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Neoliberal Migrants and 'Bongoland' in Elieshi Lema's *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam*

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Abstract
This article examines how neo-liberal economy in Tanzania can be understood through the framework of neo-liberal migration from rural to urban centres. The article draws its context from the post-liberal policy adoption era in Tanzania and Africa generally in the 1980s that brought about irreversible changes in socioeconomic and political policies. This shift in policies culminated in massive flock of neo-liberal migrants into the city to market their labour power. Thus, this article uses Elieshi Lema's *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam* as a lens through which to understand how literature offers an opportunity to explore various ways in which the city of Dar es salaam is configured and re-configured to respond to the needs of neoliberal migrants. Using Achille Mbembe's idea of crisis in the postcolony, tagged along with close-reading and contextual reading methods, the article argues that *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam* (2011) represents the city of Dar es Salaam as a complex landmark replete with images of disparity between rural and urban post-1990s Tanzania.

Keywords:
Neoliberal migrants, Bongoland, Rural-urban migration, Globalisation
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Introduction

The adoption of liberal policies in most postcolonial African nations has resulted in multiple dynamics including massive socioeconomic shifts, political reform, liberal democratisation, economic liberalisation and globalisation. These economic shifts have come into effect with "different flavours within [them]" (Myres 2010, p. 83) and such changes have mainly pushed the postcolonial nation-states into various crises. For postcolonial Africa, such changes have driven the postcolonial nations into endless socioeconomic challenges such as rural-

urban disparity, corruption, unemployment, civil wars, underdevelopment and violence. Mbembe (1992) dubs this phenomenon "chaotically pluralistic" (p.3) to refer to the diverse socioeconomic instabilities that have accelerated the decline of economic development, hence increasing the pace of abject poverty among people. Mostly, the rural setting continues to be vulnerable to several socioeconomic instabilities like economic poverty, insufficient social services such as water and electric supplies, unemployment, poor healthcare system, poor education facilities, and inadequacy of infrastructural facilities. In response to such challenges, rural dwellers, especially the young people, have been forced to become urban migrants as they search for "material security, emotional satisfaction and social recognition" (Callaci 2017, p.2), which they could not access if they remained in villages. This form of urban perception, especially for the neo-urban migrants, justifies the continued disparity between rural and urban settings. Indeed, in a postcolonial context, and perhaps in all human endeavours, the rural-to-urban migration results from unstable social and economic securities in rural areas. As Stephen Castles (2000) points out, "the most obvious cause of migration is the disparity in levels of income, employment and social well-being between differing areas" (p.153). This form of migration occurs as a forced phenomenon in which the migrants, particularly the young people, feel the urge to exercise their agency in bringing about positive changes at both individual and community levels. Thus, the varied rural instabilities catalyse the young people's desertion of their homes in search of 'greener' pastures in the urban centres. In fact, the ever-present sense of dissatisfaction becomes a push factor for individuals to migrate as they seek to change their fortunes wrought by unfavourable conditions in the countryside.

These urban migrants employ various strategies that, in some ways, deviate from the normalised urban perception. Such improvisation provides an opportunity to understand the dynamics of postcolonial cities. These dynamics emerge not to resist the normalised perception of the city but as alternatives that deviate from the normalised perception to

provide the possibility of co-existence within the socio-economic crises of the city. Therefore, this article adopts Mbembe's conceptualization of postcolonial relations to explore how "crisis in the postcolony" has played an agentive role in ushering in neo-urban migration and how the precariousness of the city has necessitated reconfiguration of the urban space from the perspective of migrants. I further engage Calas (2010) and Callaci's (2017) conceptualisation of the reconfiguration of the city of Dar es Salaam to understand the mutation of the city that emerges in the context of neo-urban migrants' attempt to co-exist within the precarious environment of the city. Therefore, in different contexts, these scholars hold similar views that the reconfiguration of the postcolonial states emerges not as a resistance to the dominant perceptions but rather to bargain for co-existence. It thus explores the representation of Dar es Salaam as a neoliberal city space in which various socio-economic dynamics have ushered in the reconfiguration of the city, in which neo-liberal migrants are depicted as agents of these changes. Such neoliberal migration provides an opportunity to explore the postcolonial condition of the city, whose precariousness has necessitated its reconfiguration, that allows neo-urban migrants to opt for and adopt new strategies for survival in their way of negotiating for co-existence and cope with various forms of urban crises.

Theoretical Orientation

In theorising the postcolonial condition of postcolonial African dynamics, Mbembe (2001) defines postcolonies as "societies recently emerging from the experience of colonisation" (p. 102). Such a postcolony has officiated its world of meanings that are conventionally normalised by the state power into the people's everyday endeavours: "They are officially invested with a surplus of meanings which are not negotiable and which one is officially forbidden to depart from or challenge" (Mbembe 1995, p. 4). These meanings become official as a means to establish conventionality by the state power. They are, therefore, a determinant agent of the relationship between the state and the subjects. The creation of such meanings also creates "avenues for escape" whereby various crises force the postcolonial subjects to deviate from the officiated meanings through the creation of "non-official meanings" that provide space to co-exist

within the crisis. Thus, to co-exist in such crises in this context refers to the various alternatives that deviate from the official meanings but which are normalised by the postcolonial subjects in order to access their needs. Mbembe (1995) uses the two concepts of "the grotesque and the obscene" to express the ways of creativity that the postcolonial subjects impose as a "means of erecting, ratifying or deconstructing" (p.5) particular official discourses created by state powers. In other words, they express the destabilisation of normative perceptions, hence creating non-official meanings that render the possibility of co-existence amidst the socio-economic crisis in the postcolony.

The postcolony further refers to "chaotically pluralistic" sphere in which subjects are vulnerable to crises resulting from such challenges as civil strife, crime, political violence, economic insecurity, military coups, authoritarianism, corruption and bribes. These crises render the postcolonial subjects vulnerable to socioeconomic instabilities that trigger the creation of various survival alternatives that strive to challenge the normalised perceptions. To cope with the crises, the postcolonial subjects "have to have a marked ability to manage not just a single identity for themselves but several, which are flexible enough for them to negotiate as and when required" (Mbembe 1995, pp.5). Thus, the postcolonial subjects are forced to learn to bargain and negotiate the various ways that are enablers of survival within the crisis. Neo-urban migrants treat rural-to-urban migration as an avenue for escaping from various rural instabilities including insufficient social services and amenities such as water and electric supplies, unemployment, unreliable medical facilities, poor education services, and poor infrastructural facilities. These socioeconomic instabilities force young people to look at the urban space as a "pathway [towards] wealth accumulation" (Callaci 2017, p.39), which they could not access in the limited environment of the rural space.

The African urban spaces that emerge amidst socio-economic crises provide the ground to read and understand them as "spaces where the urban inhabitants are reconfiguring and remaking urban worlds, deplo

ying their own forms of urbanity, born out of their historical and material circumstances" (Demissie 2007, p.155). Demissie (2007), further comments that "African urbanity has been accelerated in recent years by the deepening political and social crisis that has engulfed African cities" (p.156). Myres (2011) takes a similar view that "Cities in Africa are…undergoing deep political, economic and social transformation. They are changing in ways that defy usual notions of urbanism. In their dazzling complexity, they challenge most theories of the urban. African cities represent major challenges as well as opportunities" (p.4). These forms of urbanism in postcolonial Africa are born out of various socioeconomic crises that characterise postcolonial nations, particularly the widening economic gap between rural and urban. Rural-urban migration emerges as a response to individuals' desire to exercise their agency in the process of seeking socioeconomic opportunities in cities. The context of postcolonial African urbanism is, therefore, characterised by dynamics that are fuelled by rural-urban migration, in which the inadequacy of social services in rural places forces village dwellers to migrate to cities with the hope of attaining their socioeconomic needs. In this paper, the changing urban dynamics are explored in relation to the various social, economic, and political changes that characterise the African landscape. I therefore, engage Mbembe's (1992, & 2001) theorisation of postcolonial relationship alongside such other scholars as Calas (2010) and Callaci (2017) (as dealt with in the main discussion) to explore the various alternatives that neoliberal migrants employ to express their agency in the negotiation for survival and belonging in the city of Dar es Salaam as depicted in *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam.*

Neo-liberal Migrants and the Renaming of the City of Dar es Salaam

In the Belly of Dar es Salaam highlights the predicament of street children attempting to make ends meet in the challenging economic climate of Dar es Salaam, with a thematic focus on rural-urban migration. The plot of the story is built along five young city migrants namely, Sara (the female protagonist) who migrates from Same in northern Tanzania with her associates: Mansa from Kibaha (Eastern Tanzania), Kaleb from Mtwara (Southern Tanzania) and Ali from Lushoto (Northeast Tanzania). Through these young urban migrants, the narrative captures the socioeconomic

instabilities in postcolonial Tanzania and its associated effects on young people who are in pursuit of social and economic liberty. As young migrants from diverse regions of Tanzania, the characters converge Dar es Salaam believing that the city *can* provide space for them. In this way, the narrative exposes the failure of various economic policies that Tanzania had adopted from independence to the present and how they have socially and economically impacted on the life of the people.

Thus, *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam* depicts the massive migration of young people from villages to Dar es Salaam to communicate failure of development policies in Tanzania. Among the notable economic policies was Ujamaa[1] policies[2] ushered in under the 1967 Arusha declaration by then President Julius Kambarage Nyerere. The "emphasis was on self-reliance, public sector dominance through parastatals, rural development through Ujamaa vijijini [rural socialism], nationalization, etcetera" (Wagao 1990, p.4). Ujamaa project was built in the principles that focused on anti-urban strands, aiming to enhance "agricultural development [and] modernization of rural life" (Callaci2017, p.4). Moreover, rural modernization aimed to control urban citizenship by providing social services equally between rural and urban dwellers. However, the anticipated goals were hardly achieved since "basic consumer goods were

[1] This is a Kiswahili concept for "familyhood". It is a brand of African socialism introduced in the country by Julius Nyerere the president of that particular time. Ujamaa believed in its philosophy and ideologies of self-reliance, nationalization of the major means of economic production as well as its commitment in uplifting the economy of its people. See also John Wakota in "The Making and Remaking of Gender Relations in Tanzanian Fiction" (2014).

[2] Ujamaa aimed to instil socialist values in the country and, thus. address its economic policies from a socialist perspective. The major aim was to bridge the economic gap between the citizens and thus render economic development equally between the people. From this ideological stance, the Ujamaa philosophy contained deeply anti-urban strands that believed in rural socialism which emphasised on agrarian economy. Thus, agricultural development, as it was argued, would make the nation of Tanzania self-sufficient and economically independent from external donors. However, the policy failed miserably as there were hardly significant economic changes. Rural development was left in crisis whereby "urban-rural income differentials increased dramatically, rural based development was ignored, local expertise remained inadequate" hence, forcing rural dwellers to seek refuge in the city. See also Wagao in "Adjustment Policies in Tanzania 1981-1989" (1990).

rarely available, the transportation infrastructures were collapsing, and the government was unable to provide many of the basic health-care and educational services that were promised immediately following the Arusha Declaration" (Kaizer 2008, p.231). Nyerere's successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, adopted the Bretton Woods inspired Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) during the crises of the mid-1980s, with Ujamaa floundering and the country reeling from the adverse effects of the Kagera war it fought with Uganda. Under these SAPs, or austerity measures, Mwinyi "embraced political and liberal economic policies" aimed to uplift the already collapsed economy (Kaizer 2008, p.231). This economic phase also strived to increase the pace of development. Thus, in the rural areas, the agriculture sector was also liberalised as a way to maximize production for both domestic and export use. This, however, could not fully succeed as it faced the "anti-liberalization sentiments [which seemed to] remain strong in Tanzania" (Wineman *et al*.2020, pp.688). The KILIMO KWANZA policy adopted in 2008 under Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete's leadership sought to foster commercial farming, with emphasis on "promoting public-private partnership to support agriculture transformation" (Isinika *et al*.2016, p.53). However, the policy failed to accommodate equally the peasants as there are claims of "some diversion of subsidized fertilizers and vouchers provided to relatively wealthy farmers" (Wineman *et al*.2016, p.688). Despite the various leadership phases to empower the agriculture sector in Tanzania, it appears to face numerous hurdles that majority of small-scale farmers to abandon their farms and become city migrants. Nevertheless, with time, these migrants come to learn that the economic conditions of the city necessitate them to improvise their ways of living to catch up with the urban life reality.

In the Belly of Dar es Salaam captures how different social and economic challenges in rural Tanzania motivate young people to desert their homes and flock to Dar es Salaam "*kutafuta maisha* (to look for life)" (Lema 2011, p.26). Implicitly, the economic conditions in the rural setting are no longer promising to the young people, hence finding themselves with the Hobson's choice of escaping the rural predicaments. Lema uses young

people's migration from the countryside to Dar es Salaam to challenge the failed agriculture economic policies in the countryside[3].

[3] Since independence, Tanzania has identified its economy from an agrarian angle. The emphasis was put on agriculture as the backbone of the nation's economy. For instance, from 1961 up to 1965, the emphasis was put on "maximisation of growth through private enterprise coupled with strict adherence to external and internal balance. During this period, emphasis was put on import-substituting industrialisation, the expansion of cooperatives, marketing boards, and government services, and rural development, particularly in the agricultural commodity sector." This policy hardly yielded much significance for economic development because, during this time, the economic gap between urban elites and rural peasants widened. The failure of this economic development plan led to the adoption of the Arusha Declaration in 1967 and Ujamaa, African brand of Socialism. The aim was to address the development imbalances that were observed in previous years between rural and urban areas. The policies arising from the Arusha Declaration put emphasis on self-reliance, public sector dominance through parastatal rural development, Ujamaa villagization, et cetera. From 1971 up to the mid-1980s, it was an intensification of the Arusha Declaration policies, which were characterised by nationalisation policies. Under the villagization policy, Ujamaa became compulsory. Youths and other urban dwellers that were not in salaried jobs were forced to relocate to Ujamaa villages and establish an agriculture economy (see also Wagao in "Adjustment Policies in Tanzania"). However, Ujamaa policy could not succeed as it faced multiple challenges, including the global oil crises of 1973 and 1979 and droughts and famines that invaded the young nation in 1972, 1980, 1983, and 1984. Furthermore, the Tanzania-Uganda war of 1978–1979 put the economy of the nation in tension. Such crises and many more, such as "the Cold War, discontentment from the rural people, and internal divisions within the party regarding some Ujamaa policies, are the other problems that placed a drag on the implementation of Ujamaa" (Wakota in *The Making and Remaking of Gender Role in Tanzanian Fiction)*, With such economic crises, Ujamaa collapsed, and the nation introduced the Structural Adjustment Programmes in the mid-1980s, in which the nation embraced political and economic liberal policies. Under these policies, agriculture was also liberalised so as to maximise profit for both domestic and export use. However, such policies did not bring more significant changes for peasants since they also faced various challenges, including the anti-liberalisation sentiments that had somehow remained strong in Tanzania (see also Winneman et al., "The changing face of agriculture in Tanzania: Indicators and Transformation")

Ali and Kaleb do not heed their parents' advice of relying on agriculture as they hardly can see its economic gain. The desertion of agriculture by young people in rural areas challenge different agricultural policies formulated by different leaderships in postcolonial Tanzania that they have not yielded significant economic changes to peasants rather than widening the gap between rural and urban places in terms of social and economic development. As Ali and Kaleb quit the subsistence agricultural life and seek economic opportunities in Dar es Salaam, the narrative suggests recasting of Ujamaa socialism from the perspective of migrants, which invites the reader to re-imagine urban perception in the postcolonial Tanzania. In other words, this representation of neoliberal migrants invites the reader to meditate the role of economic instabilities in rural Tanzania and how young people respond to them. For instance, the novella illustrates the failure of Ujamaa policy on agriculture through Kaleb's loss of hope in peasantry life as he can hardly see a viable economic pathway if he opts to remain in the village to invest in agriculture like his father (Lema, 2011, p.79). Thus, the depiction of young people escaping their villages and opting for the city life implies that "rural peasants are left behind or ignored in the socio-economic planning cycles of the country" (Ng'umbi, 2015, pp.61) and thus seek to break the chain of poverty by negotiating economic liberty in urban places.

Thus, the failure of agriculture in the countryside also features in Ali's concern towards the economic condition of farmers in rural Tanzania. Ali hardly sees any benefits in agriculture because the money earned from the farm at the end of the season can only help his father "buy sugar…rice…cooking oil [and] if his father was lucky, he got some money to replace a few corrugated tin roofs for his leaking house" and as result "Ali lost all interest in growing fruits which sold cheap" (Lema 2011, p.42). Thus, the narrative highlights the state's economic crisis in the rural settings where agriculture has lost its allure and economic significance on the part of the peasants because it hardly leads to reasonable profit that could otherwise encourage young people to remain attached to it. The depiction of agriculture crisis in the postcolonial Tanzania intends to challenge the various adopted agricultural policies that envisioned success of a Tanzanian woman/man from peasantry economy, yet with inadequate means to support those engaging in agriculture. The narrative

then traces the failure of agriculture in the rural areas supposedly the backbone of the nation; hence its decline inevitably contributed a great deal to rendering the nation vulnerable to excessive aid dependence from external donors. This external aid dependence by most postcolonial nations has hardly brought changes to the African economy; instead, such aid has "made the poor get poorer and the growth become slower" (Bondareko et al. 2013, p. 92) since they mostly come with strings attached that are unfavourable to the recipient nation.

In the Belly of Dar es Salaam depicts agriculture crisis in the countryside as the main push factor for young people's migration towards cities, particularly those who cannot figure out the relevance of their education to individual economic success. The failure of the state to address clearly its educational policies is exemplified through Kaleb's failure to see the significance of his standard seven certificate if he "remains tied to the land" instead he sees that life in "Dar is much better than" (Lema 2011, p.29) his village life. As Kaleb cannot fathom how to go about with his primary education certificate, the narrative is counter-arguing against the principles of education for self-reliance rooted in the tenets of the Arusha Declaration that mainly aimed to produce Standard VII graduates who could be self-employed especially in the agriculture sector. Using Kaleb, the character in the novel who cannot find out how to utilise his education for his better future, the narrative appears to challenge the system of education that had failed to show a clear pathway on how these graduates could compete in the national economy with only their primary education certificates. Among the primary objectives of Ujamaa towards education for self-reliance was "to [encourage] young people…to develop an egalitarian society" (Cornelli 2011, p.46). As Nyerere in 1977 further put it, education was "to prepare young people for the work they will be called upon to do in the society which exists in Tanzania [that is the] rural society where improvement depended largely upon the effort of the people in agriculture and in village development" (Cornelli 2011, pp. 48 & 52). This suggests that since Ujamaa was a rural-based philosophy, this objective implies that education for self-reliance meant "to prepare young

people to become farmers" (Cornelli 2011, p. 48). Despite the adoption of such objectives in education, it largely remained unattained and it hardly met young people's expectations as "the government was unable to provide many of the basic education services that were promised immediately following the Arusha Declaration" (Kaizer 2008, p.231).

Situating the concept of 'Bongoland' into the narrative, I adopt Calas (2010) and Callaci's (2017) theorisation of Dar es Salaam to read the representation of the city's "mutations [that are] emphasizing the co-existence of two toponyms (that is Dar es Salaam and Bongoland) for a single space" (Calas 2010, p.3). Changes in political economy have necessitated changes in urban perception where neo-urban migrants improvise the city in accordance with their socioeconomic needs, hence the shift in urban perception. The concept of Bongoland is "etymologically connected to a [Ki]Swahili word *bongo* (pl. *ubongo*), which means brain" (Sanga 2013, p.387). The precarious condition of postcolonial African cities such as Dar es Salaam has necessitated its inhabitants to use their creativity and cunning ways as they negotiate survival in the harsh environment of the city. Thus, Bongoland becomes relevant especially when survival in the city demands its inhabitants to forge a number of "tactics that are used [as requisites for survival] by those who dwell in Dar es Salaam and other postcolonial cities in Africa that demonstrate the use of brain" (Sanga 2013, p.387). Such creativity is associated with what Mbembe (1992) treats as "erecting, ratifying and deconstructing" the dominant official discourses (p.5). This creativity emerges in forms of negotiation and bargaining rather than being understood as a means of resistance to the normalised urban perceptions. In other words, the name Bongoland expresses the agency of neoliberal migrants with their urge to co-exist within the socioeconomic crises of Dar es Salaam. In fact, the co-existence of Bongoland along with Dar es Salaam deconstructs the dominant perception about Dar es Salaam city whose name means "the haven of peace". The renaming of Dar es Salaam exemplifies the mutations of postcolonial cities where various socioeconomic challenges have reconfigured various cities in postcolonial Africa to accommodate urban inhabitants on the fringes yet in need to survive with its

metaphorical "belly". For instance, in the Sub-Saharan[4] cities, the urban sojourners renamed their respective cities in accordance with the socioeconomic dynamics that informed their survival. In essence, Bongoland constitutes one of the "East African variant of popular responses to economic reconfiguration [developed by young people and migrants] to describe what it means to live in these changing circumstances" (Callaci 2017, p.181) evident in the urban lingo.

In this regard, the narrative challenges the dominant perception that identifies Dar es Salaam as the 'haven of peace' as its name suggests. Through neo-liberal struggle to survive in Dar es Salaam city morphs into a place of contestation that forces its inhabitants to rely on their brain and intelligence "to manoeuvre in and out, get round or step over things and people…getting around and stepping over [and more importantly learn the various ways one requires in order to acquire the] urban knowledge" (Mbembe 2001, p.147). Contextualising Mbembe's view in relation to *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam* suggests that the narrative depicts Dar es Salaam as a city that requires an individual to have extra 'intelligence' to survive. Such extra intelligence is what deconstructs the dominant meaning of Dar es Salaam, hence transforming its image "from collective faith to individual cunning, from believer to individual, from enduring confidence to future uncertainty" (Calas 2010, p.4). In this regard, the narrative depicts neoliberal characters whose survival in the city is subjective to "individual cunning" of the city. It is a transformation of the city that Lema's *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam*, through the young migrants, attempts to unfold to the reader. In other words, the narrative reflects Bongoland where the socioeconomic dynamics have prompted the mutation and reconfiguration of Dar es Salaam city. Such reconfiguration shifts our understanding of Dar es Salaam to Bongoland where "the postmodern

[4] Bongo suggests a survival space requiring one to use one's his/her brain to negotiate space, "Jua Kali" or "hot sun" is a famous Kenyan popular term adopted by the informal sector implying workers eke out their living while fully exposed to the scotching sun. In Zimbabwe, the economic collapse and unreliable currency forced youth to manoeuvre their ways through "zigzag" (kukiya-kiya) in the absence of a straight and predictable path to economic security. See also Callaci in *Steet Archives* (2017)

individual is alone and has a difficulty surviving the cruel world" (Calas 2010, p.4), hence forced to negotiate survival by inventing new meanings of the city.

In a different context, Callaci (2017) holds a similar view with Calas (2010) regarding the transformation of postcolonial Dar es Salaam as she evaluates urban dynamics by noting that 'Bongoland' challenges Dar es Salaam through its meaning and operations. In conceptualising the two toponyms, Callaci (2017) differentiates Dar es Salaam from Bongoland by delineating that whereas the former emphasises "the shared narrative of the collective future [the latter is] carrying the suggestion that urban-dwellers had to rely on their own creativity and intelligence—their brains—to survive" (pp.180) within the crisis. Calas' (2010) and Callaci's (2017) conceptualisations of Dar es Salaam and Bongoland imply that Lema's *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam* (2011) depicts Dar es Salaam as, first, a precarious space and, second, as an avenue where young neo-liberal migrants look at it with a different gaze in which intelligence, negotiation, creativity and economic improvisation serve as yardsticks towards survival in the city.

Being migrants to the city, neo-urban migrants navigate opportunities with a positive and ambitious spirit as they see the city as "the Basket of Secrets" (Lema 2011, p. 45). As a basket of secrets, the city's economic success is subject to one's creativity and exploitation of the available opportunities that, when compared to the rural setting, are a bit promising. The characters' readiness to negotiate space amidst the city's precarious condition leads us to see the reality that "survival [in the city] is a war that demands different kinds of arms" (Lema 2011, p. 17) and that to become part of the urban mainstream, one ought to get used to the "ways of life in the streets" (Lema 2011, p.16). Such a depiction of the reality of city life provides an opportunity for the reader to come to grips with the urban knowledge that is required for one's survival in a precarious city. Mbembe (2001) argues that the postcolonial subjects, in their varied socio-economic circumstances, find themselves caught in the urge to forge different alternatives for survival that "constitute a determining element of behaviour and urban knowledge" (p. 155), which is useful in confronting urban predicaments. This 'urban knowledge'

becomes relevant to the lives of characters in the narrative as migrants are depicted experimenting with life through the acquired urban knowledge they encounter in the city.

Simone (2004), in different contexts, holds a similar view, especially when he describes the condition of the marginalised urbanites in Johannesburg. He propounds that these individuals have to negotiate survival "according to a finely tuned series of movements and assumptions" (p. 421) that lead them to their socio-economic destinations. When the narrative equates survival in the city with war that requires different kinds of arms, the impression is that the narrative seeks to challenge the previous anti-urban propaganda that dominated the urban discourse. In most postcolonial nations, the city was thought to be a place relevant to particular individuals, especially those who "work in parastatal factories or in salaried government positions" (Callaci 2017, p. 36). The urban migrants that did occupy informal occupations had to rely on different alternatives that made their survival possible. Furthermore, this required knowledge for urban survival disrupts the imagination of the city from collective faith; the city unfolds only to those that are on salaried jobs. It is this urban knowledge that transforms the characters' attitude towards the city as they negotiate space in the city to suit their social and economic needs. For instance, Sara's naïve imagination of Dar es Salaam ceases immediately as she comes to the reality that the city "demanded efforts and struggled to survive" (Lema 2011, p. 16) due to its harsh economic condition. Such a portrayal serves as a reminder that in a neoliberal city, everyone improvises their own ways so as to negotiate survival, belonging, and identity. Thus, as social services remain fragile in the countryside, young people opt for urban life, whose precariousness forces these young migrants to opt for new tactics to make sense of life in the city.

Indeed, the representation of neoliberal Dar es Salaam with its harsh economic conditions provides the groundwork to understand the various socioeconomic forces and their influential role in nurturing young urban migra

nts. The narrative reveals that it is in the city where young urbanites get transformed from innocence to guiltiness and from naivety to rebellion. According to Mbembe and Roitman (1995), "when the urban landscape no longer creates…surprise" (p. 330), it then becomes an avenue of contestation where individuals' survival is subjective to their cunning ways that provide opportunity to fit in the 'tunes' of the city. Leaning on Mbembe and Roitman (1995), the narrative reveals the reality of the lives of young urban sojourners through what they become as they variously attempt to confront their socio-economic conditions. For instance, Ali gets new companions at Kijiweni[5], a place that emblematically stands for communion, connection, and the revival of hopes and the invention of ideas and dreams for young people in an urban setting. Kijiweni makes Ali gradually come to learn the other ways of manipulating life in the city. Keeping in mind what had made him escape rural life, Ali and other young urban inhabitants voluntarily entered the criminal world because they "wanted to breathe" (Lema 2011, p.73). The word 'breath' illuminates the reader's thinking towards the economic predicaments of the city that young people attempt to disrupt through their own improvised ways. Breathing here suggests the chain of economic poverty that neo-urban migrants seek to break and attain their social and economic liberty.

The desire for breathing equates to the desire that young people have to deconstruct the economic chains of poverty that are perceived as obstacles towards social and economic success. Reading the narrative from this angle, it appears that the novel affirms Kaleb's perspective that the level of poverty in the city makes no difference from the one found in villages since everything in the city needs money; even those that are "served for free" in the village need money in the city. It is this "worse kind of poverty" (Lema 2011, p. 79) that forces Ali to become a moral deviant. The narrative here aligns with Mbembe and Roitman's (1995) view that "the physicality of the city reduces people to precarious conditions that affect the very way in which they define themselves" (p. 330); they then opt to improvise the urban space in ways that meet their socioeconomic demands. For instance, Ali's dream as he migrates to Dar es Salaam is "to

[5] Kiswahili slang term for 'jobless corner'

build a brick house, buy a motorcycle, and marry a beautiful and educated woman who does not smell of wood smoke like his mother" (p. 40). This portrayal exemplifies the differences in choices and desires between generations, where the young generation envisions the future differently from their parents and grandparents. It is this difference in dreams and desires between generations that forces young people to deviate from normalised urban perceptions through various alternatives that inform new ways of survival.

This urban reconfiguration exposes how the precarious condition of the city has transformed the urban space such that the "subjects in the postcolony have…to have marked ability to manage no just a single identity for themselves but several which are flexible enough for them to negotiate when required" (Mbembe 1992, pp.5). Thus, being forced by socioeconomic circumstances to negotiate survival in the city, young migrants find themselves pressed to contend with their socioeconomic tension with 'marked ability', that is, a cunning ability to challenge the dominant discourses while seeking co-existence within dominant urban perceptions. Through these precarious conditions the urban landscape is subjected to various reconfiguration in ways that sustain young urbanites' desires. As Mansa chooses to become a 'Machinga'[6] and later turns to "pushcart business" (Lema 2011, p.138), Kaleb opts to sell second-hand (used) clothes on the streets (p.134) and Sara tries her luck at economic success at the sprawling Kariakoo market where she sells cooked food to street-vendors and other market frequenters. On the other hand, Ali takes a different path as he acquires new knowledge of accessing money illegally at Kijiweni.

It is at Kijiweni where Ali acquires what Mbembe (1992) regards as "urban knowledge" of accessing money. This knowledge defies the dominant logic—the logic that holds official perceptions of the city. The deviation from dominant perception of the city creates avenues for new imaginings that emerge to allow the co-existence of individuals with a destabilised

[6]Term used to describe young people who walk the street selling various items.

economic background. Ali's new knowledge of the city leads him to "join a group of night prowlers" (p.74) and later on hold a "gun [that] made [him] POWER-FULL" (p.75). The gun that Ali holds symbolises what Ng'umbi (2015) calls "a waging of war against economic pressure" (p.64) in the mission to outdo the odds of economic crisis in a socially and economically stratified urban environment. As the normalised means for survival diminishes, young people improvise new ways to sustain urban living even if it may endanger their life. A gun in this context suggests young people and migrants' defiance against urban economic hardship. In other words, the gun, besides being a symbol for "economic liberation" (Ng'umbi 2015, p.64) also denotes enforced violence, disharmony, hate, destruction and revenge against postcolonial conditions motivated by betrayal of rulers and elites over the common people. With an image of a gun, the city signifies a brutal urban world that forces young people to become criminals as options for survival become unpredictable. Impliedly, circumstances at times prompt young inhabitants to treat crime as an easy way out of economic doldrums. In this way, Ali gets transformed by the urban economic pressures as he later on learns that being "a drug courier…was a get-rich faster" (Lema 2011, pp.79) oblivious of the inherent risk.

Thus, reading the representation of Ali's transformation, the narrative "reflect(s) [on] the parenting [role] of the city" (Lema 2011, p.80) towards its youngsters. In similar vein, as Ali deviates from the morally upright standards of the society, the narrative demonstrates how various urban economic predicaments expose young people to crimes and violence in the desperate attempt to survive as opportunities become scarce. Similarly, Pieterse (2011) contends that "for most poor youths in many cities of Africa, the city is a highly funnel that delivers them to contexts within which they have very little option other than a life of violence" (p.11). Hence, Ali's manipulation of city life through his criminal deeds suggests his ambition towards desirable city life.

The underprivileged in urban spaces, particularly the youth, face economic turmoil that drives them to deviate from the rule of law to meet their expectations. This desire for social and economic spaces in postcolonial urban settings drives them to seek new ways to access

socioeconomic space. Their criminal behaviour reflects the "underground" ways postcolonial subjects improvise to satiate their desires through illegal actions. Mbembe (2001) opines that in the postcolonial states "everything has gone underground" (p.147) prompting individuals "to manoeuvre" new methods to outshine their undesirable conditions. As such, Ali's shortcut towards economic freedom in the city "reflects the hues and the parenting of the city" (Lema 2011, p.80) for youngsters. It also exemplifies the diverse ways through which the city transforms young people's characters from innocence to criminality.

As the narrative exposes the precarious state of Dar es Salaam, it also reveals how young urban dwellers navigate the city's challenges by forging new alternatives. The portrayal of characters' struggles in neoliberal Dar es Salaam also challenges the notion of the city as a 'Haven of Peace'. Instead, the city demands resilience, boldness, flexibility, creativity, and ambition, hence the name 'Bongoland.' The image of the city projects postcolonial survival as subjective to how one embraces the city's challenges and turns them into opportunities. The representation of neoliberal migrants allows readers to see the city as a place where the future holds meaning through creativity and flexibility. Young migrants treat this urban space as a solution to the social and economic instabilities they flee from in rural settings. Mansa admits to Sara that "the city is kind [and above all] it does not discriminate" (p.17) regardless of the status and backgrounds of its inhabitants. The 'kindness' of the city Mansa's remark hints at denotes the various opportunities that the city can engender to its inhabitants.

This "kindness of the city" encourages neoliberal migrants to see the possibility of economic improvisation capable of fostering economic sustenance. Sara, Mansa, Kaleb and Ali in their varyingly manoeuvre to cave out space for them to negotiate belonging and identity. For instance, Sara is determined to pursue her economic success through informal business. As she walks along the city market of Kariakoo, Sara realises that the type of business she is about to engage with is termed by the city counc

il as "illegal [and therefore, Sara with her opted business are counted as] illegal, one of those to be hunted by the police" (Lema 2011, p.151). The narrator informs the reader about the presence of "a signboard warning in big letters: USIFANYE BIASHARA HAPA: do not do business here" (p.151). This warning and the presence of the police to hunt "illegal people [with their] illegal businesses" (p.151) relates to the state's reluctance to accommodate the informal sector in its economic development strategies. When the state pushes the informal sector to the margins without suggesting the better ways to accommodate informal economy operators, implying that the state's "presentation of young people as the hope of the world has been replaced by representations of youth as dangerous, criminal and decedent" (Diouf 2014, p. 4). This statement exposes how African governments often neglect small business enterprises in their economic planning, hence limiting their capacity to thrive in urban environments. Despite adopting neoliberal policies, these cities still operate within anti-urbanism politics, restricting urban citizenship to some individuals while marginalising multitudes.

The discouragement of the informal sector by governments has led to young people engaging in moral deviancy and criminal activities. The battle against economic pressure in an environment where the informal sector is criminalised pushes young urban dwellers into crime and violence. The absence of an enabling environment for those relying on the informal sector can sometimes initiate crime acts, as seen in Dar es Salaam. In other words, the unavailability of clear economic pathway for young people to engage in informal economy has in turn forced them to become criminals in the "course of struggle to attain urban belonging, [recognition and visibility" (Callaci 2017, pp.169). In the novella, Lema depicts Ali as an individual who ends up engaging in crime acts due to the absence of clear policies that can otherwise enable him to engage in informal economic sector—hence a victim of circumstances.

The various ways improvised by migrants to negotiate survival in the city despite the city council's warnings are significantly challenging the collective faith that defines Dar es Salaam in "the name of rural socialism," meaning that those who are not in the formal sector are illegible to the city and therefore they should rely on agriculture in their rural places.

However, the presence of a multitude of hawkers and vendors in various areas of the city communicates the crisis of agriculture in rural places, which in turn ushers in a massive movement of young people to Dar es Salaam. This situation is heightened by the narrative, especially when Sara finds difficulty procuring an empty space on the grounds of Kariakoo: "Every available space had a kiosk, a table or a four-legged something standing…if the ground was not occupied by something upright, there was a sack or cardboard, a tarpaulin, a mat or any kind of covering spread on the ground on which vegetables or other merchandise was spread" (Lema 2017, p.151). The depiction of the city's population growth as rural life becomes more strained suggests that the characters are challenging the illegalisation of the informal sector through their defiance as city council warnings fall on deaf ears. The narrative suggests that the city council should treat urban youth, particularly those in the informal sector, as a valuable resource and asset, rather than sidelining them as threats. In fact, their being rejected communicates Diouf's (2014), view that the condition of youth in African cities "no longer represents the national priority" (p.4) because of minimal initiatives their respective nations take to include them in socioeconomic development. Yet, their defiance communicates the change in urban perception in which migrants are represented as agents of changes.

In the Belly of Dar es Salaam then invites its readers to interrogate the role of neoliberal migrants in navigating their identity in the urban landscape. The narrative highlights the importance of money in determining one's status and identity in the city. Mansa, a neoliberal migrant, struggles to accumulate enough money to win over Sara's heart, believing that Sara's respect is subjective to the amount of money he gives her. His failure to win her heart leads to frustration and a sense of rejection. He compares himself to Derek Mapolo, Sara's boyfriend, and realises the yawning economic gap between them, which pushes him away from Sara's affection over his love. Mansa's struggle to have "big money" to win Sara's heart reveals the competitive nature of the neoliberal urban landscape, highlighting the identity crisis faced by city migrants. The

narrative reveals that the city as a space for socioeconomic contestations hardly provides space for the marginalized to grab their desires and opportunities.

In this sense, the city is a world where economic success determines one's identity and status. For instance, Ali, after securing some money that he grabs from theft, he confesses to have got what he had longed all his life, admitting, his life is now "very different [and that he] will never leave the city" (Lema 2011, p.79). The comfort that Ali finds in the city rests on his ability to access money and thus his mission to the city is complete.

While Kaleb complains to have found the 'worse kind of poverty in the city' than in a rural setting, Ali sees the city differently. This difference in perspectives communicates the different paths each one has taken in negotiating social and economic space in the city and how each path responds to one's anticipated dreams. Furthermore, Sara realises that it is the economic power that renders "people the title of Sir or Madam" (Lema 2011, p. 133), as she learns that when she is with 'her man'. Derek Mapolo is at the restaurant. Sara learns that "the respect [she] got from the waiters [is just] because" of her man (Lema 2011, p. 124). It is perhaps from this experience that Sara vows to "one-day leave Kigogo" (Lema 2011, p. 110), an area of the city that is home to the urban poor, street children, the unemployed, and criminals. In this context, Sara challenges the inherent urban mentality that confines migrants and the poor in deprived areas of the city. Sara embodies a neo-liberal attitude, as she believes in the possibility of a better future with access to better housing in prime areas of the city such as Oysterbay and Masaki. When Sara vows to leave Kigogo in the future, the narrative invokes the sense of migrants' defiance against the odds of economic discrepancies in urban spaces. Sara's attitude embodies new narratives about urban migrants and their occupancy of marginal spaces. Sara's "T-shirt with words I CAN" (Lema 2011, p. 120) becomes a metaphor for change in urban perception where the word 'I CAN' communicates the message of empowerment, with neoliberal migrants believing in their ability, flexibility, and intelligence to exploit the available opportunities, hence reinventing their identity. Consequently, Sara and other characters stabilise in the city and become economically independent. In so doing, the narrative disrupts the

previous anti-urban propaganda in which migrants were labelled as people escaping rural responsibilities and becoming a jobless lot in the city.

The novella also provides an opportunity for readers to meditate on the complex socio-economic relations that inform the postcolonial urban landscape. In so doing, the narrative reveals the complexities of the urban world, whose inhabitants get labels based on their socioeconomic statuses, hence making the city severely segmented world. At Kijiweni, Ali learns about the city as a 'basket of secrets' comprising several worlds, with the urban poor belonging to "the innermost chamber of the basket, the one at the bottom, present but inconspicuous" (Lema 2011, p. 45), hence alluding to Calas's (2010) observation that in a neo-liberal world, the postmodern individual is left alone to compete and survive the harsh economic environment. Being at the bottom of the pile also challenges the state's gross negligence of marginalised groups that places the deprived urban world of the poor and street children in what Simone (2004) refers to as "the inner city [that is characterised by] a complex geography that residents must navigate according to a finely tuned series of movements and assumptions" (pp. 421–421). The narrative exposes the postcolonial conditions of postcolonial subjects, particularly those in Dar es Salaam's inner city, which is plagued by poverty and crime. As a neoliberal city, Dar es Salaam is "open to habitation of all kinds" (Simone 2004, p. 411) and yet, paradoxically, lacks clear economic policies to support the deprived segment of the urban dwellers. This lack of policies, particularly for urban youths and the poor, reflects Diouf's (2014) concern about the condition of young people in African cities, who are "losing the prestigious status that nationalism gave them [since they are no longer a reflection of] national priority" (p. 4). With limited avenues towards economic independence, young people end up becoming moral deviants; this lack of recognition, particularly in the national political economy, causing a multiplier effect.

The precariousness of the inner city is then intensified through the geogr

aphical complexities that Kigogo (translated as log) exemplifies. The narrator likens Kigogo (log) with "rot and chaos…a rotten *gogo* was a haven for worms and in there was also chaos. Chaos came from the many living creatures which invaded the log, chewing and stinging to get little scraps from it" (108). This description of the city space invokes the conditions of most urban migrants and the reality of life they live. Characteristically, a log is detached from a stem can either rot or germinate. Equating Kigogo to a rotten log suggests the decadence of the city with most of the young men living in the mainly slum area "thieves and drug addicts" (Lema 2011, p.108)**.** In this regard, Lema's *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam* warns the state against its failure to address the plight of street children through the portrayal of children and youths who, under dire socioeconomic circumstances, become moral deviants.

Being deprived of various social services, Kigogo becomes "the antithesis of the [ideal] world" (Lema 2011, p.110) devoid of vital basic social services.

The narrative portrays Kigogo as a place that is alienated from better social services, with its predominantly poor population living in dire straits. The area is marked by run-down infrastructure, poor housing, and activities that highlight the poverty level. The narrator complains about the state's negligence in addressing these marginalised areas, as there are fewer initiatives to intervene. The only billboard in Kigogo is a conspicuous sign warning about HIV/AIDS, highlighting the economic distress of the majority and their high risk of exposure to dangerous diseases. This portrayal of Kigogo reveals spatial inequalities in postcolonial urban areas and the failure of postcolonial national governments to provide equal social services. The narrative also highlights the irony of Kigogo's poor infrastructure compared to other parts of the city makes it appear immune to beauty: "Was Kigogo immune to beauty?" (Lema 2011, p. 112). The narrator further negatively describes: "Kigogo looked like geography of dead ends, stagnant pools and open drainages…Kigogo was a forgotten island, without a network of roads, sewage or water. Even the cars had run away from Kigogo. Where would they go with so many dead ends?" (Lema 2011, pp.111-112).

Kigogo, a forgotten 'island' with tattered infrastructure, represents the postcolonial condition of African cities where less privileged areas lack essential social services. The absence of basic services like drainage systems and clean water exposes inhabitants to infectious diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea, leading to many deaths. Implicitly, the narratives presents this postcolonial African city as one still perpetuating colonial residential segregation, including neglecting the development of poor areas where the marginalised and downtrodden live.

Conclusion

Generally, *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam* demonstrates how the failure of various socioeconomic policies in the countryside has triggered massive rural-to-urban migration of individuals seeking reprieve and relief in the city in postcolonial Tanzania. When in Dar es Salaam, these characters scavenge for means to survive in the city whose space can at times be unforgiving. Their cumulative experiences invite us to meditate on how the urban economic landscape and associated predicaments have necessitated the reconfiguration of city by neoliberal migrants. The narrative appears to suggest that as postcolonial states fail to equally create inclusive and accommodative grounds for all its citizens, it forces those at the fringes of the economy to deviate from the officiated perceptions of the city as they nevertheless must negotiate belonging within the crisis. The reconfiguration of Dar es Salaam to 'Bongoland' that we learn through the characters' transformations and actions seem to be "emphasising the co-existence of two toponyms for a single space" (Calas 2010, p.1). Such emphasis signals the need for postcolonial state to re-work its various socioeconomic policies to accommodate urban dwellers regardless of their backgrounds.

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