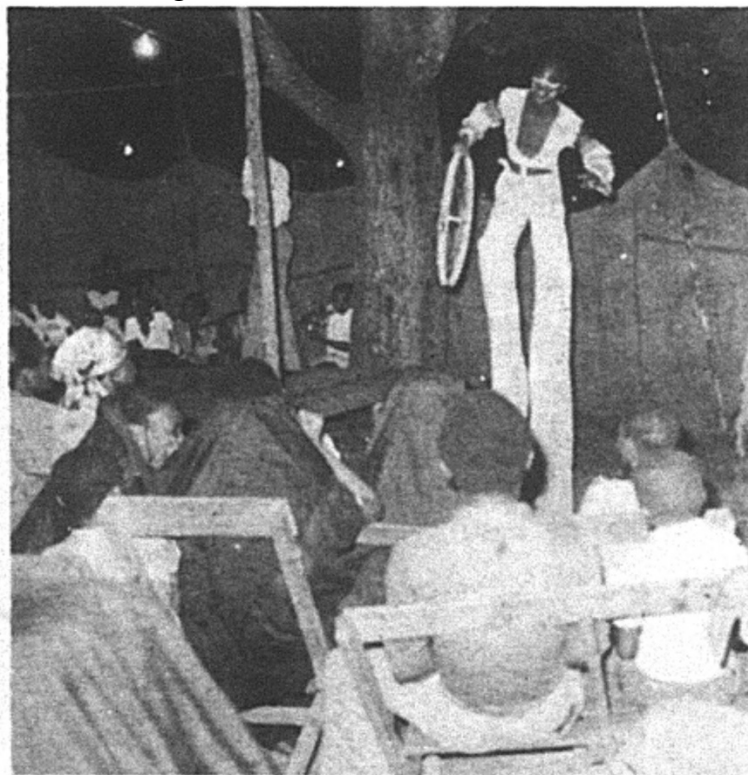


Figure 6.3: Stilt performer at the 1980 Idd-ur-fitr celebration, 1980. East African Standard, August 20, 1980.

CONCLUSION

Why did the government allow for the *Idd* festivals to return to Makadara Gardens, passing over the lucrative prospects of luxury hotels and shopping centers? It is uncertain whether the local government's interest in protecting Makadara Gardens was sincere, or, feeling dissatisfied with the proposals, it wanted to save face while backing out of negotiations. Kalendar Khan speculated that the reason the government had agreed to renovate Makadara Gardens, to begin with, was to make it attractive to outside developers.¹⁵⁸

I alternatively suggest that local residents had demonstrated their stake in Makadara Gardens through their participation in discussions, debates and struggles over the park's identity as a public space. Makadara Gardens had incorporated a variety of uses, forms of expression, and social meanings that made it a resonant fixture within the Mombasa community. The park was also a site of contestation and community debate, as various users fought to maintain their access and right to determine the identity of this space. The struggles and controversies concerning Makadara Gardens called attention to competing claims to urban space by multiple racial, generational, gender, and religious subjectivities. Such contestations illustrate the "right to the city" as the negotiation of divergent political claims, rather than a single, all-inclusive, and necessarily egalitarian framework. Even acrimonious disputes about whether Makadara Gardens would function as a public garden, or as a multipurpose social space, demonstrated the park's cultural significance to Mombasa society. The verticality of the Kenyan state, while allowing for top-down domination in some cases, opened avenues to challenge its sovereignty in others. Municipal officials and councilors mediated broad statist ambitions with the demands and perspectives of local inhabitants. The local government consequentially could not ignore the

¹⁵⁸ Kalendar Khan, interview by author.

significance of the park to the city's population. While transferring Makadara Gardens to private developers certainly offered economic rewards, it would have cost the local government its political legitimacy. Municipal officials' use of the term "open space" in describing Makadara Gardens highlighted their capitulation to local demands to preserve Makadara Gardens as a multifunctional space that catered to diverse social activities and recreational interests.

The conflict and controversy over the development of Makadara gardens, underscored the contradictions and complexities of state policy that negotiated local political concerns with the allure of modernity. Modernity promised the Kenyan state aesthetic order, international investment, individual financial gain for officials involved, and membership in a global community. Modernity, however, also entailed the exclusion of local ideas and practices to participate in the processes of urban planning. The production of a sanitized and aesthetically ordered urban space, curtailed the practices and users that made Makadara Gardens a resonate feature within the local community.

As the final chapter of this dissertation will delineate, neoliberal privatization and the state's emphasis on spectacular development continued to jeopardize the sustainability of public urban parks across Kenya through the 1980s, 1990s, and indeed into the twenty-first century. The actions of the Muslim community of Mombasa demonstrated, however, that the protection of parks and public spaces had become politically galvanizing issues for urban Kenyans. The passion and zealousness of Kenyans to preserve their parks challenged the state's progression towards neoliberal privatization and exclusivity.

CHAPTER 6

CUSTODIANS OF THE PARK: STRUGGLES FOR CITY PARKS IN NEOLIBERAL KENYA

In late 1989, rumors circulated Nairobi that a significant portion of Uhuru Park was to be sectioned off for a major skyscraper project. Wangari Maathai, founder of the Greenbelt Movement, recounted hearing the news from a concerned citizen: “In the autumn of 1989, I was working late in the office, as was often case, when a young law student knocked on my door. Although I didn't know him, it was obvious he had some news for me. He told me that he had learned from very reliable sources that the government was planning to build a skyscraper in Uhuru Park.”¹ The rumored skyscraper turned out to be a media complex, which would serve as the headquarters for the Kenyan Times, a major media outlet with connections to Kenya's ruling Kenyan African National Union (KANU) Party. Rising to sixty stories, the Times Media Complex, was to be the “most prestigious” building in the “whole of black Africa.”² A large statue of President Daniel arap Moi, set against the colorful Jogoo emblem—the emblem of KANU—was to front the colossal high-rise.³ Maathai, and her supporters, believed the scheme would deprive Nairobi inhabitants of their largest public recreational space, which she described as “the equivalent of Hyde Park in London and Central Park in New York City.”⁴ The news of the skyscraper set in a motion a nearly yearlong campaign, with Maathi at the forefront, to protect the park, pitting them against the upper echelons of the Moi regime.

¹ Wangari Muta Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 184.

² Qtd. in “the Media Complex Furor,” the *Weekly Review*, November 17, 1989: 14. Maathai is most famous for her work on environmental conservation, tree planting, as well as her advocacy for democratic and women's rights, for which she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Between 1977 and the mid-1990s, the Green Belt Movement had built a following of 50,000 followers across the country. David Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 188.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Maathai, *Unbowed*, 184.

This chapter examines contestations and debates over public recreational amenities, as national and local state institutions, private organizations, and ordinary urban dwellers grappled with Kenya's turn to privatization and commodification of urban land. From as early as the 1960s, municipal governments, faced with limitations of financial resources, considered proposals of private institutions to develop existing recreational amenities. The first section of this chapter examines how the efforts of the Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK) to transform Mombasa's Prince's Park into a showground contributed to debates within the local government over public access to the space during the 1960s and 1970s. Struggles over public amenities escalated during the 1980s as parks became targets of economically ambitious politicians and real-estate speculators. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, a series of large scale land grabs and lucrative development schemes threatened Kenya's largest urban parks, including Uhuru Park, Jeevanjee Gardens, City Park, and Mama Ngina Drive. In contrast to the small community playgrounds outlined in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, these parks were each prominent and centrally located recreational amenities, patently featured on Nairobi and Mombasa city maps. The encroachment of these parks to private individuals and developers represented a particularly brazen and visible reallocation of urban land.

The threats to these prominent urban parks spurred community members to openly challenge the state by organizing grassroots style campaigns to protect these places. Wangari Maathai's successful campaign has become a widely known story among citizens of Nairobi and across Kenya. Scholars have touted her efforts as a triumph of grassroots activism over the despotism and cronyism of Daniel arap Moi's regime.⁵ While the endeavors of Maathai and her supporters foregrounded Kenya's broader political transition to a multiparty democracy, it is

⁵ Godwin R. Murunga and Shadrack W. Nasong'o, *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2007). Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, 186.

important not to understate the significance of parks and other public recreational amenities to their struggles. Parks were an important facet of community life for urban residents, especially the poor. While Maathai's struggle to save Uhuru Park were the most famous, her efforts were part of much broader and regionally dispersed struggles of residents and community activists to preserve open spaces. Urban residents and community activists across Kenya engaged in public campaigns to implore the inviolability of parks and open spaces while censoring the practices of corrupt government officials and developers.

As state administration of public parks proved ineffective, various non-state actors stepped in to assume the upkeep and management of these spaces. The final section of this chapter examines the objectives of the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AGTC) to restore Mombasa's Mama Ngina Drive Park and Nairobi's City Park during the late 1990s through present times. The NMK and the AGTC intended to restore guardianship over these parks, both of which have been sites of significant encroachment; both organizations, however, have themselves drawn from neoliberal models emphasizing revenue generation as an essential plank of administration of parks. This latter form of privatization, while presenting itself as an alternative to the failures of the state, has produced similar contestations over "ownership" of public parks and the terms of public accessibility.

Kenya's path towards global membership was a particularly neoliberal one. Local and national leaders, eager to legitimize their nation, embraced privatization of urban land and free-market capitalism.⁶ Neoliberalism is itself a broadly defined term that has encapsulated a variety of processes, ideologies and social transformations. Specifically, this chapter brings together two

⁶ Garth Myers, *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2011), 83; James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

distinct patterns that emerged from neoliberalism: first, the commodification of urban land, which manifested in the accumulation of public space by wealthy and politically connected elites; and second, the extension of non-governmental actors into the management and decision making of urban public parks. An effect of neoliberalism, according to David Harvey, has been the opening of “new fields for capital accumulation in domains hitherto regarded off-limits to the calculus of profitability.”⁷ These transformations included the privatization of public utilities, social welfare provisions, and public institutions.”⁸ Neoliberalism likewise changed the nature of public space by opening it up to private ownership, trusteeship and jurisdiction.⁹ As local and national leaders faced dwindling financial resources to maintain urban parks, they began to see these spaces as valuable caches of land of which they could dispense for lucrative profits, and political support.

The application of economic liberalization in Kenya, as was the case in other countries, was contradictory. Officially, policies recognized the supremacy of legalized mechanisms of property accumulation—i.e. every plot had a rightful owner who could readily substantiate their claim with a legally sanctioned title deed. These principles, rather than broadening economic opportunity and creating a level economic playing field, manifested in a zero-sum system of kleptocracy and patronage that violated the “norms” of neoliberal rationality.¹⁰ Branch stressed that Kenyan elites, rather than “using their control of institutions like parliament, the presidency

⁷ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 160.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Dolores Hayden, “Building the American Way: Public Subsidy, Private Space,” in *The Politics of Public Space*, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35–48; Setha Low, “How Private Interests Take Over Public Space: Zoning, Taxes, and Incorporation of Gated Communities,” *ibid.*, 50–75.

¹⁰ Graham Harrison, *Neoliberal Africa: The Impact of Global Social Engineering* (New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2010), 139; Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*; Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 24.

or the judiciary to protect Kenyans and their livelihoods,” employed their power “to seize resources, of which the most important has been land.”¹¹

Residents’ efforts to reclaim public parks have resulted in the transfer of administration of these spaces to nongovernmental and “independent” organizations, which have claimed to be best equipped to safeguard their interests. Governance has gradually transitioned from nation states to collaborative relationships between the state and private corporations, NGOs, and grassroots organizations.¹² These relationships signaled “a new modality of government,” which operated by “creating mechanisms that work ‘all by themselves’ to bring about governmental results through the devolution of risk onto the ‘enterprise’, or the individual.”¹³ While the territory of parks has formally remained in the state’s possession, institutions outside of the government have assumed managerial responsibilities for developing these spaces on behalf of the public.

But what are the ideological presumptions of these modalities? What are the implications of increased involvement of an educated and economically privileged elite in the planning and day-to-day management and upkeep of public parks for the community’s access, particularly the urban poor? While the extension of “civil society” has opened new opportunities for non-government actors to influence decisions regarding public parks, their enhanced involvement has produced new conflicts regarding accessibility and control of these spaces.¹⁴ A request by the

¹¹ David Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, 21; See also Robert Bates, *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹² David Simon, *Cities, Capital and Development: African Cities in the World Economy* (London: Bellhaven, 1992), 55. Also see Claire Mercer, “Performing Partnership: Civil Society and the Illusions of Good Governance in Tanzania,” *Political Geography* 22, no. 7 (2003): 741–63.

¹³ James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, “Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality,” *American Ethnologists* 29, no. 4 (2002): 989.

¹⁴ See Setha Low, Dana Taplin, and Suzanne Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Setha Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK) to use a portion of Prince's Park in Mombasa for their annual exhibitions, for instance, resulted in the organization assuming exclusive control over the majority of the park, even hiring security guards to restrict public entry. The embrace of "civil society," as a trusted and democratic alternative to state mismanagement of public spaces, evades the often elitist assumptions and practices of such institutions.¹⁵

PUTTING ON A SHOW: THE A.S.K. AND PRINCE'S PARK, MOMBASA

The privatization of public land, and the extension of civil society into various aspects of governance were processes that did not suddenly emerge from the neoliberal turn of the 1980s and 1990s; rather such questions shaped newly independent African states. The post-colonial Kenyan state, as was the case elsewhere, strived to define itself as an efficient institution, capable of delivering the benefits of development; these states, however, simultaneously faced shortages of funds and resources hindered these goals. National and local governments consequentially turned to private individuals and institutions that would more immediately deliver the benefits of development with fewer public costs. This was the case for Mombasa's Prince's Park, which until the involvement of the Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK), was an underdeveloped and underutilized public amenity. The ASK not only expended substantial capital to improving the site, but also introduced an annual exhibition that had enduring popularity with the city's residents. The ASK's increased involvement at Prince's Park, however, stirred debates within

¹⁵ For this critique see Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2000), 53-56; James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Spatializing States", 982; Mercer, "Preforming Partnership"; John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, "Introduction," in *Civil Society and Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives*, ed. John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1999), 1-43.

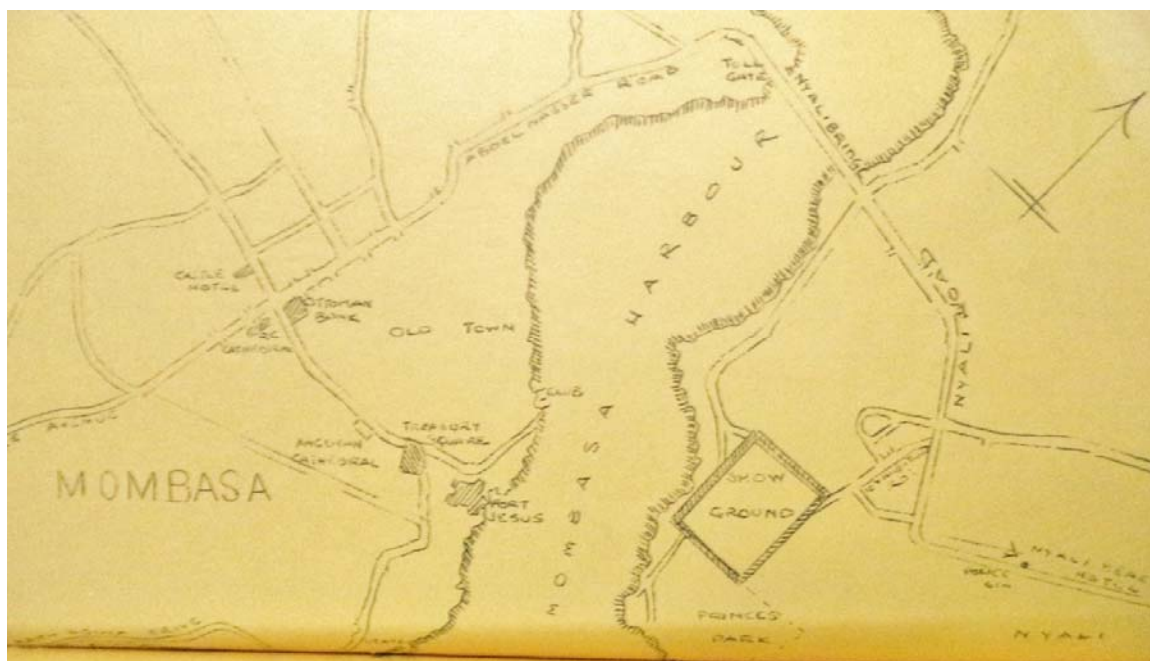


Figure 7.1: A sketched map of Prince's Park, with location of ASK showground, across the channel from Mombasa's Old Town. Kenyan National Archives.

Mombasa's local government, particularly as the institution began to claim that its investments justified its total control over the park with rights to determine the extent of public accessibility. The Kenyan state and local government of Mombasa had to determine whether the park would continue to function as the ASK's showground, or as a multipurpose recreational amenity.

In 1965, the Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK) approached the Municipal Council of Mombasa (MCM) regarding acquiring a lease for a large section of Prince's Park to host their annual agricultural shows. The ASK was a national organization, with an interest in promoting knowledge regarding cultivation and agrarian practice. Prince's Park, which measured approximately 150 acres, came into the MCM's hands in 1939.¹⁶ The park, unlike Makadara Gardens, was not extensively used by the general public. Its location on the mainland, across the channel from Mombasa's Old Town, was not easily accessible to the city's population, which

¹⁶ N.W. Ambersa, Town Clerk to H.A. Collins, February 11, 1966; K.K. Sondhi to Town Clerk, February 17, 1967, KNA, UY/20/11.

mostly resided on the island (see figure 7.1). By the 1960s, however, the MCM had accomplished little in terms of developing the land into a recreational space. A 1957 editorial in the *Kenya Daily Mail*, called on the MCM to take actions to develop the space into a proper recreational amenity, declaring, “Prince’s Park still remains a sandy stretch of beach with no trees and shade and cannot be called an amenity.”¹⁷ With few of Mombasa’s residents actually using the park the MCM was reluctant to make substantial expenditures towards its development. Although the MCM received an annual contribution of £1,500 from the Bambui Cement Company to improve Prince’s Park, the Municipal Engineer posited that the money would be better utilized to developing the other parks and public gardens, stating that, “expenditure of any additional money on Prince's Park is not justified at the present time.”¹⁸ In 1965, H.A. Collins, the chairman of the ASK, approached municipal authorities regarding hosting an annual agricultural show in Mombasa and requested a long term lease within the park.¹⁹ Collins elaborated that if the ASK was to annually stage its shows in Mombasa, it would require a site to erect its “own permanent buildings” and to be able to provide exhibitors with a guaranteed tenure of space during the events.²⁰

The shows, which were a tradition during the colonial era, continued to be popular spectacles during the 1960s. Describing the show as the “highlight of the year,” Ted Ayers recounted his enjoyment of the annual exhibitions: “We took our daughters there in those days, even though they were tiny. If we went there our Wednesdays they would wear little hats, and little white clothes. It was fun in those days.”²¹ Resembling “country shows” in the United

¹⁷ Editorial, “Prince’s Park and Public,” *Kenya Daily Mail*, March 23, 1957, CPA, UY/9/42.

¹⁸ Municipal Engineer to Town Clerk, November 2, 1963, KNA, UY/16/20

¹⁹ H.A. Collins to Town Clerk, December 8, 1965, KNA, UY/20/11.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ted Ayers, interview by author, Nairobi, April 1, 2014.

Kingdom or county fairs in the United States, the ASK exhibitions included highlights such as, “bands, displays, parades of cattle, horse jumping.”²² While Europeans initially dominated the membership of the ASK, Africans’ participation quickly expanded after independence. In 1966, the society had an estimated 320 paid members, which consisted of 117 Africans, forty-nine Asians, and 206 Europeans.²³ In 1970, however, the *East African Standard* reported that the “great majority” of entries to the show were “wananchis”; Jomo Kenyatta proclaimed the exhibition to be “the wananchi” show because of Africans’ increased level of participation.²⁴

While the exhibitions were crowd pleasers, drawing in thousands of spectators, the ASK’s requests for extended tenure of Prince’s Park posed a dilemma for the local administration. Unlike the Muslim Community’s short-term use of Makadara Gardens for religious celebrations (Chapter 5), the ASK demanded exclusive use of Prince’s Park throughout the entire year. Collins reasoned that for the show to be successful in Mombasa, the ASK would require “the sole right of tenancy of Prince’s Park for a minimum of twenty-five years.”²⁵ The ASK’s demand for exclusive year-round occupation of the park concerned officials because it would mean a loss of public access to the area. While the MCM initially agreed to provide the ASK with a long term lease, the central government informed the town clerk that such an arrangement would be a breach of law, which stipulated that the council use Prince’s Park only for public purposes. K.K. Sondhi, the Commissioner of Lands, advised that the council would need to relinquish the land to the central government, which would then enter into an

²² Ibid.

²³ “Mombasa to Have Own Agricultural Show,” *East African Standard*, July 5, 1966.

²⁴ “Mombasa Agricultural Show,” *East African Standard*, September 28, 1970; “Showground to Crowded Says Mayor,” *East African Standard*, August 20, 1970. “Wananchis” is the Kiswahili term for Africans of Kenyan nationality.

²⁵ H.A. Collins to Town Clerk, September 1, 1967, KNA, UY/20/11.

arrangement with the ASK.²⁶ The MCM resolved to disavow its interest in a long term arrangement with the ASK, professing that it “had never intended to relinquish control of the park even during the period of the lease.”²⁷ The ASK would continue to have permission to “stage their shows every year,” but the council would not enter into any long term lease arrangement.²⁸ In a subsequent meeting, the council approved a six year arrangement with the ASK for use of the park’s facilities.²⁹

The ASK, despite not having a formal lease, continued to invest in the park’s development. In advance of its inaugural 1967 show, the ASK spent nearly £7000 towards preparing the park, including the installation of a large stand to accommodate seven-hundred people.³⁰ Its expenditures, overtime, gave the organization a claim of ownership of the park. Ownership, applying Graham Harrison’s definition of the term, signifies “a right of control, a kind of sovereignty in which decision-making arrogates to the owner.”³¹ While the ASK, during this time, was not legally in possession of the park—i.e. in the form of a title deed or long-term lease—its investment in the area’s development gave the organization a claim to control the park and establish the terms of the public’s access. In early 1967, the ASK successfully removed a church, which was holding services in an onsite building, so that the organization could expand its showground.³² The following year, the organization requested permission to establish a permanent security guard, with “authority to exclude anyone from entering the ground, save with the society’s permission.”³³ Collins stressed the need “to better protect the assets” of his society

²⁶ K.K. Sondhi, Commissioner of Lands, to Town Clerk, January 23, 1967, KNA, UY/20/11.

²⁷ Minute 171/67, MCM, Housing and Estates Committee, January 31, 1967, KNA, UY/20/11.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Minute 262/67, MCM, Housing and Estates Committee, February 17, 1967, KNA, UY/20/11

³⁰ “£7000 Overhaul for Prince’s’ Park Showground,” *East African Standard*, June 29 1967.

³¹ Harrison, *Neoliberal Africa*, 58.

³² Minute 18, Mombasa Show Committee, February 23, 1967, UY/20/11.

³³ H.A. Collins to Town Clerk, February 8, 1968 KNA, UY/20/11.

and exhibitors.³⁴ When the MCM requested that the ASK allocate it a free stall at the 1969 show, citing the latter organization's access to the park for nominal rent, Collins reminded the Town Clerk of his contribution to the park's development: "I must point out that although the rental charged by your council for the lease of the land may be considered nominal by them, it must be remembered that the park is now guarded and maintained in a very tidy condition for 365 days a year by my society at no cost to your council."³⁵ The council, by relying on the ASK for security and maintenance, no longer could exclusively claim authority over the park; the ASK rather presented a stake in the park's management and development.

In 1969, the ASK again approached the MCM to acquire a long term lease. Wilfred Havelock, Collins successor as ASK chairman, reiterated his organization's financial stake in the grounds, having "invested a large sum of permanent improvements and amenities."³⁶ Havelock proposed a comprehensive development scheme for the park that would accommodate year-long public use of the space. His proposals included a racecourse and jockey club, a public golf course, a camp site, installation of floodlights—which the ASK would rent to football leagues and public performances—and a driving school.³⁷ Havelock, moreover, emphasized the various events that his organization already hosted throughout the year, including field days, an annual young farmers' camp, and regular training of farmers.³⁸ The ASK's self-interest in the project was clear; "If all these amenities were provided," Havelock argued, "then the public would be able to enjoy the park throughout the year and there would be no objection to the granting of a long lease to the society."³⁹ The availability of other publicly accessible amenities would bolster

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ H.A. Collins to Town Clerk, March 17, 1969, KNA, UY/20/11.

³⁶ Wilfred Havelock to Town Clerk, October 22, 1969, KNA, UY/20/11.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

the ASK's long-term claim to the central portion of the park. The ASK, meanwhile, requested additional park land to meet the requirements of the exhibition's growing popularity. The 1970 "wananchi" show reported a record 1800 entries.⁴⁰ ASK officials, however, complained that the limitation of space left little room for the exhibition's future development, and entreated the council to be "flexible when calls for expansion were made."⁴¹

The ASK received support from the upper echelons of the state. Bruce McKenzie, a close political ally to President Jomo Kenyatta, wrote a letter to Attorney General Charles Njonjo, pressing the ASK's need for a lease. He declared, "Unless we can obtain a ten-year lease, there is no hope of attracting commercial organizations in any number and get them to build substantial stands on their plots. Furthermore, it is out of the question for the society to spend money to develop the show grounds facilities—loads, trees water articulation, etc."⁴² K.K. Sondhi, who had originally halted the MCM's consideration of a long-term arrangement with the ASK, informed the town clerk that the attorney general, "on very careful consideration of this matter," no longer objected to the council granting an extended lease to the ASK.⁴³

Despite gaining the approval from the central government, the ASK's lease was far from certain; a contingent of local officials raised objections to the ASK's long-term use of Prince's Park. While the public generally did not use the park, aside from the ASK shows, municipal urban planners began to see the park as an important future public amenity for Mombasa's rapidly growing population. R.F.K. Catchpole, the Town Planning Officer, was a particularly vocal critic of a proposed lease. Catchpole, while acknowledging the social benefit and popularity of the exhibitions, questioned whether a three-day show justified the organization

⁴⁰ "Showground to Crowded Says Mayor," *East African Standard*, August 20, 1970.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Bruce McKenzie to Charles Njonjo, October 14, 1969, KNA, UY/20/11.

⁴³ K.K. Sondhi, Commissioner of Lands, to Town Clerk, March 5, 1970, KNA, UY/20/11.

assuming year-round access of a potentially valuable public amenity. “Within ten years,” he postulated, “pressure on the park is likely to build and its overall use to become more intensive.”⁴⁴ The ASK’s proposals, according to Catchpole, did not “provide for sufficient year round use of the showground, as was originally requested, and hence does not justify a year round lease of such a large portion of the potentially very valuable open space of Prince’s Park.”⁴⁵ The ASK’s desire for a strong security apparatus, including guards and fencing, also concerned Catchpole, who recommended that, “if a lease were to be considered it should be conditional on limited fencing to ensure that as much, as possible, the ground may continue to be used as open space, in fact, as well as in legal fiction.”⁴⁶ S.C. Lock, the Town Planning Adviser warned that the ASK’s continued financial stake in the existing Prince’s Park showground would make it harder for the municipal government to remove the organization from the area, declaring, “Every year the showground committee and the participants add to the capital investment and everybody becomes progressively committed to extensions of the lease, whether or not, on a long term basis, it will be practicable or desirable in the interest of proper planning and development of the town.”⁴⁷ Locke added that the park had potential to become an important public amenity for residents of Mombasa, advising that “even over a fairly short number of years, the legitimate land requirements for the showground could be such as to cause a serious land conflict with these other legitimate purposes.”⁴⁸

On September 8, 1970, municipal leaders and the executive committee of the ASK met to discuss the park’s future. Havelock contended that his society used the showground for more

⁴⁴ R.F.J. Catchpole, Town Planning Officer Coast, to Town Planning Adviser, September 12, 1969, KNA, UY/20/11.

⁴⁵ R.F.J. Catchpole to Town Planning Adviser, March 19, 1969, KNA, UY/20/11.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ S.C. Lock, Town Planning Adviser, to Town Clerk, June 17, 1970, KNA, UY/20/11.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

than the three days of the exhibition and that “a definitive lease would encourage investment in the showground and would provide an even better show.”⁴⁹ Municipal officials, while expressing continued support for the show, maintained that a long term lease on the Prince’s Park site was out of the question; the loss of the park would leave Mombasa with only one-hundred acres of public open space to accommodate a projected population of one-million residents.⁵⁰ The government proposed a shorter term arrangement of ten years, during which time the ASK would “phase out development of Prince’s Park” in preparation to move to a “suitable alternative site.”⁵¹ For the government, the solution was a workable compromise that balanced the public’s interest in the show, with the city’s requirements for open space and recreational amenities.

The ASK, on the other hand, ardently protested the government’s calls for relocation. Havelock considered the council’s proposal a betrayal of trust, frustratingly telling the Town Clerk, “It has certainly come as a shock to me that at a time when the society’s negotiating with the Municipal Council has reached a stage where the council has agreed in principle to lease a part of the Prince’s Park to the society, and a press announcement to this effect has been made, that you have introduced an entirely new idea that the society should establish a new showground at Bambui.”⁵² The ASK resented their potential relocation from Prince’s Park where they had invested more than £20,000 towards the development of the area. The proposed alternative site at Bambui, Havelock argued, was “entirely unsuitable, being featureless,” adding that the smoke problem was “extremely serious.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Minutes of Meeting Held at Town Planning Office, September 26, 1970, KNA, UY/20/11.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Wilfred Havelock to Town Clerk, June 1, 1970, KNA, UY/20/11.

⁵³ Ibid.

Despite plans to move the agricultural shows to an alternative location, the ASK received a ninety-nine year lease for Prince's Park in 1972.⁵⁴ Political influence from the upper levels of the central government influenced this outcome; President Kenyatta himself expressed his wish that the ASK receive an extended lease.⁵⁵ E.M. Maninu, the Provincial Commissioner of the Coast, stressed that it was the government's interest to promote the activities of the ASK, adding that the annual shows were "of great value to our young farmers, not to mention the trade interests that go along with this."⁵⁶ The MCM, under the direction from the central government, capitulated to the ASK's nearly decade long struggle for ownership of Prince's Park. In a November 1972 meeting, the MCM formalized the ASK's connection to Prince's Park, changing the area's name to the Mombasa Show Ground.⁵⁷

The negotiations between the ASK and the MCM over Prince's Park delineated the early processes of the transfer of public urban parks to private hands. The ASK provided both capital and commitment towards the development of Prince's Park. The organization's investments and financial stake in the grounds, however, made it difficult for the local government to distinguish the public's interests in the park from those of the ASK. The ASK eventually assumed control of the site, as well as the right to determine its identity as a showground. The controversy concerning the ASK's hold on Prince's Park set the stage for the privatization of public parks in the 1980s, 1990s, and present times, as NGOs, and non-government institutions gained influence and sovereignty over these spaces.

⁵⁴ Town Clerk to Ministry of Local Government, July 21, 1972, CPA, UY/9/87.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ E.M. Maninu, Provincial Commissioner, Coast, to Commissioner of Lands, July 17 1972, CPA, UY/9/87.

⁵⁷ Minute 1600/72, MCM, Housing, Estates and Gardens Committee, CPA, UY/9/87.

CONCRETE JUNGLES: DEVELOPMENT, SPACE, AND THE URBAN POOR

For many of the local officials involved in the deliberations regarding Prince's Park, concerns of public accessibility framed their evaluation of the Agricultural Society's proposals. By the 1980s and 1990s, public officials' priorities had shifted; a series of financial crises compelled the government to accept IMF loans, which resulted in a dramatic scaling back of social services, including the upkeep of urban parks.⁵⁸ Major parks, like small playgrounds and open spaces, moreover, became readily dispensable lands for infrastructural development or commercial real-estate. As Kenya's economy declined and its public sector shrank, land became a "valuable currency with which Moi's regime was able to buy the support of key players."⁵⁹ Urban parks, which were often located in areas of enhanced property value, were especially attractive targets for a locus of actors—business tycoons, politicians, KANU sycophants—who sought to financially benefit from the speculative real-estate market.⁶⁰ The beneficiaries of these "land grabs" appraised parks in terms of their market value, rather than as places of social importance and recreational enjoyment for the community.

The political and economic establishment's prioritization of prestige projects and commercial real-estate stood in marked contrast to the concerns of working class urban dwellers who regarded parks as an indispensable feature of community life. Wangari Maathi's well-known fight to save Uhuru Park was one of multiple discrete campaigns during the late 1980s and early 1990s that involved grassroots activists and ordinary residents to safeguard public parks and major recreational amenities from encroachment. While these movements were temporally and regionally dispersed, several overlapping themes connected these struggles. First,

⁵⁸ Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, 423.

⁵⁹ Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, 204-5.

⁶⁰ Médard, "City Planning in Nairobi," 34-35.

the campaigns shared broad popular appeal among urban dwellers; grassroots activists and ordinary community members emphasized the importance of urban parks as essential features of city life, particularly for working class residents who lacked the financial ability to access commercial venues for leisure. The encroachment of popular recreational amenities affirmed the greed and impunity of Kenya's ruling class. Secondly, in their efforts to restore urban parks, both activists and residents openly challenged ruling elites' priorities concerning urban development. They contended that high-rises, prestigious housing, shopping centers, and parking garages threatened to transform Kenyan cities into stifling concrete jungles.

The decline of small playgrounds and social centers in the estates made the few remaining public parks important for meeting the recreational needs of Kenya's urban population, particularly the cities' poor who lacked access to exclusive social or sport clubs. An article in the *Standard* examined the challenges of urban planning in Kenya, including the shortage of recreational spaces, declaring, "The lack of playgrounds and recreational facilities within the estates has forced many parents to look for alternatives, such as taking their children to places like the national parks, and the gardens and city parks."⁶¹ The article described a typical sight of "large numbers of families who visit Uhuru Park and Central Park after Sunday Church services," adding that, "There are many families enjoying a picnic as a form of family outing."⁶² Mama Ngina Drive, in addition, to being a "much visited public park," had archeological and historical significance, as the site of a sixteenth century Swahili settlement, which included a "high concentration of baobab trees believed to be grave markers."⁶³ The park, which directly overlooks Mombasa's Kilindi harbor, has been a popular attraction for local residents who come

⁶¹ "Whither City Planning," *Standard*, October 18, 1989.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Phillip Jimbi Katana to Bambui Cement, February 5, 2008, NMK, NMK/003/OSM/2/4/21

to the area to relax and enjoy the cool ocean breeze.⁶⁴ Jane Kangethe recollected taking her children to Nairobi's City Park, telling me, "City Park used to be very good during the time we came here. It was very, very good. We made it every Sunday. We came from Church and we packed our food. We went and ate there. We stayed there and we fed the monkeys."⁶⁵ A popular attraction of City Park was a corn maze, which was popularly named the "*mtego wa panya*" (rat trap). A profile of City Park in the *Daily Nation* proclaimed, "Many a city-working father, striving to give his school-going rural child a holiday treat, would make the maze a highlight of the itinerary."⁶⁶

Parks were among the few areas in the city where the urban poor enjoyed unhindered access. As the above description of City Park illustrated, access to a park could give even a poor, working class father the opportunity to fulfill his expectations of domesticity, respectability, and paternity, impressing his children with an afternoon of enjoyment. For the city's administrative or household workers, the parks were a freely accessible space for them to sit during their lunches or afternoon breaks. Lydian Mutungi, an employee with the Green Belt movement, told me, "If you went to the office and were told to come back after two hours, there was no other place in Nairobi where you could go and wait. You would just walk to Uhuru Park, stay there, and sleep."⁶⁷ Uhuru Park was a popular meeting place for friends who could not afford the expensive restaurants, and tea houses of the CBD.⁶⁸ School choirs rehearsed at the park, offering

⁶⁴ Amira M. Said, interview by author, Mombasa, November 13, 2014; Mumira Khalid, interview by author, Mombasa, November 14, 2014,

⁶⁵ Jane Kangethe, interview by author, Nairobi, October 21, 2014.

⁶⁶ Chege wa Gachamba and Njenga Munyori, "The City Park that Is No More," *Daily Nation*, April 15, 1990: 16.

⁶⁷ Lydian Mutungi, interview by author, Nairobi, February 2, 2014.

⁶⁸ Jane Kangethe, interview by author,

a form of free musical entertainment for people who could not afford tickets to attend shows in concert halls.⁶⁹

By the late 1980s, urban parks across Kenya were in a state of aesthetic decline. In early June 1989, just months prior to the scandal regarding the Times Media Trust (TMT) complex, the *Daily Nation* published an exposé of the degraded state of Uhuru Park, detailing its squalor: “It is when you go inside the park that you see a lot of scattered waste paper, rotting maize cobs and left-overs, carelessly dropped by people after they have had their meals. The worst areas are those around the dam. Human feces are also found along the fences and in the flower gardens.”⁷⁰ The article also divulged several disreputable activities occurring within the park, including beer drinking, ice cream vendors secretly selling alcohol, and the chewing of miraa.⁷¹ Many patrons, according to the article, had lost their shoes, due to thieves snatching them as they napped.⁷² Jane Kangethe recounted that her family discontinued their weekend visits to City Park because of the insecurity. “Some bad boys had turned it into a very insecure place,” she exclaimed, “they came and robbed you of everything, they took whatever you would have, so people stopped going.”⁷³ Corruption within municipal governments meant that few of the scant resources allocated for public parks went into actual use. A *Daily Nation* profile on City Park described the place as a “pale shadow of its former self.”⁷⁴ The popular corn maze was overgrown with tall grass and weeds and—true to its popular name *mtego wa panya*—had become a “sanctuary to snakes and rats.”⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Waigwa Kiboi, “Park is Getting Dirtier Every Day,” *Daily Nation*, June 2, 1989: 17

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Jane Kangethe, interview by author.

⁷⁴ Chege wa Gachamba and Njenga Munyori, “The City Park that Is No More.”

⁷⁵ Ibid.

The aesthetic decline of urban parks coincided with the growing commercial value of urban land. The loosening of land restrictions made venture real-estate a lucrative market for prospective investors and politicians.⁷⁶ Mohamed Swazuri, who is presently the chairman of the Kenyan Land Commission, described the growth of real-estate speculation, during the 1980s and 1990s, as a national epidemic: “I think there came some kind of mania, some kind of epidemic, that the only way to make quick and easy money—a lot of money—was through land grabbing.”⁷⁷ Kenya’s leaders, like others throughout Africa, used economic patronage to maintain political legitimacy. This form of politics created a “rush for spoils,” as influential actors sought to broaden their networks.⁷⁸ Using the Ministry Lands, Ministry of Local Governments, and the provincial and district commissions, Moi adapted the systems of patronage of his predecessor, Jomo Kenyatta, to extend and direct networks that “distributed state resources from the center to certain key allies in every district and constituency of the country.”⁷⁹ Moi was not deeply popular outside of his Kalenjin ethnic group; his political prestige “rested on a carefully constructed alliance between the Kalenjin, previously marginalized groups such as pastoralists and Muslims, sections of the Luo, Luhya, Kamba and Gusii, and individual Gema businessman and politicians.”⁸⁰ Ruling Kenya as his own fiefdom, Moi allowed political allies to accumulate beach plots, forest lands, urban open spaces, and other forms of public land. While

⁷⁶ For discussion of the speculative real estate market in Africa see Martin Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg After Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008).; Myers, *African Cities*, 85; Simon, *Cities Capital and Development*, 83; Claire Médard, “City Planning in Nairobi: The Stakes, the People, the Sidetracking,” in *Nairobi Today: The Paradox of a Fragmented City*, ed. Hélène Charton-Bigot and Deyssi Rodriguez-Torres (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2006), 34.

⁷⁷ Mohamed Swazuri, interview by author, Nairobi, February 10, 2014.

⁷⁸ Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: Politics of the Belly* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 235.

⁷⁹ Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, 173.

⁸⁰ Hornsby, *Kenya a History Since Independence*, 399.

the practice of dispensing land to cronies was hardly particular to the 1980s, Moi advanced this system to new levels of impunity. As Charles Hornsby argued, “Moi’s elites needed to extract more, more rapidly, because of their fragile political and economic position.”⁸¹ The flippant allocation of major public parks was emblematic of the kleptocracy and authoritarianism of KANU rule.

In late May 1987, the *Daily Nation* reported that a significant portion of Mombasa’s Mama Ngina Drive Park had been turned over to developers, who planned to construct luxurious residential houses on the twelve-acre seaside strip.⁸² Individuals within the provincial administration had allotted the plots on ninety-nine year leases, at an average value of KSH 350,000 per acre.⁸³ Local residents strongly denounced the alleged allocations of their largest park to developers. The *Daily Nation* reported a number of people chaining themselves to the park’s historical baobab trees in a demonstration of protest.⁸⁴ David Wambua, a local trade union officer, told the *Standard* that “if these reports are true then hundreds of residents in this town, who go to the 12-acre beach plot to relax, would have nowhere to go.”⁸⁵ He inquired that if the park was to be developed, then “where will the *wananchi* be resting, taking into account the Mombasa heat?”⁸⁶ An editorial in the *Daily Nation* implored municipal leaders to reconsider the allotments, warning that “in 20 years’ time, Mombasa will be critically overcrowded and space for any purpose will be extremely hard to come by. This will happen at a time when it is imperative that average family units have a place to unwind.”⁸⁷ Invoking the moral discourse of

⁸¹ Hornsby, *Kenya a History Since Independence*, 441.

⁸² Gray Phombeah, “Mama Ngina Drive Goes to Developers,” *Daily Nation*, May 31, 1987: 1 & 4.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “Mama Ngina Plots Cause a Stir,” *Daily Nation*, June 19, 1989: 3.

⁸⁵ Qtd. in Buff Mshamba, “Mama Ngina Drive Should Remain a Leisure Park,” *Standard*, June 7, 1987: 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Editorial, “Leave Mama Ngina Drive Alone Please,” *Daily Nation*, June 21, 1987.

the past, the editorial advised that fewer recreational facilities, would lead to an increase of “anti-social activities like drinking and crime.”⁸⁸

Social class featured prominently in community protests over the allocations. Mombasa residents regarded the distribution of park plots as an act of the rich and powerful exerting their privilege at the expense of the urban poor. Several residents criticized the allotments because the houses “would not benefit the poor *wananchi*.”⁸⁹ A “Concerned Resident” wrote to the *Daily Nation*, probing, “How can a few rich and influential people be allowed to rape the natural beauty of the area? Where will our children go to after the drive has been developed by those people?”⁹⁰ Juanita Carberry, who was herself a member of the former Happy Valley aristocracy, deplored the greed of a “few wealthy people,” who intended to deny “the rest of the Mombasa public... a unique place where they have until now enjoyed the tranquil peace and view over the ocean and channel.”⁹¹ In their letters to the editor, Mombasa residents affirmed the park’s importance as a space for the city’s working class. While the newspapers never precisely identified the culprits of the park’s encroachment, residents saw the allotments of park land as evidence of the greed and corruption of Kenya’s economic and political establishment.

Public pressure was influential; nearly two weeks after the *Daily Nation* first reported the allotments, the Provincial Commissioner for the Coast, Simeon Mung’ala, ordered an end to the unsanctioned development of Mama Ngina Drive Park “as a private residential area.”⁹² The following day, Mombasa’s Mayor, Ahmed Mwidani also renounced the plans and promised to “safeguard the preservation of the plot for recreational purposes.”⁹³ The public’s response

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Concerned Resident,” “In Defense of Mama Ngina Drive,” *Daily Nation*, June 17, 1987: 5.

⁹¹ Juanita Carrberry, “These Trees Are Our National Heritage,” *Standard*, June 14, 1987, 7.

⁹² Gray Phombea, “Mama Ngina Drive: PC Intervenes,” *Daily Nation*, June 20, 1987, 1 & 24.

⁹³ Qtd. in Kenneth Mwema, “Mama Ngina: Now Mayor Rejects Plans,” *Daily Nation*, June 21, 1987, 28.

compelled the local government to respond in favor of local needs and interests. The problem of the illegal allotments, however, was suspended, not resolved; although stopping the immediate threat of residential development at Mama Ngina Drive Park, neither the Provincial Commissioner, nor the mayor, addressed how the title deeds entered into private hands, or how the government would retrieve them. The 1987 scandal over Mama Ngina Drive Park rather was the first dispute in a broader and nationwide series of struggles over urban parks and spaces.

Social class likewise framed Wangari Maathai's grassroots struggle to maintain Uhuru Park, which was under threat by a major high-rise project benefiting the *Kenyan Times* and Kenya's ruling KANU party. Moi regarded the Times Media Trust (TMT) complex as "his ultimate monument" that would "outdo the Kenyatta International Conference Center," which bore the name of his predecessor (see Figure 7.2).⁹⁴ The cost of a project was an astronomical \$197 million, which would be funded through a "consortium of banks, led by the Standard Chartered Merchant Bank Limited of the United Kingdom."⁹⁵ In addition to the mammoth sixty foot tower, the proposal called for "two 10 story wing blocks, malls, auditorium, external works, under passes at Uhuru Highway and Kenyatta Avenue, three satellite dishes and ancillary telecommunications equipment, a parking area for 2000 cars, landscaping, works of art, and other amenities."⁹⁶ The center would provide conference accommodation for nearly five-thousand people. Project leaders touted that the design of the complex would "ensure the retention of Uhuru Park and add elegance to and enhance the scenic beauty of Kenya's capital city."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Simon, *Cities Capital and Development*, 98.

⁹⁵ Muthui Mwai, "House Asked to Guarantee SH4b "Times Loan," *Daily Nation*, November 24, 1989: 1 & 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

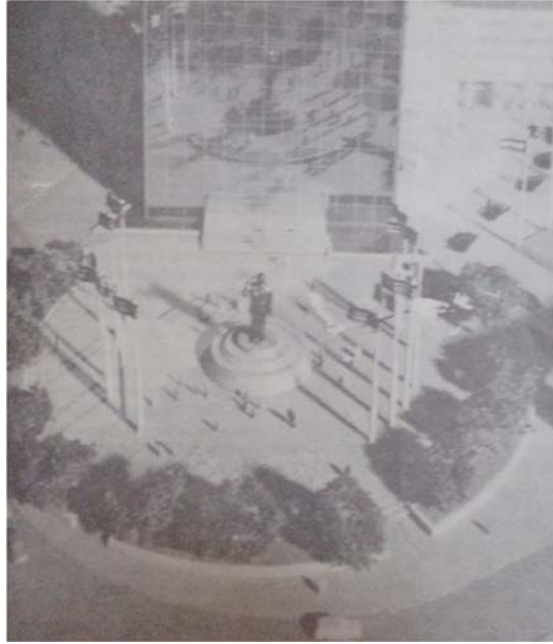


Figure 7.2: A concept sketch of the front of the Kenya Times Media Trust Complex, with Moi statue fronting the building. Kenya Weekly Review, November 17, 1989.

Moi's ambition found a relentless adversary in Wangari Maathai. Maathai, born in Nyeri District in 1940, earned a doctorate in veterinary science from the University of Nairobi in 1971.⁹⁸ She had previously studied in the United States, earning a Bachelor of Science degree at Mount Saint Scholastica College in Kansas, and later a Master of Science degree from the University of Pittsburg. She married Mwangi Mathai, a rising political star, who had also studied in the United States. In 1974, Mwangi was elected to the politically influential Lang'ata Constituency, which he held until 1979. As the wife of a prominent politician, Wangari became active in numerous public causes and found particular interest in environmental issues. She

⁹⁸ For this short biography of Maathai, I relied on a number of sources. See Wangari Muta Maathai, *Unbowed*; John Vidal, "Wangari Maathai obituary", *the Guardian*, September 26, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/26/wangari-maathai> (Accessed April 28, 2015); Jeffrey Gettelman Wangari Maathai, "Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Dies at 71," *New York Times*, September 26, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/27/world/africa/wangari-maathai-nobel-peace-prize-laureate-dies-at-71.html> (accessed April 28, 2015)

started the Green Belt Movement in 1977, which advocated for poverty reduction through environmental conservation and tree planting. By 1989, Wangari Maathai—who after her divorce had added an “a” to her surname—had developed an international reputation as a fierce advocate for forest conservation and other environmental issues impacting the lives of the rural poor.⁹⁹

Maathai regarded the proposed media complex as little more than a “monument to ego” that contributed little to the public good.¹⁰⁰ In an open letter to D.M. Mbela, the Minister of Lands and Housing, Maathai warned against the “transformation of serene, green natural vegetation into cold concrete and impersonal urban prisons, which do little to pacify the unavoidable frustrations experienced by many, particularly the poor, who try to cope with the trials and tribulations of modern development.”¹⁰¹ Maathai, rejected the state’s vision of modernity—defined, in part, by imposing skyscrapers—which she regarded as transforming Kenya’s cities into cold, impersonal concrete jungles.¹⁰² “Psychosis, neurosis, maniacal, and freakish behavior,” she argued, were symptoms of a society that was “continuously alienated from divine manifestations of God’s own creations...and engaged in non-soothing environments of man-made, idolized gadgetry, which is presented as glittering symbols of man’s development.”¹⁰³ In addition to her press statements, Maathai took her objections to the court, filing a lawsuit to prevent construction of the media complex.

Nairobi residents shared Maathai’s umbrage regarding the proposed project. The *Daily Nation*, and the *Standard* published letters from residents condemning the proposed building.

⁹⁹ Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, 188.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁰¹ Wangari Maathai, “Open Letter to Mbela on Transformation in City Center,” *Standard*, October 19, 1989, 7.

¹⁰² Maathai, *Unbowed*, 187.

¹⁰³ Maathai, “Open Letter to Mbela on Transformation in City Center.”

One writer cleverly crafted an obituary for Uhuru Park, reporting the park's dying pleas: "who will take care of my fish, my boats, my lunch time visitors when I often fed them with airburgers, my weekend visitors, including lovers, my religious crusades and the like."¹⁰⁴ The "mourner's" letter underscored the importance of the park to Nairobi's urban poor. Many parks users did not have money to enjoy lunch in town, but could relax in the park while eating their imaginary "airburgers." Charles Ruko, describing the importance of Uhuru Park to his family, proclaimed, "Once in a while my wife and our three year old daughter board KBS to Uhuru Park on Sunday afternoons to try and escape from the dust, garbage, and flies of a Eastlands estate. In Eastlands recreation areas were omitted by our learned planners. It is a luxury Eastlanders cannot afford."¹⁰⁵

Uhuru Park, gave Nairobi's struggling inhabitants a sense of dignity within the congested and economically straining conditions of urban life. Mrs. R. Mwangi underlined this point in her letter to the editor:

I use the park with my family most weekends. I see people there, who have no other forms of recreation, with their families, men with wives, and barefoot children, but happy to have those moments of tranquility when they can forget the struggle of daily living. When a man who has failed to give anything more to his family economically can forget his sense of guilt and failure by taking them out for this inexpensive outing.¹⁰⁶

As one of the few places within the CBD where Nairobi residents could relax and take their children to play, without purchasing a product, or paying for a membership, Uhuru Park was fundamental to the urban poor's "right to the city."¹⁰⁷ Gender underlined Mrs. Mwangi and other residents' perspectives. Parks allowed urban men to fulfill their expectations as husbands and

¹⁰⁴ Mourner, "I Mourn Uhuru Park's Death," *Daily Nation*, November 4, 1989: 7.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Ruko, "Letter to the Editor," *Standard*, November 17, 1989: 7.

¹⁰⁶ R. Mwangi "Don't Rob Us of Tranquility and Recreation of the Park," *Standard*, October 27, 1989, 7.

¹⁰⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 73; Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Right to Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003).

fathers by providing their families with afternoon outings in the city. The TMT complex, on the other hand, exemplified the disneyfication of Nairobi; modern high-rise buildings, shopping centers, and nationalistic monuments, created a sanitized CBD that catered exclusively to the city's elite, who had the marketplace power to participate in such spaces.¹⁰⁸

Other sections of the community emphasized the logistical problems of the proposed media complex. In addition to reiterating concerns regarding the potential loss of a major public recreational amenity, the Architectural Society of Kenya warned that an additional major skyscraper would generate three-thousand additional vehicles, in an already congested CBD.¹⁰⁹ The skyscraper would also hinder other urban services such as “firefighting, roads, sewers, water supply, and storm water draining.”¹¹⁰ Oscar Mann, a Nairobi resident, surmised that the sixty floor building would cast a dark shadow across the nearby CBD.¹¹¹ Playing off of Nairobi's popular identification as “the green city in the sun,” Mann suggested that the skyscraper would turn Nairobi into the “the Grey City in the Shade”¹¹² Citizens and civil institutions remonstrated the high modernist direction to which national leaders sought to take Kenya, asserting that a lofty skyline was not the answer to quality urban life. The project's cost of nearly two billion schillings, moreover, seemed inappropriate at a time when most Kenyans were feeling the effects of cuts to public expenditures and social services.

The state and proponents of the proposed TMT complex defended the proposed skyscraper with vitriolic zeal. While at first denying that the project was going to occur on the park's land, members of parliament resorted to personal attacks against Maathai and her

¹⁰⁸ See Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ The Architectural Society of Kenya, “Nairobi and Uhuru Park,” *Daily Nation*, November 24, 1989.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Oscar Mann, “Monstrous Building Will Turn Nairobi into Grey City,” *Standard*, October 28, 1989, 9.

¹¹² Ibid.

supporters. They expressed anger that Maathai had written to international embassies, including the British High Commission, in order to dissuade them from supporting the plan. Kennedy Kiliku, the MP for Chagambwe, proclaimed that, “It is very strange for a citizen to write a foreign country as if there is no security here...She should tell her foreign masters that this country is stable under the wise leadership of his excellency the President. Our problems are our own and we can solve them. No country can come to solve them for us.”¹¹³ The Minister of Local Government, William ole Ntimama, exclaimed that as an educated woman, Professor Maathai “should have known better than to have undermined Kenya’s head of state by appealing to Kenya’s former colonializing power.”¹¹⁴ Critics, in making such arguments, conveniently elided that the media complex was almost entirely financed through London banks. Ntimama extended his criticisms to the Green Belt Movement itself. “I also want to say that the Green Belt Movement is bogus,” he declared, “I know one place on the way to Narok, near Mai Maihu. There is a big board written ‘Green Belt Movement’ under it. Under that there are a few pawpaw trees and eucalyptus, which were planted by a farmer forty years ago. If that is what is being called Green Belt Movement, then it is seriously bogus.”¹¹⁵

The trivialization of the feminist orientated Green Belt Movement by a nearly exclusive male body of MPs had clear gender overtones. John Keen, who was an assistant Minister of Tourism and Wildlife, evoked Maathi’s contentious divorce, telling the legislative body that Maathai had lost respect from the African community for the way she had “disowned” her former husband in “broad daylight.”¹¹⁶ Keen exclaimed, “I do not see why a bunch of divorcees,

¹¹³ Kennedy Kiliku, *Kenya National Assembly LXXVIII*, November 8, 1989.

¹¹⁴ William ole Ntimama, *Kenya National Assembly LXXVIII*, November 8, 1989.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ John Keen, Assistant Minister Tourism and Wildlife, *Kenya National Assembly LXXVIII*, November 8, 1989.

of no standing at all, should come forward to criticize the efforts which are being made by this government.”¹¹⁷ The explicit postulation of Keen’s statement was that women should allow men, with the proper authority, to make decisions concerning national development. “The Minister of Local Government is responsible for planning our city,” he proclaimed, “if he wants to build a 100 story building anywhere in the city, he is free to do so. He is entitled to build anywhere, and we support him one-hundred percent.”¹¹⁸ Moi himself participated in disparaging Maathai and her supporters. In front of a packed Jamhuri day audience—ironically gathered at Uhuru Park—Moi chastised Maathai for her “misguided” and disrespectful statements.¹¹⁹ “African traditions stipulate that *wamama* (mothers) respect men,” he opined, and pondered “why other Kenyan women were standing on the fence to witness, Professor Maathai endlessly fight her crusade.”¹²⁰

In addition to suffering rebukes on the floor of the National Assembly, Maathai experienced other political and economic reprisals for her resistance to the state’s plans. A judge swiftly dismissed her civil suit to prevent implementation of the government’s scheme, on the basis that Maathai lacked *locus standi*—the right to bring a case to court. The court concluded that since the proposed building did not directly harm Maathai, she could not sue on behalf the public.¹²¹ The judge derided Maathai’s suit as frivolous and ordered her to pay both the court cost, and the opposing party’s legal fees.¹²² The following day, Maathai’s Greenbelt Movement received an order from the police to vacate their headquarters, located near the Central Police Station in Nairobi. The police claimed that they wished to develop the premises, but could not do

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Emman Omari, “Moi Attacks Maathai, Law Society, NCKK,” *Daily Nation*, December 13, 1989: 1 & 23.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Gichuru Njihia, “Maathai Loses Bid to Stop ‘Times’ Complex,” *Daily Nation*, December 12, 1989: 1 & 18.

¹²² Ibid.

so because of the Green Belt's temporary structure located within their lines.¹²³ Maathai suffered another indignity when Maendeleo ya Wanawake, Kenya's foremost women's organization, called for her expulsion from KANU. Maendeleo ya Wanawake held close ties to KANU and many wives of high-level government officials were part of the organization's leadership. The women's association accused Maathai of arrogance, by putting her own political ambitions over the interests of economic development in Kenya and ridiculed her in a statement to the press, stating, "She [Maathai] certainly has contributed a lot in noise-making, chest thumping and reminding everybody about her chain of degrees, which have something to do with treating animals. Perhaps she has forgotten and began to group Kenyans with those beasts."¹²⁴ The TMT complex, the women argued, would benefit all of Kenyans and enhance the nation's development.

For many local observers, the acerbic bullying of an internally renowned environmental activist for her efforts to protect a public park was emblematic of the corruption and despotism of Daniel arap Moi's presidency. Jackobo Ruhengeri asserted that MPs had crossed over a line of decency when they attacked Maathai on personal terms. MPs he argued, "should be able to accept criticism."¹²⁵ Z.W. Wazuri, who herself claimed to be a member of Maendeleo ya Wanawake, denounced her organization's call for Maathai's expulsion from KANU, contending, "Do they want to tell us that there should be no freedom of expression in a democratic country like ours? And should anyone who speaks up his or her mind be expelled from KANU which is the only political party in our country?"¹²⁶ The controversy regarding the TMT complex of Uhuru Park, and the Moi regime's obstinate commitment to the project, was an opportunity for

¹²³ Philip Wangalwa, "Mathai Ordered to Quit Premises," *Daily Nation*, December 15, 1989: 1 & 25.

¹²⁴ Qtd. in Makau Niko, "Kanu Urged to Expel Mathai," *Daily Nation*, December 16, 1989.

¹²⁵ Jackobo Ruhengeri, "Leaders Should Accept Criticism," *Daily Nation*, December 3, 1989, 14.

¹²⁶ Z.W Warui, "Expulsion Calls Should Cease," *Daily Nation*, January 5, 1990, 7.

local residents and everyday citizens to openly challenge the moral legitimacy of the state and KANU leaders. Moi and his allies vituperatively employed political mechanisms to punish Maathai for her subordination, they had little control over the tide of public opinion that swiftly moved against the state's brazen grab of a beloved park, and its subsequent efforts to discredit its opponents.

By January 1990, plans for the TMT complex had floundered. Maathai's campaign had gained sympathy from international financiers, particularly the United States and Japan, who warned the Kenyan government that the project would "jeopardize" future financial assistance to Kenya.¹²⁷ Western donors, which had praised Kenya for its prudent borrowing policies, determined that the country could not afford the nearly \$200 million price tag of the proposed skyscraper.¹²⁸ The World Bank likewise "asserted the inappropriateness of costly prestige projects at a time when government expenditure was under severe pressure due to the implementation of an enhanced structural adjustment."¹²⁹ Thus while Maathai and her supporters had stopped the building from being built over the park, their victory ironically owed partially to the neocolonial stipulations of international financiers. Maathai and her supporters, however, had made the scheme controversial, which helped to draw the scrutiny of potential foreign investors.

The success of Maathai had implications for following campaigns to restore public recreational amenities. In June 1991, near a year after Maathai's successful campaign to restore city park, the *Daily Nation* reported the sale of several public parking lots throughout Nairobi's CBD.¹³⁰ The paper noted plans for a private developer to construct an underground, three-story

¹²⁷ "Times Complex: Saitoti Denies Aid Cuts Reports," *Daily Nation*, January 7, 1990, 1.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ David Simon, *Cities Capital and Development*, 98.

¹³⁰ Joseph Karimi, "City Commission Park Plots Up for Sell," *Daily Nation*, June 24, 1991:32. Spaces for parking were in high demand in Nairobi's CBD, with an estimated shortage of 32,730 parking spaces in

parking garage, beneath Jeevanjee Gardens. Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee had donated the gardens to the government around 1900. While Jeevanjee Gardens was much smaller than Uhuru Park or Mama Ngina Drive Park, it was one of the few remaining open spaces in Nairobi's congested CBD.¹³¹ In 1954, the Nairobi Municipality approached the Jeevanjee family, which was in financial distress, with an offer to purchase the garden so that the government could install new parking lots. The family, however, declined the government's proposal, citing the wishes of the late Jeevanjee that the gardens remain an open space.¹³²

Zarina Patel, the granddaughter of Jeevanjee, recounted her reaction to learning of the proposed car park, telling me, "My mother was the youngest daughter of Jeevanjee. I said to her 'they can't do this, they simply can't do it.' We had the influence of Wangari Maathai who fought for Uhuru Park about two years ago. And at that point I was politically aware of things."¹³³ Zarina, who began her career as physical therapist, took an interest in Jeevanjee Gardens while conducting research for her biography of her grandfather. She described the park's importance to Nairobi inhabitants in her self-published manuscript:

Today it is a busy place, especially at lunch time, used by office workers from the surrounding areas and by the itinerant preachers who ceaselessly compete for the attention of the crowd. Students and lecturers from the Nairobi University campus seek inspiration in the quiet shade while visitors to the city go there to rest their feet for a while. Many lecturers have told me of their student days when with their pockets empty they would while away the lunch hour in the gardens and resume class feeling refreshed if not replenished.¹³⁴

Zarina's reflections underlined the social significance of the park to the city's poor and working class. The gardens, which were located in the heart of Nairobi's CBD and near the University of

Nairobi. Joseph Karimi and Argwings Odera, "Crammed Parking Space Squeezes City Motorists," *Daily Nation*, July 16, 1991: 6.

¹³¹ Uhuru Park was located immediately outside of the CBD.

¹³² Njunga Mutonya, "Scramble for Jeevanjee Gardens," *Daily Nation*, July 20, 1991.

¹³³ Zarina Patel, interview by author, Nairobi, October 29, 2014.

¹³⁴ Zarina Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism* (Nairobi: Zarina Patel, 1997), 213.

Nairobi, provided a free and accessible venue for office workers and students to take their lunches, relax, or take in the spectacle of street preachers during their midday breaks.

The popularity of Jeevanjee Gardens as a venue for community relaxation and socialization, stood in contrast to the agenda of national and local political leaders concerning the development of the area. While early descriptions of the scheme featured an underground parking lot, developers outlined plans to construct a shopping center on the site. The Nairobi City Commission (NCC) planned to fund the Sh250 million project through ten-year loans from local and foreign financial institutions.¹³⁵ The *Daily Nation* reported that “some high ranking civil servants” had an interest in the proposed project.¹³⁶ Zarina, although not knowing the identities of these “shadowy developers,” believed that they included “the very top brass of this country.”¹³⁷ In 1991, the chairman of the NCC was Fred Gumo, a close political ally of President Moi. During Gumo’s tenure, Nairobi experienced a rapid decline in services and frequent accusations of corruption.¹³⁸ Gumo functioned as a strongman for Moi, “working with hooligans” and using intimidation to satisfy his own, as well as the President’s, wishes.¹³⁹ When Zarina decided to publically oppose the car park, she believed she was acting against the direct wishes of President Moi. She told me, “When I picked up the struggle people said to me ‘you are mad, you are out of your mind. You know what Moi is what he can do to you and your mother.’ It became a real political hot potato. Internally we knew we were actually directing confronting Moi. He absolutely had a hand in this deal.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Joseph Karimi, “Jeevanjee Car Park to Cost Sh350m,” *Daily Nation*, July 14, 1991: 20; Joseph Karimi, “The SH350m Deal,” *Daily Nation*, July 20, 1991: 1.

¹³⁶ Joseph Karimi, “The SH350m Deal.”

¹³⁷ Zarina Patel, interview by author.

¹³⁸ Hornsby, *Kenya: a History since Independence*, 445.

¹³⁹ Zarina Patel, interview by author.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Zarina and her supporters assailed the project for its infeasibility and the detrimental effects it would have on one of Kenya's few remaining urban open spaces. Zarina argued in a letter to the *Daily Nation*, that the construction of the car park would require uprooting the "old and beautiful trees."¹⁴¹ She also noted other technical shortcomings of the project, stating, "For the car park to carry the weight of the required depth of the soil it would have to be massively reinforced and it is highly unlikely that a private developer would want to incur that kind of cost."¹⁴² Despite the need for more public spaces within the city, people's letters to the editors were predominantly in opposition to the project. Kenneth Githinji, a Nairobi resident, stressed that the gardens were of "great historical, environmental and recreational value to the country" and encouraged Kenyans to "not put financial gains above our national heritage."¹⁴³ Githinji concluded that, "It is not fair to convert the few remaining recreational spaces into car parks. The future generations will need the gardens just as much as we need them today, if not more."¹⁴⁴ Kilonzo Nzau, who identified himself as an architect, likewise emphasized the necessity of green spaces for "any well planned city," and cautioned that, "it is detrimental for the psychological well-being of city dwellers to give them concrete, concrete, and yet more concrete."¹⁴⁵ Supporters of Patel's protests, invoked and built on the themes of Wangari Maathai's campaign to restore Uhuru Park. The ordinary residents writing letters to the editor rejected the state view of development in the form of shopping centers, new buildings, and parking garages; Patel and her supporters rather affirmed the importance of public parks and

¹⁴¹ Zarina Patel, "Gardens Should Remain Intact," *Daily Nation*, July 16, 1991: 7.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Kenneth Githinji, "Preserve Historical Gardens," *Standard*, July 21, 1991: 7.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Kilonzo Nzau, "Jeevanjee Project Disturbs Me," *Daily Nation*, August 2, 1991: 7.

open spaces to a hospitable and appealing urban environment for all residents, regardless of social class.

The government's response to the public's opposition to the proposed parking garage starkly contrasted with its conduct during Maathai's nearly two yearlong campaign against the TMT complex. Politicians and state institutions, beginning with Maendelo ya Wanawake—the same institution that had threatened to expel Wangari Maathai—lined up to denounce the project. A month after the *Daily Nation* exposed the scheme, Nairobi's four MPs expressed their opposition. David Mwene, who was an Assistant Minister for Industry, warned that if the NCC did not heed the public's calls, he would personally "organize a group of people to apply for a court injunction."¹⁴⁶ President Moi, barely a year removed from his political defeat regarding Uhuru Park, positioned himself as a firm advocate for Jeevanjee Gardens. Moi spoke to a throng of cheering supporters at the park, declaring that his government "went by the wishes of the majority and not of individuals."¹⁴⁷ The *Daily Nation* lauded the President for his foresight, while rebuking the short-sightedness of corrupt city leaders who had devised the scheme: "What will Nairobi look like two decades hence? A gross agglomeration of concrete. It will be particularly hideous if the so-called planners at City Hall are left to their own devices. Happily, President Moi has given them food for thought and rescued a major part of the city's natural heritage."¹⁴⁸ The editorial omitted whispers of Moi's own involvement in the project, or the irony of his new-found identity as a defender of public parks; Moi, rather, basked in accolades for his observance of the public's interest.

¹⁴⁶ Qtd. in Emman Omari, "City MPs Oppose Jeevanjee Project," *Daily Nation*, August 12, 1991: 1 &2.

¹⁴⁷ "Cheers as Moi Halts Jeevanjee Project," *Daily Nation*, August 15, 1991: 1.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, "Jeevanjee: a Kudos to the President," *Daily Nation*, August 16, 1991: 5.

A number of differences between Maathai and Zarinas's respective movements explain the latter's more immediate victory. Zarina, as a direct decedent of Jeevanjee, could successfully claim a "a local standard" that gave her legitimate stake in the park's development; the government, she argued, saw her as a legitimate stakeholder of the park. Patel's mostly self-organized campaign was also much narrower in scope than Maathai's Green Belt movement, which had achieved a strong national following even prior to the Uhuru Park conflict. The widespread appeal of the Green Belt movement made Maathai's efforts to restore Uhuru Park inseverable from national politics in Kenya, representing a potential threat to Moi's regime. Zahid Rajan, Zarina's partner, noted that Zarina stayed clear of the more contentious politics shaping Kenya's transition to multi-party rule, framing her struggle in terms of family legacy. Wangari Maathai, a Kikuyu, was perceived to be anti-Moi.¹⁴⁹ "When it came to Zarina," he told me, "there was no axe to grind. She was not part of any political party. She was not part of any political movement then in anyway. So it became an issue of a family member fighting for a social justice issue."¹⁵⁰

Despite these points of contrast, several themes connected Wangari Maathai's campaign to restore Uhuru Park, Zarina Patel's struggles over Jeevanjee Gardens, and Mombasa residents' efforts to reclaim Mama Ngina Drive Park from private developers. Each movement built on a class-driven narrative, that highlighted the importance of these amenities to the urban poor. The activists leading these struggles, as well as the ordinary residents supporting them, challenged the greed, crony capitalism, and development agendas of national and local officials. The

¹⁴⁹ Maathai was also a Kikuyu, the same ethnic group as most of Moi's primary political rivals. A major component of Moi's president was to dismantle the position of Kikuyu elites within the state. Daniel Branch and Nicholas Cheeseman, "Introduction: Our Turn to Eat," in *Our Turn to Eat: Politics in Kenya Since 1950*, ed. Daniel Branch, Nicholas Cheeseman, and Leigh Gardner (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010), 2.

¹⁵⁰ Zahid Rajan, interview by author, Nairobi, October 29, 2014.

prestigious high-rises, mansions, and shopping center that enticed Kenya's ruling elites failed to resonate among working class residents who saw these schemes as an affront to their continued access to the spaces that provided them with enjoyment, relaxation, and fulfillment in the city. Their efforts to safeguard parks and gardens revealed that the continuity of parks and other publicly accessible spaces of recreation was an issue that could galvanize Kenyans across racial, ethnic, religious, gender, and regional differences.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC PARKS FROM “LAND GRABS” TO CUSTODIANSHIP

The struggles of Wangari Maathai, Zarina Patel, and Mombasa residents, underlined that control of parks and open spaces has been fluid and contested, as a range of private actors and state institutions vied for control of these spaces. The 1990s and early 2000s were turbulent years in which the administration of Kenya's public parks shifted from municipal councils to parastatals and non-government institutions. Nairobi's City Park and Mombasa's Mama Ngina Drive Park were two large and popular recreational amenities that experienced significant loss of lands due to encroachment of wealthy politicians, business tycoons, and real-estate speculators throughout the 1990s. Nairobi City Park was a large park, located north of the city center (visible on Figure 2.2, p.54). Mama Ngina Drive Park was a waterfront amenity stretching across the south of Mombasa Island, near the Mombasa Golf Club. Much of the park was created through the excision of the golf club's land during the mid-1960s (Figure 7.3).

The demise of single-party rule opened new possibilities for the management and administration of urban parks. As the public lost confidence in the state's ability to administer parks, a variety of private institutions stepped in, promising to safeguard and develop these amenities on behalf of the public. The National Museums of Kenya (NMK), a parastatal, and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), an organization connected to the powerful Aga Khan



Figure 7.3: A map of southern area of Mombasa Island, with current Mama Ngina Drive Park marked with lines by author. Most of the current remaining golf club land is located to the right of the marked section. Survey of Kenya, 1963.

family, assumed the mantle of custodianship and management of Mama Ngina Drive Park and City Park. These organizations have represented a model of privatization distinct from the speculative real-estate and crony capitalism of the 1980s and 1990s, rooted in private-public partnerships and the expansion of civil society. While these organizations promised to fulfill the expectations of good governance, efficiency, and transparency, the transfer of control of public parks from government to private management has posed new questions of access, as these institutions, guided by rationalities of neoliberalism, have sought to develop and define the identity of these spaces.

During the same period as the Jeevanjee Gardens controversy, a fresh dispute over Mama Ngina Drive Park erupted. Private developers, who the public had halted in 1987, resurfaced “less than five year later” with plans to build two churches.¹⁵¹ K. Somba-Kivalya, a

¹⁵¹ Njunguna Mutonya, “A Scenic Spot That’s Losing to Developers,” *Daily Nation*, August 9, 1991.

senior official within the provincial administration, signed off on the allocations of 3.06 acres of park land to the African Inland Church and 0.9 acres to the Baptist Convention.¹⁵² During the early 1990s, the District Plot Allocation Committee, a committee established under the Ministry of Land, had the primary authority to allocate plots. Powerful individuals, however, circumnavigated these channels, utilizing their connections within the municipal council, the district and provincial administrations, and the ministries of land and local government to acquire title deeds.¹⁵³ Marlene Reid, a local conversationalist, told the *Daily Nation* that she suspected “the religious angle” was actually a front for “grander and more profitable plans.”¹⁵⁴ A map of the allotments showed several subdivisions of park plots, suggesting their sell to individual developers and real-estate speculators (see figure 7.4).

A series of notices in the Kenya gazette added confusion to the controversy. On August 23, Davidson Karugu, Minister for Home Affairs, listed the 7.85-acre park in the *Kenyan Gazette* as a protected site under Kenya’s Antiquities and Monuments Act.¹⁵⁵ As a protected antiquity, plot holders would not be able to erect structures without authorization from the National Museums of Kenya (NMK). Two weeks later, however, Karugu rescinded his previous order.¹⁵⁶ Darius Mbela, Minister of Lands and Housing, explained in a press statement that the government rescinded the initial gazette notice because it “had encroached on some private land, making it necessary to have the boundaries redefined.”¹⁵⁷ Mbela pledged that Mama Ngina Drive Park would remain a public recreational utility, and that the government would issue a new title

¹⁵² Mutonya, “Mombasa Park in Danger Again,” *Daily Nation*, March 14, 1991: 3.

¹⁵³ Francis Raymond, “Seafront Public Plot ‘Grabbed’,” March 8, 1993: 5.

¹⁵⁴ Mutonya, “A Scenic Spot That’s Losing to Developers.”

¹⁵⁵ Gazette Notice No. 3651, *Kenya Gazette XCIII*, No 34, August 23, 1991.

¹⁵⁶ Gazette Notice No. 3909, *Kenya Gazette XCIII*, No 36, September 6, 1991.

¹⁵⁷ “Park Status Clarified,” *Kenya Times*, September 26, 1991: 12.

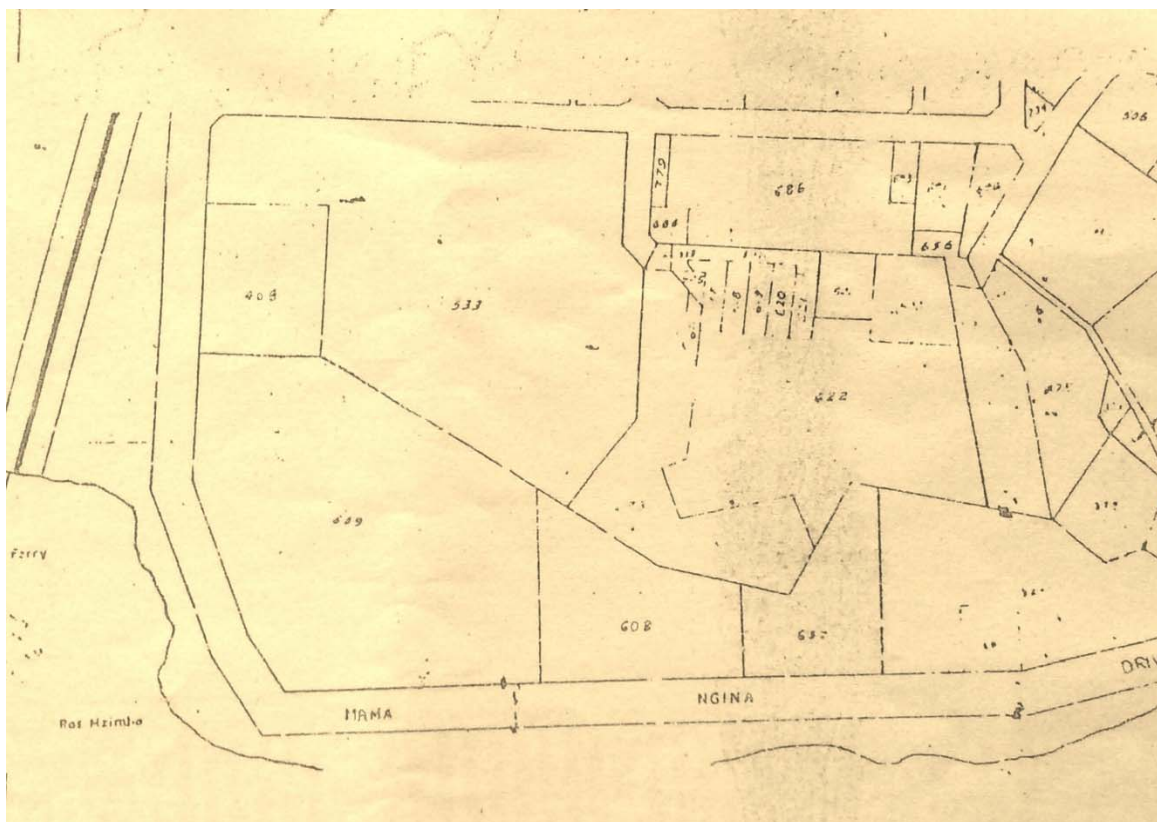


Figure 7.4: A sketched map showing Mombasa's Mama Ngina Drive, with reported subdivided plots. *Daily Nation*, May 16, 1996.

deed to the Mombasa Municipality.¹⁵⁸ Mbela, however, maintained that “there would not be any need for the gazetting of the park.”¹⁵⁹ The government’s decision to rescind its previous directive to protect Mama Ngina Drive Park, suggested the presence of pressure from above. Abdallah M. Salim, a Mombasa resident, declared that “The de-gazetting of Mama Ngina Drive Park...has left many Mombasa residents very suspicious. We have reason to believe that the de-gazetting of the said park has been done through pressure from rich and powerful people.”¹⁶⁰

The park’s status continued to be tenuous throughout the mid-1990s, as allocated plots remained in private hands. The *Daily Nation* reported that allocations of park plots to the African

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Abdallah M. Salim, “Clear Disturbing Speculations on Popular Mama Ngina Drive,” *Daily Nation*, September 24, 1991.

Inland Church, and other private developers “were still valid, despite Government denials.”¹⁶¹ “Unknown persons,” had removed documents regarding additional plots that had been “carved out of the park,” making the identification of beneficiaries “difficult to establish.”¹⁶² The unregistered Islamic Party of Kenya threatened “severe retribution on anyone” who attempted to develop the Mama Ngina Gardens.”¹⁶³ The group’s warning invoked a broader narrative of the displacement of coastal Muslims at the hands of a Christian, upcountry elite.¹⁶⁴ It implored the government to immediately revoke the allocations and suggested that it regarded inaction as “evidence of the government’s discrimination against Muslims.”¹⁶⁵

Local conservationists and the NMK called on the government to “regazette” the park as a protected historical place, and to transfer it to independent trustees, which would safeguard the park’s interests.¹⁶⁶ Najib Balala, the Chairman of the Coast Tourist Association, told the *Daily Nation* that, “We have already written to the municipal council asking them to allow us to be the custodians of the park. This will enable us to assist them in maintaining it.”¹⁶⁷ Balala was himself spearheading a campaign of local conservationists and historians to oversee a KSH5 million “facelift of the park,” which would include “the provision of fresh water, public toilets, lights and bus and parking bays to improve facilities offered by the popular park.”¹⁶⁸ Balala’s comments underscored the public’s distrust of the Mombasa Municipal Council’s ability to

¹⁶¹ Njungua Mutonya, “Church ‘Given’ Park’s Plot,” *Daily Nation*, May 15, 1996.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Njungua Mutonya, “Grabbers Get Jihad Threat,” *Daily Nation*, March 10, 1996: 21.

¹⁶⁴ Donal Cruise O’Brien, “Coping with the Christians: The Muslim Predicament in Kenya,” in *Religion and Politics in East Africa: The Period Since Independence*, ed. Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), 200–219.

¹⁶⁵ Njungua Mutonya, “Muslims Appeal to AIC,” *Daily Nation*, March 25, 1996: 5.

¹⁶⁶ Stephen Muiruri and Njuguna Mutonya, “Mama Ngina Drive Given to Developers,” *Daily Nation*, March 6, 1996; Njungua Mutonya, “Outrage Over Move On Park,” *Daily Nation*, March 7, 1996.

¹⁶⁷ Qtd, in Njungua Mutonya, “Outrage Over Move On Park.”

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

manage its parks. Non-government institutions and concerned individuals, with their own agendas, pursued custodianship over these spaces, as an alternative to the state's corruption.

The controversy regarding Mama Ngina Drive Park underscored the tenuous position of parks and open spaces across Kenya. Park land, with its scenic value, fetched a high premium on the market of speculative real-estate. An editorial in the *Daily Nation* described this problem, proclaiming, "Land so allocated is usually free or, if sold, rather like a handshake. If one is sold such land for Sh2 million, one can sell it for as much as Sh60 million. If one got it for free, one could still make Sh60 million."¹⁶⁹ The inability of the various institutions of the government to recover park lands and protect them from further encroachment led to factions of the community to demand custodianship of these spaces.

City Park was the latest major park to fall into private hands. Uri Gachunga argued that City Park was "under siege from all sides" by a "new Kenyan species of man," which he dubbed "Homo Grabbes."¹⁷⁰ "Homo Grabbes," Gachunga continued, had an "insatiable appetite" for public lands and open spaces.¹⁷¹ Gachunga assailed "greedy indigenous monsters," for colluding "with certain corrupt members of the moneyed Asian and European communities to rob the helpless citizens of this country of their trust lands, recreational areas and any open spaces in the city."¹⁷² Putting the blame on Kenya's ruling party, Gachunga proclaimed that, "a day of reckoning will come when KANU will not be in power forever. Those who have stolen public property will have to surrender it."¹⁷³ Even the popular corn maze was purportedly allocated to

¹⁶⁹ Editorial, "We Can Stop City Park's Destruction," *Daily Nation*, March 1, 1997: 6.

¹⁷⁰ Uri Gachunga, "Save City Park from Extinction," *Daily Nation*, June 12, 1996:7.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

developers to build a private school and a Hindu Temple had also received a significant portion of the park.¹⁷⁴

Throughout early 1997, the allocations of City Park plots had elevated into a full-fledged scandal that dominated public discussion and debate. Senior municipal officials were “under mounting pressure” to allocate City Park land to “influential political and business personalities.”¹⁷⁵ Prices for the “prime recreational land” were reportedly as high as KSH10 million per acre.¹⁷⁶ The *Daily Nation* urged the Minister of Lands, which was connected to the allocations, to “come clean and tell Nairobians, and Kenyans in general, whether or not he has moved to revoke the allocations of City Park as recommended by City Hall.”¹⁷⁷ City Park, the editorial proclaimed, “belongs to the public and posterity, not to individuals with an eye for a quick buck.”¹⁷⁸ MPs jostled to point fingers at each other during parliamentary sessions. Henry Ruhiu, the MP for Embakasi, presented a document, which identified several prominent members of KANU as recipients of City Park plots. His list included the ministers of Local Government and Land, as well as William ole Mtimama, who was then Minister of Home Affairs and National Heritage. Gideon Moi, the son of the president, also appeared on Ruhiu’s list.¹⁷⁹ Accused members dismissed the charges, maintaining that Ruhiu had no evidence to support his claims. Ntimama, for instance, denied culpability, declaring, “I do not have any title deed or any ownership at all of the land in City Park. I think the hon. Member is part of the malicious system that is trying to malign other people.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ John Githongo, “Save Nairobi from Barbarians!” *East African*, December 2-8, 1996: 9.

¹⁷⁵ Andrew Ngwiri, “City Park Threat Looms,” *Daily Nation*, April 20, 1997: 3.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Editorial: “Saving City Park for Nairobians, Prosperity,” *Daily Nation*, April 20, 1997: 6.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Henry Ruhio, *Kenya National Assembly*, May 15, 1997.

¹⁸⁰ William Ole Ntimama, *Kenya National Assembly*, May 15, 1997.

The controversy over City Park took place in the midst of a contentious presidential election, the second since the restoration of multi-party politics. Ruhiu, a member of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), the primary opposition party to KANU, accused members of KANU as the culprits of stolen land. While Moi ultimately prevailed in the presidential election, primarily due to a divided opposition, the encroachment of City Park threatened to further undermine the credibility of the nation's ruling class and KANU Party, particularly concerning administration and management of public lands. An editorial in the *Daily Nation* denounced the government's unwillingness to produce any information regarding the allotments of park lands, or their beneficiaries, declaring, "We would think it is incumbent upon a public office to go public about a public facility. This is why we feel strongly that the Lands Office should tell us who else was given this land."¹⁸¹ The recipients of park land often disguised their identities through "dummy companies," using capital from development loans.¹⁸² Such practices made it difficult for third parties to determine the source of private development. Without clear answers as to the nature of the allotments and the identities of their recipients, the public could only speculate.

Nairobi's reestablished city council called for the national government to instate City Park as a protected site in the Kenya Gazette. The City Council also encouraged the involvement of "other major players, such as professionals, contractors, and the community" to assist in the upkeep and management of City Park.¹⁸³ A volunteer group, calling itself Friends of City Park, emerged as one of the independent institutions that claimed a vested interest in the management of City Park. The organization, which had roots in the East Africa Natural History Society,

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Andrew Ngwiri, "City Park Threat Looms."

¹⁸³ Kariuki Waihenya and Ochieng'Sino "Council Wants Park Gazetted," *Daily Nation*, May 9, 1997: 19.

included a “cross-section of interested individuals linked to both NGOs and the government.”¹⁸⁴ According to a pamphlet, which the group published in 2012, the organization’s objectives were to “rally public support for the Park’s long term preservation, engaging with partners...to secure protected legal status for the entire park, while helping to ease the burden of the Council administrators through raising funds and mobilizing resources and expertise needed to restore and to expand the Park’s then dilapidated infrastructure.”¹⁸⁵ With the City Council’s backing, Friends of City Park planned to rehabilitate the park by upgrading its visitor facilities, developing an information and education program, and improving the park’s security and amenities.¹⁸⁶ As was the case with Mama Ngina Drive Park, the consensus solution for protecting City Park from real-estate speculation was to minimize the government’s managerial control. Partnerships between the government and independent institutions became the accepted practice for managing Kenya’s urban parks.

On November 18, 2004, Najib Balala, the Minister for State and National Heritage, reinstated Mama Ngina Drive as a site of “historical and archeological interest.”¹⁸⁷ City Park had received this designation in November 1997, following the allocation scandals of that year.¹⁸⁸ As national antiquities, these parks have been under the managerial purview of the NMK. NMK is a parastatal, run as a partnership between the Government of Kenya and various foreign and national NGOs. The transfer of these parks to the NMK underscored the advancement of various institutions outside of the state—which have fallen under the broadly

¹⁸⁴ East Africa Natural History Society, “What is the Future of City Park,” *Daily Nation*, December 14, 1996.

¹⁸⁵ Gordon Boy, ed., *City Park: the Green Heart of Nairobi* (Nairobi: Friends of City Park, 2012), 16.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Gazette Notice No. 9464, *Kenya Gazette CVI*, No. 99, December 3, 2004.

¹⁸⁸ Gazette Notice No. 6313, *Kenya Gazette XCIX*, No 59, November 27, 1997. William ole Ntimama, an alleged recipient of City Park land made the declaration, as Minister for Home Affairs and National Heritage.

defined term of “civil society”—that promised better accountability, efficiency, and democratic participation.¹⁸⁹ Civic associations, Tar argued, emerged “as a bulwark for supplanting key state functions—not least service provisions and democratic institution building and advocacy.”¹⁹⁰ Such associations “claim to be voluntary, not-for-profit organizations” that are autonomous from the state and “capable of transcending particularistic interests.”¹⁹¹ By transferring custodianship of urban parks to the NMK, the government sought to absolve itself from the acrimonious conflicts and scandals regarding these spaces. Although connected to the government, the NMK seemed to operate as an independent institution, comprised of conservationists, environmentalists, and academics who shared a common concern for maintaining the parks’ heritage.

Scholars have rightfully questioned idealized representations of civil society as the answer to good governance and democratic participation in Africa.¹⁹² The “heterogeneous and segmented nature of civil society,” Abrahamsen contends, “cautions us against definitions that treat it as inherently democratic.”¹⁹³ Civil associations, which themselves tend to be led by elites, espouse particular ideologies, values, and visions which themselves are inherently exclusive.¹⁹⁴ The transfer of custodianship to private stakeholders has presented new political dilemmas concerning the use and accessibility of Kenya’s urban parks and open spaces. While

¹⁸⁹ For description and analysis of the term civil society see Comaroff and Comaroff, “Introduction,” 1999), 1–43; Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*, 52; Usman Tar, *Politics of Neoliberal Democracy in Africa: State and Civil Society in Nigeria* (London: Tauris, 2009).

¹⁹⁰ Tar, *Politics of Neoliberal Democracy in Africa*, 6.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*, 54. Comaroff and Comaroff, Introduction; Mercer, “Performing Partnership,” 748; Martin J. Murray and Garth Myers, “Introduction: Situating Contemporary Cities in Africa,” in *Cities in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Martin J. Murray and Garth Myers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 19; Tar, *Politics of Neoliberal Democracy in Africa*.

¹⁹³ Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*, 55.

¹⁹⁴ Tar, *Politics of Neoliberal Democracy in Africa*, 6.

independent organizations have emerged as relentless advocates for reclaiming park land from influential land grabbers, they possess their own global visions of development that have implications for community use and access to these spaces.

Shortly after receiving trusteeship of Mama Ngina Drive Park, administrators for the NMK expressed its intentions to “develop” and “beautify” the space into a “world class” water front park. In a November 2005 meeting, NMK administrators, academic consultants, and Balala, planned for the park’s future development. Balala was a prominent voice during this meeting, emphasizing the importance of “harnessing public/private partnerships” through the encouragement of private investment and commercialization of the park’s activities.¹⁹⁵ He contended that the NMK should “explore possibilities of blending two approaches—i.e. retaining the site as a historical monument and turning it into a modern water front park, in line with other water front parks that exist in other parts of the world.”¹⁹⁶ This approach would allow the NMK to preserve the heritage of the site, while also generating revenue. Transforming the park into a profitable amenity emerged as an important plank of the NMK’s proposals. Balala suggested “the possibility of constructing a tower, which visitors could mount at a nominal fee...the tower could also serve as a new symbol/image of Mombasa town.”¹⁹⁷ J.W. Ngatia, another participant of the meeting, added that “restaurants like the Carnivore Restaurant can be developed by interested investors as a way to generate revenue.”¹⁹⁸ The NMK’s agenda for the park’s development illustrated the convergence of public and private interests. While the NMK’s prerogative was to preserve Mama Ngina Drive Park as a public amenity, concerns for the

¹⁹⁵ “Minutes of the Mama Ngina Heritage Site Project Meeting,” November 2005, NMK, NMK/003/OSM/2/4/21/.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. Carnivore, is a popular restaurant located in Nairobi’s Karen suburb. The restaurant is located in close proximity to a public garden, with frequent musical performances and other spectacles.

production of revenue drove the organization's plans, equating the park's "sustainability" to the generation of new commercial activities.¹⁹⁹

The NMK, in its effort to promote financial investment, has offered various private companies, and institutions positions as stakeholders of Mama Ngina Drive Park. The NMK proposed a trust of leading companies, which would "oversee, advise, control and manage the sustainable development of the site to a reputable public recreation park...equipped with modern facilities and infrastructure for the benefit of the future generation and nation."²⁰⁰ Katana described the motive of the trust as generating the necessarily capital to undertake the park's development, and enhancing a "spirit of cooperation between the public and private sector."²⁰¹ Among the local organizations to which the NMK approached were the Bambui Cement Company, Aga Khan Foundation, Kenya Ports Authority, Kenya Ferry Services, Kenya Association of Tour Operators, Kenya Hotel Keepers and Catering Authority, Coast Development Authority, Wamui Foundation.²⁰² The NMK promised companies participating in the project space within the park to improve their public image and market their products.²⁰³

The NMK's plans for the park have required coordinating and restricting the park's various activities. In 2008, the NMK announced that local driving schools could no longer use Mama Ngina Drive Park as a practice area. The park, because of its size as an open space, was an ideal location for inexperienced drivers to develop their skills before moving to the city's busy streets. Kaingu Tinga, an official at the NMK, issued the ban because "vehicles were also

¹⁹⁹ Phillip Jimbi Katana, "Brief Report on Mama Ngina Drive Historical Site," August 2007. National Museums of Kenya, NMK/003/OSM/2/4/21.

²⁰⁰ Idle O. Farah to Various Parties, October 4, 2005, NMK, NMK/003/OSM/2/4/21.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Phillip Jimbi Katana, "Brief Report on Mama Ngina Drive Historical Site."

²⁰³ Phillip Jimbi Katana to General Manager, Bambui Cement, February 5, 2008, NMK, NMK/003/OSM/2/4/21.

causing congestion and endangering the lives of revelers of the seaside resort.”²⁰⁴ The NMK has also sought to coordinate the activities of the park’s various vendors who used the area to sell *madafu*—a young, tender coconut—cassava, potato chips, ice-cream, and soda.²⁰⁵ A report in the *Daily Nation* reported that the commercial enterprises had evolved into disorder, declaring that the park had been “invaded by food vendors who pay little attention to hygiene, and who have no toilet facilities either.”²⁰⁶ Katana lamented that “the influx of hawkers” had “turned the site into a slum.”²⁰⁷ Bakari Mwarabu, who is the current site manager of Mama Ngina Drive Park, told me that the museum has developed a list of various vendors and would eventually like to allocate each a specific stall to sell their products.²⁰⁸ Katana, in a letter to the former site manager, outlined this practice, stating, “Now that the NMK Board has officially told us to take physical possession of Mama Ngina Drive site and develop programs that will enhance its conservation, we need to start the process of carrying out an inventory of the hawkers at the park. This exercise should be done discreetly and immediately before the demolition exercise begins some time later this year.”²⁰⁹ While the NMK’s plans accept the continued access of vendors to sell their product, it is clear that their entree will be contingent on participating in a system of formalized registration and payment of fees. Kalendar Khan cited Zanzibar’s Foradhani Gardens as a model for how this system would work. Khan elaborated that Zanzibar’s government has permitted vendors to access the gardens, but only during prescribed hours and for those who have registered and paid a fee. Such a system, Khan argued, has assisted in the park’s maintenance

²⁰⁴ “Learners Driven Out of Recreational Park,” *Daily Nation*, September 16, 2008.

²⁰⁵ Bakari Mwarabu, interview by author, Mombasa December 8, 2012.

²⁰⁶ Mazera Ndurya, “Food Hawkers Invade Mama Ngina Gardens,” *Daily Nation*, March 5, 2006.

²⁰⁷ Phillip Jimbi Katana, “Brief Report on Mama Ngina Drive Historical Site.”

²⁰⁸ Bakari Mwarabu, interview by author, Mombasa, December 8, 2014.

²⁰⁹ Phillip Katana, to Site Manager Mama Ngina Site, November 8, 2005, NMK, NMK/003/OSM/2/4/21.

and contributed revenue to Zanzibar's government.²¹⁰ The NMK has yet to fully enact its plans for Mama Ngina Drive—so it is difficult to assess the consequences—however, for vendors who currently sell their products to passing strollers, the museum's plans will constitute a change in terms of their accessibility.²¹¹

The NMK's now has the prerogative to determine the park's development and to authorize the construction of new structures. Bakari Mwarabu told me that “there is nothing” anybody can build “without the approval of the Museum.”²¹² The Museum's efforts to reclaim the title deeds of park plots, however, has been politically contentious. When the NMK attempted to evict Ali Hassan Ali, a local restaurant owner, he protested, arguing that he had “operated his business for the last 17 years and had a temporary occupation lease from the Mombasa council.”²¹³ Hassan accused Balala of targeting him for political reasons. The NMK had to take Hassan to court, where it eventually prevailed.²¹⁴ The 2004 gazette notice regarding Mama Ngina Drive Park excluded two plots belonging to Crescent Properties Development Company Limited and Calwall Investment Limited because the plot holders had objected. This outcome illustrated that influential individuals and development firms have continued to protect their holdings of park lands, even despite the area's protected status. Katana emphasized the importance of reclaiming title deeds to “definitively guarantee” the park's “protection from similar threats in the future.”²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Kalendar Khan, interview by author, December 11, 2014.

²¹¹ See Christina Jimenez, “From the Lettered City to the Sellers' City: Vendor Politics and Public Space in Urban Mexico, 1880-1926,” in *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imageries, Politics and Everyday Life*, ed. Gyan Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

²¹² Bakari Mwarabu, interview by author.

²¹³ “Hotel Owner Denies Grabbing Land,” *Daily Nation*, October 10, 2004.

²¹⁴ “Court Blocks Developer from Disputed Plot,” *Daily Nation*, November 5, 2004.

²¹⁵ Phillip Jimbiri Katana, Head Coast Sites and Monuments, to Director Physical Planning, February 25, 2006, NMK, NMK/003/OSM/2/4/21.

The NMK's objectives regarding Mama Ngina Drive Park underscored the contradictions of private custodianship of parks and public spaces. While the primary objective of the NMK has been to safeguard the park for public use, their concern for developing the site into a world-class waterfront amenity and a source of revenue has led them to pursue an agenda emphasizing privatization and commercialization. Commercialization, allows for only a certain type of public to experience a space.²¹⁶ While I do not wish to suggest that the NMK's interests in the space's future has been insincere, the organization has nonetheless interpreted the park's role as a public amenity through a rationality of markets and entrepreneurial enterprise. The officials leading the development of Mama Ngina Drive Park, moreover, have themselves been elite professionals who generally perceive "foreign investment and tourism as the basis for a healthy economy."²¹⁷ Hegemonic ideals of how a "world-class" waterfront park should resemble, have driven the NMK's proposals for the area's development. The NMK's mandate to manage the park and determine its use has profound implications for its future as a freely accessible space for Mombasa's urban poor.

In 2011 the Government of Kenya, the NMK, and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) signed a memorandum of understanding concerning the development of City Park. The AKTC and other stakeholders agreed to spend at least \$10 million towards improving the park's amenities, over a six-year span.²¹⁸ The agreement resulted in the creation of the Nairobi City Park Service Company (NCPSP), which represented the various stakeholders, to oversee the park's management and the implementation of development objectives. While the agreement

²¹⁶ See Setha Low, "How Private Interests Take Over Public Space: Zoning, Taxes, and Incorporation of Gated Communities," in *The Politics of Public Space*, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2006), 81.

²¹⁷ Setha Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

²¹⁸ Churchhill Oteino, "City Park Set for 1 Billion KSH Facelift."

explicitly maintained the Kenyan government's continued ownership of City Park, it gave the AKTC and NCPSC full authority "to exercise its right over the entire site."²¹⁹ Noting the AKTC's involvement in various park rehabilitation projects around the world—including Cairo's al-Azhar park, the Babur Gardens in Kabul, Afghanistan, the Sundar Nursery in Delhi, India, and the National Park of Mali in Mamoko—the document posited that the institution would rehabilitate City Park "to its former pristine state" and accommodate "requirements from the public that are in line with modern development in Kenya."²²⁰ The project expounded several goals, which included: turning City Park into a "public attraction for local, national, and foreign visitors"; new educational facilities, cultural spaces, playgrounds, sport facilities, and recreational areas; providing visitors with a "clean and enjoyable environment"; creation of employment opportunities; and the transformation of the park area into a "renowned green public space, capable of ensuring its economic and financial autonomy."²²¹

Development of City Park would occur through three different stages (see figures 7.5 and 7.6). The first phase of the project called for preparation of the site, as well as the rehabilitation of the park's "historic garden" and nursery.²²² During the project's second phase, there would be creation of new sporting and educational facilities, including an auditorium and open air theatre. The project's final phase emphasized the restoration of the cemeteries, rehabilitation of the forest reserve, and the installation of a circular roadway, connecting the various features of the park. The creation of new "income generating facilities" was a common feature of all three phases,

²¹⁹ Government of Kenya, "The Nairobi City Park Rehabilitation Funding and Technical Assistance Plan" (2010). I accessed this document from a private individual connected with the project, who did want their identity disclosed. Under their request I am unable to disclose the full title of the document, or its location, until the project's outlined completion in 2017. I will more fully cite this document in future editions.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid

²²² Ibid.

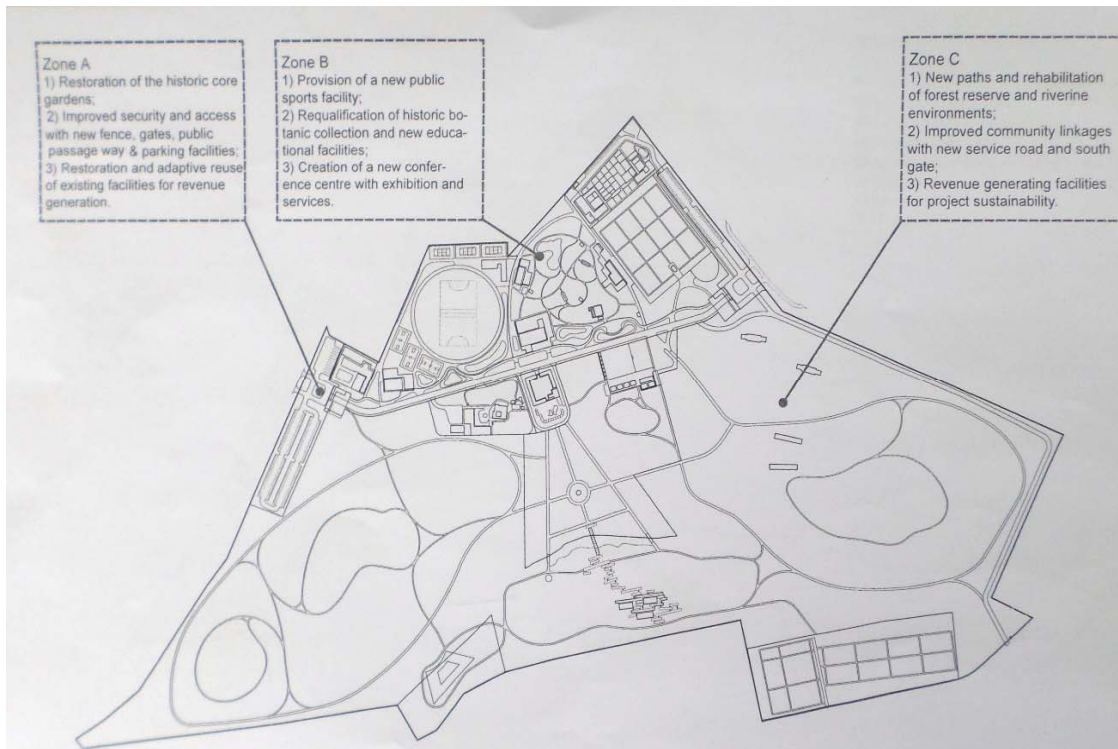


Figure 7.5: A map of the proposed City Park rehabilitation scheme by zone. Government of Kenya, 2010.

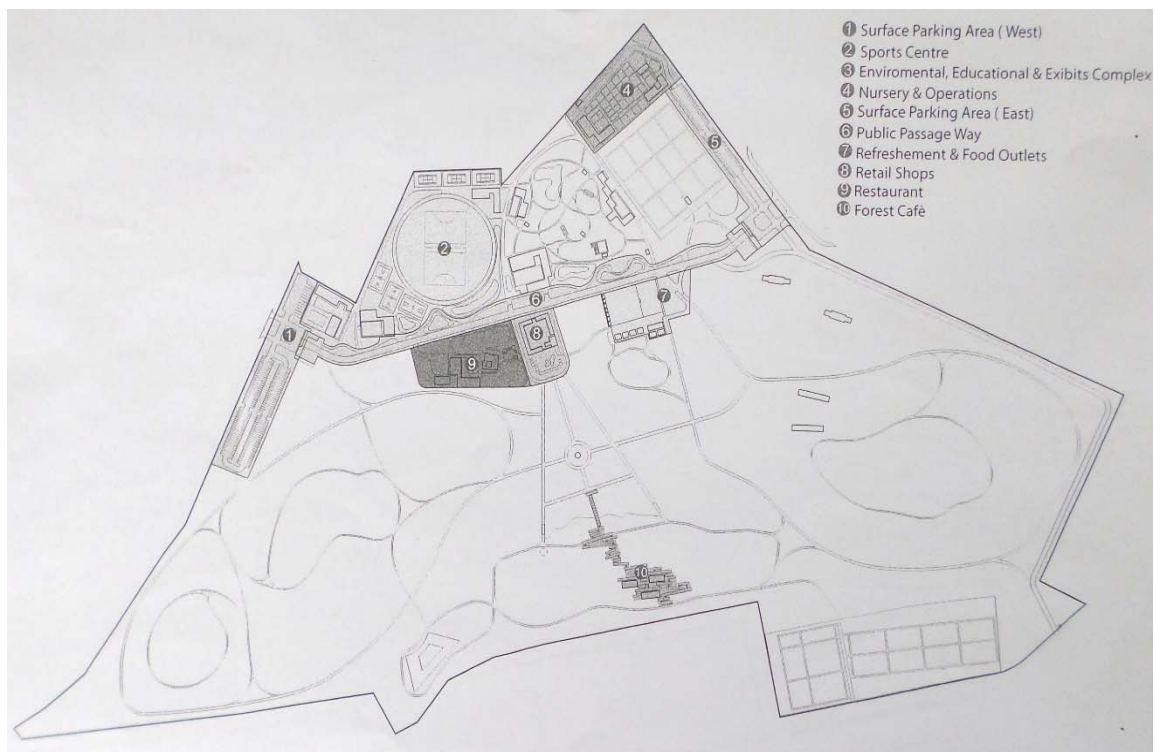


Figure 7.6: A map of proposed new infrastructure and park's amenities. Government of Kenya, 2010

underscoring the importance of commerce and revenue generation to the scheme. Many of the proposed amenities would require the public to pay fees to access. The agreement gave the NCPSC authority “to receive (i.) from the visitors of the fenced off areas with NCP a modest fee and (ii) from the operators of activities licensed by the NCPSC, a certain rent or royalties on the basis of commercial agreements.”²²³

The proposed scheme for “rehabilitating” City Park, although still in its early stages, has been controversial among Nairobi residents and other conservationists. Zarina Patel, for instance, regarded the Aga Khan’s participation in the project as little more than a land grab, proclaiming, “They want to charge people for coming into the park and they want to hive off part of the park. You know it’s the Aga Khan trust who are running the whole show there. There is the Aga Khan Hospital across the road, there is the Aga Khan club. They need parking bad. So they want to hive off a part of City Park and make it into a parking lot.”²²⁴ The AKTC’s emphasis on commercialization of City Park, including the imposition of fees, has raised concerns regarding the park’s future availability to the urban poor. Even a nominal fee of one-hundred schillings—currently about \$1—would hinder the access of a family living in nearby Mathare, where the average monthly income is less than KSH8500 a month (about \$100).²²⁵ Such changes have threatened to make City Park exclusive to Nairobi’s middle and upper classes. “If you allow parks to be upgraded for a middle class of people,” Lydian Mutungi told me, “there is a class which is sixty percent of this country which is being left behind. You are not thinking about that

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Zarina Patel, Interview by author.

²²⁵ Muugano Support Trust, “Mathare Valley: 2011 Collaborative Upgrading Plan” (University of California, 2013).

class you are only thinking about the middle class, the upper. What about the others? Where will they go?”²²⁶

Parks are ultimately political spaces, with questions of access, control, and custodianship contested. Even Zarina Patel, who has been a steadfast advocate for continued free and non-commercial access to Jeevanjee Gardens, has contended with preachers, vendors, and other users who had formerly benefited from the space.”²²⁷ In 2002, Zarina and other concerned individuals received permission to form a Friends of Jeevanjee Gardens committee. The committee, according to Zarina, has adhered to two principles: a ban on any form of “formal commercial activity,” and that the park “should continue be a free entrance to the public.”²²⁸ The association successfully organized a petition of nearby residents and shopkeepers that prohibited the use of loudspeakers in the park. The ban of loudspeakers targeted street preachers who had been using the park for their daily sermons. Zarina’s group recently launched a proposal to improve the park’s amenities and establish a playing area for children. Zarina credited a World Urban Forum meeting in Medellin, Colombia, as an inspiration for her group’s proposals, proclaiming, “That for me was the first time I saw what a developed public space can mean for a city. It was for me a real revolution.”²²⁹ Some groups, as Zarina herself disclosed, have expressed concerns that the proposed upgrades would threaten their access to the park. The Mbugu wa Wananchi—a group of unemployed graduates and youth that have regularly met at the park to discuss political issues—organized a petition to protest the proposed renovations, believing that they would diminish the group’s access to Jeevanjee Gardens. Although Zarina told me the controversy has

²²⁶ Lydian Mutungi, interview by author.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

since “quieted down,” opposition to her recent proposals to develop the park called attention to the potential public anxieties concerning individual institution’s custodianship of public spaces.

Privatization of urban space occurred across a vast spectrum of visions and managerial frameworks, instead of a singular occurring phenomenon. The efforts of Zarina and her supporters to make the park a clean, peaceful, and freely accessible environment for residents to relax marked a distinct contrast to the personal enrichment of Kenya’s ruling classes, as well as the commercialist agendas of the NMK and AKTC. Nonetheless, Zarina has presented a particular vision for Jeevanjee Gardens that has conflicted with alternative uses or ways of seeing the space. As urban Kenyans grapple with declines of recreational space in Nairobi and Mombasa, the stakes of control and access to the few existing amenities have become more pronounced. The recent trend towards private custodianship of parks has presented an alternative framework to the corruption and crony capitalism that came to define state management of these spaces during the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, it is itself connected with politics and contestations over land and urban space.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has delineated the processes of privatization of urban public parks in Kenya. The recent troubles of City Park’s stakeholders to secure the necessary space to carry out their agenda, illustrates the enduring legacies of political patronage and sub-legal allocation of land to influential individuals. These allocations, however, occurred at the same time as an alternative sphere, operating outside of the state, asserted itself as a viable, efficient, and moral alternative to state governance. This sphere, which scholars have termed “civil society,” included journalists, environmentalists, and urban conservationists who shared concerns for the preservation of Kenya’s urban parks. Urban residents’ fervent opposition to these land grabs, visible on the

editorial pages of Kenya's major newspapers, reminded national and local leaders of the inviolability of public space and their ability to politically galvanize the public. For the urban poor, in particular, parks were a refuge from the growing "concrete jungle" of skyscrapers, asphalt roads, and shopping centers. By openly challenging these allocations, urban dwellers asserted their "rights to the city," demanding places where they could go for relaxation and to take their children to play.

The "grabbing" of land to wealthy individuals, however, was only one specific form of privatization that occurred within a much broader neoliberal trajectory. The state responded to the conflicts, unrest, and anxieties that resulted from the privatization of parks to wealthy land speculators, by turning to the expertise and assumed trustworthiness of private, non-governmental institutions. This latter form of privatization has resulted in a collaboration of NGOS, conservation organizations, and even corporations, which have assumed managerial responsibilities of urban parks, as well as the right to determine their future. Civil associations, as the example of the Agricultural Society of Kenya delineated, have coopted their own agendas into a mandate of development and improvement of the parks' amenities. Although the accumulation of park lands by wealthy politicians and business tycoons has represented a more pernicious form of privatization, Kenya's embrace of civil society's custodianship of these places has potential to be more impactful, in terms of the enduring transformations of public parks and open spaces. The agendas of conservationists, NGOs, and foreign foundations has tended to draw quieter scrutiny and limited protest because their reported aims are couched in a discourse of conservation, improvement, and good governance. The AKTC and its partners has carefully guarded their plans for City Park and very few members of the public, outside of the circles of activists and urban conservationists, are aware of the organization's actual proposals

and potential controversies. The AKTC and NMK have each embraced a rationality of free market capitalism, in which public accessibility is compatible with installation of fees and commercial endeavors. The risk of this logic is that it may reduce the access of the urban poor, who have tended to benefit the most from these spaces. It is conceivable to imagine a future in which these parks become exclusively the playgrounds of Kenya's upper and middle classes, not dissimilar to the cities' clubs and golf courses.

EPILOUGE AND CONCLUSION: #OCCUPYPLAYGROUND

On January 19, 2015, just a few days after my return from fieldwork, I received a text message from my research assistant Paul. “Did you hear the news?” he asked me. “No, what news?” I wrote back. Paul relayed to me that the Kenyan police had thrown tear gas into a crowd of primary school children who had been protesting the loss of their school playground. When pupils of Langata Road Primary School returned from their December holidays, they found that developers had barricaded the school’s playground. Many of the children who attended the school were poor and resided in Kibera. The rumored culprit of the barricade was a luxury hotel connected to Kenya’s Deputy President William Ruto. During a school recess, the students, alongside several community rights activists, gathered outside of the playground, hoisting signs proclaiming, “grabbers without shame” and “occupy playground.” A number of protesters beat improvised drums, while chanting “haki yetu” (our right).¹ Activist Boniface Mwangi, one of the adult organizers of the protest, offered this account of the events that followed.

Suddenly there was a loud bang as tear gas canisters exploded at the feet of the singing pupils. Everyone stampeded away. A few children were hurt while trying to escape and others fell into a roadside ditch. There were loud screams and some children called for their mothers as they choked on the gas...

After the situation calmed a little, the children regrouped and, with their teachers, started to demolish the wall blocking access to the playground. One side of the wall soon came tumbling down, and some of the children ran into the playground. They kicked balls and enjoyed traditional games. But then the police charged, and attempted to arrest some of the activists.²

¹ Boniface Mwangi, “#OccupyPlayGround: Police Used Teargas on our Children, but for Now We Celebrate the Win,” *the Guardian*, January 20, 2015, accessed on June 24, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2015/jan/20/occupyplayground-police-used-teargas-on-our-children-but-for-now-we-celebrate-the-win>.

² Ibid.

The image of the Kenyan police physically assailing young children as they attempted to reclaim their lost school ground quickly proliferated across Kenyan and international news outlets and generated discussion in social media. Twitter users popularized the hashtag #OccupyPlayGround to express their support for the children's protest and to condemn Kenya's government. Within hours of their broken protest, the students had triumphed. President Uhuru Kenyatta—the son of former President Jomo Kenyatta—along with the Cabinet Secretary of Lands, and the Chairman of the National Land Commission (NLC) quickly promised a return of the playground to the school.³

The conflict over the Langata Road Primary school ground highlighted many of the issues important to this dissertation. First, the loss of the school's playground underlined the continued tensions between the interests of public recreation and the growing commodification of urban land. Land reform was an essential plank of Kenya's 2010 Constitution, which created the independent NLC to directly oversee the recovery of public lands. The constitution, moreover, replaced the Nairobi City Council with the Nairobi County Assembly, under the principle of giving local political institutions greater control over their resources.⁴ Despite these mandates, the loss of public urban lands has continued to frequently make the headlines and editorial pages of Kenyan newspapers.⁵ As the value of urban land continues to increase, the parks, playgrounds, and open spaces where residents frequented for relaxation and leisure have

³ Otiato Guguyu and Daniel Tsuma Nyassy, "Police Use Tear Gas on Lang'ata Pupils Protesting Land Grab," *Daily Nation*, January 19, 2016, accessed on June 24, 2016, <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Langata-pupils-protest-land-grab/-/1056/2594292/-/15rax03z/-/index.html>.

⁴ Republic of Kenya, *Constitution of Kenya 2010* (Nairobi: National Council for Law Reporting, 2010).

⁵ "Battle on to Save One of the City's 'Green Lungs' from Early Collapse," *Daily Nation*, November 2, 2015, accessed on June 25, 2016, <http://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/DN2/Saving-KENYA-Ngong-Road-Forest/-/957860/2938714/-/10tidvpz/-/index.html>; Aggrey Kulali, "Kenyans' Appetite for Land in Towns is Getting Out of Control," *Daily Nation*, March 15, 2015, accessed on June 25, 2016, <http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Letters/Kenyans-appetite-for-land-in-towns-is-getting-out-of-control/-/440806/2654570/-/vy7jahz/-/index.html>.

become battlegrounds for diverse and competing interests. If anything, these conflicts have extended to the previously inviolable spaces of school grounds, which now face similar threats of encroachment. Boniface Mwangi cited the report of an education taskforce that showed forty-six schools in Nairobi had reported “a lack of clarity” regarding their boundaries and one out of every ten schools reported “encroachment by private developers, religious organizations, or illegal settlements.”⁶ The #OccupyPlayGround protests, on the other hand, highlighted the resilience of both activists and ordinary residents to reclaim spaces lost to such encroachments and to reaffirm recreation as an essential community right and priority. Hashtags and the global connectedness of social media have provided new mediums for community members to expose land grabs and pressure state authorities to restore public lands.

The development of recreational space in Kenya coincided with expanding claims to the city. Within the span of a century Nairobi and Mombasa blossomed from small railroad and port cities into expansive and densely populated metropolitan centers. As the two cities developed and new groups and communities became an integral part of the city, the nature and character of recreational spaces changed. Prior to independence, access to clubs gave European settlers a stake in the city, as places where they could find entertainment and social connection within Kenya’s deeply stratified colonial society. Clubs skirted the boundaries between the public and private spheres. On the one hand, they presented themselves as carefully guarded institutions, with rigid qualifications for membership; on the other hand, they claimed their land by satisfying public demands for leisure space. The expansion of Nairobi and Mombasa, particularly the integration of African communities into the city, necessitated the broadening of possibilities for leisure space. Colonial officials created new lands of leisure in the form of parks, playgrounds,

⁶ Boniface Mwangi, “#OccupyPlayGround.”

and social halls, believing they would instill onto Africans ideals of stability and family life. The work of these social engineers, while rooted in the imperialist convictions of late colonial developmentalism, created spaces where Africans explored new possibilities for leisure and identity. Urban Kenyans did so according to their own interests and aspirations, often vexing colonial officials who saw their control of the city waning.

The work of social engineers during the 1940s and 1950s, however, shaped the ontologies of Kenyans who came to the city for promises of better wages, housing, and leisure. Such aspirations and priorities transcended conventional segmentations of identity and kinship. For aspiring middle class men and women, access to a community playground, park, or social hall became an extension of the home, connoting the facets of domestic stability, respectability, and dignity. As resource strapped governments grappled with the multiple and often competing demands for open spaces, Kenyans continued to uphold access to venues of recreation as an essential facet of city life. Chapters five and six, for example, underlined efforts of both community activists and ordinary residents to recover the parks, playgrounds, and recreational amenities lost to the excesses of Kenya's political and economic establishment.

Children too have rights, as the young protestors at Langata Road Primary School reminded us with their signs and chants of "haki yetu." The rights of children are an underexplored facet of this dissertation, which has primarily emphasized the various undertakings and perspectives of adult actors. Yet the needs and activities of children were often integral to residents' demands and struggles for accessible recreational grounds. The shared promises of domesticity, respectability, and familial stability, which informed the aspirations of urban migrants, entailed places where their children could play. When wealthy developers seized community playgrounds or football pitches, it was youth and children who experienced the most

immediate and detrimental effects. Not unlike Stephen Mutiso's poem at the beginning of this dissertation, #OccupyPlayGround was a reminder that children also have a stake in the city.

Leisure was certainly not the only priority that shaped urban Kenyans' experiences. The objective of this dissertation has not been to diminish the importance of conventional issues of urban African history, such as labor and housing. It rather aimed to contemplate the alternative ways by which city dwellers struggled over questions of urbanization, land rights, and urban development in Africa. Kenyans' struggles for parks, playgrounds, and open spaces were ultimately about livelihoods and communities. For much of the colonial era, European officials and settlers largely imagined Africans as existing outside of the city. The colonial administration guarded the city from Africans by propagating mythologies of cities as errant places of disorder and social dislocation. Even when administrators begrudgingly accepted Africans' presence in urban environments, they did so through a framework of development, by which they would prepare Africans for the precepts of urban life. The development framework has had continued resonance in contemporary African cities, as current narratives present African urban centers as a catalog of social problems ranging from crime and destitution to poor traffic flow.

For most urban Africans, however, the city is not merely an object of development, but the place where they establish homes, raise children, and pursue their aspirations for an elevated standard of living. By treating cities as homes and communities, rather than as places of work or temporary residence, we can better contemplate the stakes of "struggles for the city," while exploring other sites where such struggles took place.⁷ Such a framework will call attention to capabilities of Africans to shape the production of the city according to their own needs and

⁷ See Frederick Cooper, "Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labor in Africa," in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Luise White (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 7–50.

aspirations, wresting control away from ruling elites, developers, and state urban planners. This approach, moreover, presents alternatives for understanding questions of community and identity in Kenya, outside of the conventional terminology of rural autochthony, kinship, and ethnic discipline. Kenyans regarded the city not only in terms of its constraints, but also its possibilities, as they developed new interests in leisure, built social relationships across ethnic lines, and explored alternative expressions of identity.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVES CONSULTED

Nairobi:

Kenya National Archives
Anglican Church of Kenya Archives
National Museums of Kenya Archives
University of Nairobi Library
Daily Nation Archives
Macmillan Library

Mombasa:

Coast Provincial Archives
Research Institute of Swahili Studies of Eastern Africa

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Place (All in Kenya)</u>
Abdul Hussein	Nairobi
Abdul Juma	Nairobi
Abedi Saleh	Nairobi
Adab Rajab	Nairobi
Adam Hussein	Nairobi
Akbar Hussein	Nairobi
Albert James Marafa	Mombasa
Ali Philip Njoro	Mombasa
Amira M. Said	Mombasa
Aswila Rashid	Mombasa
Bakari Mwarabu	Mombasa
Barack Obat Blasto	Nairobi
Ben Okello	Nairobi
Benta Kilonzo	Nairobi
Bob Munro	Nairobi
Christine Kaloki	Nairobi
Clement	Nairobi
Dennis Ooko	Nairobi
Donald Mbotela	Mombasa
Eli Odhiambo Onguku	Nairobi
Elizabeth Okello	Nairobi
Ester Warimu	Nairobi
Eunice Mutoni	Nairobi
Ezekial Arema	Nairobi
Fatma Sheriff Hussein	Mombasa
Francis Achar	Nairobi
Fred Lobo	Nairobi
Frederick Uledi	Mombasa
George Oluoch	Nairobi
Godfrey Muriuki	Nairobi
Grace	Nairobi
Habiba Kaim	Mombasa
Hafswa Hussein Abdullah	Mombasa
Hamid Yusuf Hamid	Mombasa
Hamza Ahmed	Nairobi
Helena Wanjiro Kirari	Nairobi

Hilary Omala	Nairobi
Ibrahim Ali	Nairobi
Ibrahim Amber	Nairobi
Ingrid Ayers	Nairobi
Ismail Ramadan	Nairobi
Jack De Souza	Nairobi
Jackson Ochieno	Mombasa
Jamaldin Yahya	Nairobi
James Mwangi Wenjohi	Nairobi
Jane Kangethe	Nairobi
Jimmy Litumi	Nairobi
John Odhiambo	Nairobi
Joshua Makindi	Nairobi
Juma Kajanda	Nairobi
Kalendar Khan	Mombasa
Kassim Buran	Nairobi
Luka Mbat	Mombasa
Lydian Mutungi	Nairobi
Mary Ramtu	Mombasa
Maurice Otieno	Nairobi
Miraj Sebich	Nairobi
Mohamed Hassan	Nairobi
Mohamed Shalo	Mombasa
Mohamed Swazuri	Nairobi
Mumira Khalid	Mombasa
Mutulu Mwastoia	Mombasa
Naaman Al Bashek	Nairobi
Nadi Hussein	Nairobi
Nassr Ahmed	Mombasa
Osman Amber	Nairobi
Paul Kibwawa	Nairobi
Peter Kuria	Nairobi
Peter Kuria Kirima	Nairobi
Rukia	Nairobi
Said Suleman	Mombasa
Simon Kimani	Nairobi
Simon Ngugi Thiga	Nairobi
Stanley Franco	Nairobi
Steven Muchoki	Nairobi
Ted Ayers	Nairobi
Tom Onyango	Nairobi

Tony Franco
Twalib Swali
Ushi Bakari
Yusuf Diab
Zahid Rajan
Zarina Patel
Zuleya Abdullah

Nairobi
Mombasa
Mombasa
Nairobi
Nairobi
Nairobi
Mombasa

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