Generating hope through activity: Resilience among urban refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the way Somali refugees cope with their situation under uncertain circumstances in their transit country, more particularly, the Eastleigh Estate, Nairobi, Kenya, where they wait for resettlement to a third country in a process that normally takes years of waiting with no guarantee of a positive outcome. The spatial reality of their displacement in Eastleigh was characterized by socio-economic hardship, a sense of illegitimate stay, and the uncertainty of their chances for resettlement. During their prolonged wait for resettlement, the refugees generated hope by engaging in a search for normality through making homes, social activities, and religious practices. Displacement meant not only crisis and hopelessness; it could also entail potentiality and openings for social transformation. In an environment that did not allow much space for agency, the refugees in Eastleigh, Nairobi, fostered hope through activity, collectiveness, and building for the future.

Keywords: displacement, Eastleigh, hope, transit, urban refugees

About the author

Lena Johansson completed her MA in Cultural Anthropology in 2018 at Uppsala University, Sweden. Her main research interests are migration and forced displacement.
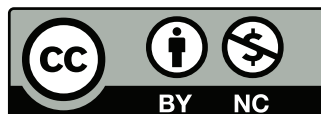
Introduction

Migration has shaped the Eastleigh Estate in Nairobi, Kenya, through history. Already in the late 18th century Somali migrants settled in the area that was to become Eastleigh, in the south of Nairobi and relatively close to the business center of the town. During the 1970s and 1980s, large numbers of asylum seekers came to Kenya from Somalia, many of whom were highly educated and experienced in business and trade. The Somali migrant and refugee population, through its trade networks, made Eastleigh into an area of commerce of major significance in East Africa, even globally (Carrier 2016, 33-37). A great number of Somali refugees arrived in Kenya after the civil war broke out in 1991, passing through the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in northern Kenya, or arriving directly to Eastleigh. As a consequence, since the 1990s, Nairobi has hosted some of the largest urban refugee communities in Africa, functioning also as an important transit point. According to a 2012 report by the Danish Refugee Council and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), asylum seekers and refugees are surprisingly independent and well integrated into the socio-economic life of Nairobi. Eastleigh Estate is, even otherwise, considered as a suitable area for refugees due to the opportunities for economic activities it provides. In addition, according to the report, Eastleigh refugees are characterized by "incredible resilience and ability to survive in the face of significant odds" (United Nations High Commissioner 2012, 7). Contributing to the refugees' high levels of independence are seen to be the opportunities the location offers to engage in the informal sector of sales and trade.

In this article I explore everyday life and livelihoods of the refugees in Eastleigh, suggesting that by examining hope as disparate social practices we may obtain a better understanding of resilience as a spatial-temporal phenomenon. My discussion draws upon materials collected on a group of Somali refugees, asylum seekers, and community workers in Eastleigh, Nairobi, over a two-month period in 2017. The refugee group consisted of single men and women as well as mothers with children who all had applied or planned to apply for resettlement. They had limited opportunities to find livelihoods, and the experience of severe insecurity was part of their everyday life. Meanwhile, they endured long wait times for their interviews, refugee status determination, identification cards, and final resettlement decisions. Of central interest to this chapter is how hope plays out in this state of protracted spatial and temporal displacement. How did the refugees create and maintain hope despite their small chances to resettlement to a third country and their long wait for their transit visas? For the research, 50 semi-structured interviews, five walk-along interviews, and eight occasions of participant observation were conducted. The participants were recruited through a Kenyan Somali journalist Ahmed Kassim Abdi, who, besides providing me with access to Eastleigh community members and their homes, also acted as an interpreter for the interviews.

Inspired by Malkki's notion of refugeeness as a "process of becoming" (Malkki 1995, 114), the first part of the article investigates the diverse experiences of displacement among Somali refugees in Eastleigh, focusing on the shared condition of building for the future while being stuck in the displacement. The way the refugees inhabited this duality between building a life in the present and hoping for a future elsewhere is examined, with focus on the role of livelihood, daily household activities, and collectiveness in hope-creation and maintenance in people's everyday lives. The way that possibilities to initiate activities and activities from a familiar past were essential for people's sense of normality, including hope, is looked at. Memories from the homeland, feelings of not belonging in Eastleigh, and hopes for a better future in some Western country had a prominent place in this regard

in the interviews. In considering how Somali refugees in Eastleigh engaged with their current physical place and their past, present, and future, this article sheds light on hope as a social practice as entangled in people's daily life in displacement.

Refugeeness, its documentation and processes

A refugee is a person who has crossed an international border in search for safety from war, violence, conflict, or persecution. By *refugeeness*, I refer both to identity-connected traits and to the lived experience of refugees. According to Malkki (1995, 114), refugeeness is a "process of becoming" and a transformation – not just the experience of fleeing and crossing a border, in other words. In order to understand refugees' experiences of refugeeness, their ways of relating to their current place of residence and the future, and the way these experiences and ways are negotiated by refugees as well as "the institutions whose mandate they are" (Malkki 2002, 356), it is also necessary to understand the more formal processes of application for, and determination of, refugee status and resettlement. Most of the refugees in Eastleigh in this study had received their refugee mandate and, at the time of their interviews, were busy waiting for the decision on their resettlement in a third country. In Kenya just as elsewhere, those seeking shelter need, upon arrival, to apply for asylum, and they are considered asylum seekers until their claim for refugee status has been granted. For those arriving in Kenya, the Governmental Refugee Affairs Secretariat is the institution responsible for the co-ordination and management of the applications and their processing. It registers the asylum seekers, interviews them, and conducts the refugee status determination. Applications can be made in Nairobi and at the UNHCR offices in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, established in the early 1990s to accommodate refugees from Somalia, Su-

dan, Ethiopia, and the Great Lakes countries (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi). Dadaab is located in north-eastern Kenya, 100 kilometres from the country's border with Somalia, and it is the largest refugee camp in the world, holding an estimated 217,108 refugees (United Nations High Commissioner 2019). Of the 255,754 refugees and asylum seekers of Somali origin in Kenya in 2019, 19,605 lived in Nairobi (United Nations High Commissioner 2019). Opportunities for resettlement are few, and they are normally granted to those most vulnerable in the following applicant categories: women, children, and adolescents at risk; survivors of torture and violence; individual seeking family reunification; those with legal and physical protection needs and medical needs; and those without foreseeable, durable alternative solutions. The process for resettlement includes several interviews, with the UNHCR making the final decision. Once the process is completed in Kenya, the case is referred to the country of resettlement for final approval, although the process can be halted at any stage.

Experiences of refugeeness

Even faced with standardized policies and formal processes affecting all displaced persons alike, there was great variety in the ways life in displacement manifested itself for, and was negotiated by, the Somali refugees in this study. This was so through all the different stages of their resettlement process. The waiting periods leading up to the resettlement decisions were experienced as a temporal vacuum, while parallel to that state of standstill, this group of refugees kept building for a future. Refugeeness, for them, was then not only about survival; it was also, and primarily, a process of becoming someone and leaving the status of refugee behind. Turner's (2016, 38) notion of "mobile projects" is useful in this context, suggesting that emplacement, as opposed to displacement, does not necessarily

include "putting down roots and belonging to a place but instead can be perceived as taking control over life projects." Such mobile life projects can involve a certain degree of creating a home despite not having a desire to stay permanently.

The Somali refugees who shared their stories with me in Eastleigh had experienced sudden, unplanned, dramatic departures, leaving them with traumatic memories of separation and lost family members and homes. Upon their arrival in Eastleigh, one of their biggest concerns after finding a roof over their head was lack of safety and absence of protective institutions in their new environment. According to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, refugees have a right to protection, public relief and assistance, freedom of movement within the territory, as well as identity and travel documents (United Nations High Commissioner 2019). It was a common experience not to feel protected or welcomed by the Kenyan government. One's experience of refugeeness, however, varied depending on one's personal background, capacities, life goals, and current stage in the resettlement process. Farhan, for example, who was 19 years old when he and his neighbours arrived in Eastleigh in 2009, had expected a quick transfer to a third country but was still, at the time of this research, waiting for his resettlement decision. When first arriving in Dadaab, he experienced life in the camp as very difficult, leading him to run away to Eastleigh. Farhan describes his current situation:

> *I never expect that I'll be here for another day… From the government, I expect nothing. You're a refugee… You're not a Kenyan. A refugee is a bad word. It means you are displaced…. Nobody wants to be called a refugee. I'm thinking, whatever happens, that's God's plan, and I believe that, one day, I'll be able to leave this refugee tag behind.*

The label "refugee" was something Farhan did not want. He saw what in this article I term refugeeness as a temporary state that he would eventually leave behind, along with Eastleigh and the entire country Kenya. This state of continuously entertaining a hope of something that lies in an uncertain future was central to the Somali refugees' experience of migration and refugeeness itself – both social being and becoming (cf. Vigh 2009, 93). Looking at 'being' and 'becoming,' in turn, makes it possible to "illuminate migration through a focus that links social contexts and imaginaries to individual motivations and trajectories" (Vigh 2009, 93). The reason why Farhan wanted the refugee status was that it would enable him to continue his life trajectory. The refugee status was both liberating and imprisoning. For him, the segregated, stigmatizing status of a refugee without equal legal rights with Kenyan citizens was connected to Eastleigh as a place and had an imagined, unknown expiration date.

Farhiya, born in 1991, came to Eastleigh in August 2016, primarily because her father sought to force her to marry for a second time to a man that she had already once divorced due to maltreatment. A female relative in Eastleigh sent her money for transportation, and she came by truck from a border-crossing point. At the time of this research, she had not yet succeeded in securing an appointment to apply for a refugee mandate. As she herself told of her situation:

> *My expectation was that I was going to be safe, but I don't have any documents, and I can't go out. If I get a mandate, [refugee status] I'l be like the others. Now I am below them; I'm just a housemaid. If I had better work, I would have a better life…. I don't want to go back…. I'm worried that I will be forced to marry someone again. He [ex-husband] used to beat me. We had fights. Here I'm safer.*

Also Farhiya desired the refugee status, as she

needed to be officially recognized as a refugee to be able to move forward in her resettlement process and move without restrictions in Eastleigh. Such a recognition would have also given her a desirable position in the broader refugee group. Her status was connected to the refugee status and, as she saw it, to the activities she performed. As long as she had no written appointment with the UNHCR and no ID-papers to show, she could risk being stopped and questioned by the police, compelled to pay bribes or arrested. Her refugeeness illustrated a paradox typical of the refugee condition: that of being unsafe and safe at the same time. Being an asylum seeker in Eastleigh had opened up the possibility for her to apply for refugee status which kept her safe from having to return to a future she did not desire. Her hope lay in managing the first step of becoming recognized as a refugee.

For Somali refugees in transit, the feeling of being caught in a standstill was closely linked to their refugeeness and the impossibility of crossing borders legally. Somalian passports are not recognized by Kenya and most countries in the world, as Somalia is not seen as a legitimate state. Indeed, "being citizens of a failed state diminishes the legitimacy of Somalis' travel documentation and renders their citizenship inflexible" (Abdi 2015, 60). Their lack of recognized passports severely limited their freedom of movement, reinforcing their sense of being stuck. The Somali refugees interviewed for this study directed their hope at obtaining a refugee status, the next step in a process toward winning the kind of legitimacy that resettlement brings. Resettlement had a significant association with passports, which, in turn, had a significant association with freedom of movement.

Farhan and Farhiya were at different stages of the process, which partly explains why their experiences of being a refugee differed. What was common to them both, however, was a certain duality of that experience. While neither one of them desired refugeeness, they nevertheless looked forward yearningly to

the refugee status that would help them move forward in their resettlement process. Farhan and Farhiya nevertheless found themselves caught within a standstill, both spatially and temporally, waiting for the next stage in the process to unfold. What they both showed was that refugeeness is not only about survival, but also agency: about taking action in the hope of a better future and a new beginning in a new place. In the next section, we look at the struggle for livelihood and the difficulties in building a relationship to the place that characterized also the experience of refugeeness of the Somali participants in this study.

Finding ways to earn a living

Many women among the interviewed refugees reported themselves facing hardships and limited opportunities to earn money for rent and food. Being urban refugees they hardly receive any economical support, not from the government nor from aid organizations. Their opportunities to actively earn a living were restricted, and they expressed frustration at not being allowed to engage in activities to that end that they found within their reach. In this section, especially the experiences of female refugees are highlighted in looking at how finding ways to work and earn a living were essential during displacement, in order for the refugees to not only survive but also become part of a place. Many women refuges in this study spoke of how they had lost their hope in that struggle. This lost hope of theirs was closely connected to the difficulties they encountered while looking for ways to earn a living, difficulties that in turn were connected to the socio-economic and socio-political context.

One way to make a living in Eastleigh was to work as hawkers or street vendors. These were most active at night-time, since they were not welcomed by shop owners protecting their businesses. The city council often cracked down on hawkers. Selling in the streets was illegal, and sellers were only allowed in

designated marketplaces. For the women in this study, however, selling at a marketplace was not an option since they could not pay the fees involved. Selling in the streets, on the other hand, involved risks arising from state regulations and patrolling city council guards. Restrictive government policies on sales and work thus in many aspects excluded refugees from the economics and trade for which Eastleigh was known. Some refugees earned their daily bread by working as housemaids or selling tea and milk in the streets. It was particular often women vendors who challenged the municipal restrictions, given that they needed money to pay for food and the rent and provide for their children. A fragile socio-economic situation and lack of safety were everyday reality for women refugees, contributing to their vulnerability. Moreover, it was not easy for Somali women in Eastleigh to find persons they could trust, and thus they tended to suffer from lack of sufficient social networks to provide them with opportunities for new, more reliable sources of income.

Maryam, one of the women in this study, had married in Kismayo, Somalia, where she gave birth to three children. After she had divorced her abusive husband, she left with her children for the Ifo refugee camp in Kenya (today part of Dadaab), where they stayed for 15 days before leaving for Eastleigh. After arriving there, they lived with relatives for one month, managing, by the time of these interviews, to nonetheless rent a room of her own in a shared apartment, paying for it from her income as a mobile tea vendor. All the same, she was not satisfied with the options she had found in Eastleigh, reporting that:

> *I'm looking forward to having a good life because it is not possible here. What can you do to have a good life here? [There are] no possibilities for that. I've been working as tea vendor for seven years now. I don't see any way forward.*

As Maryam clearly states in this quote, she did not see any future for herself and her children in Eastleigh. The difficulty of finding work and lack of funds limited her ability to take initiative and move forward. With street sales prohibited, moreover, her only available means of supporting herself and her children entailed necessary risks. The presence around her of her fellow countrywomen was of not much help in these regards, either. As Maryam described her relationships with other saleswomen from Somalia:

> *Every day, I meet other women at the market. What do we talk about? We talk about business. We don't talk about Somalia. We don't talk about private things. My problem is my problem, and nobody will help me. It's our culture, a question about trust and lack of trust. It's like that not only here; it's like that also in Somalia.*

When selling her tea, Maryam constantly changed for security reasons, and the people surrounding her varied accordingly. This may have been one factor explaining the relatively limited networks that Maryam, just like some others like her, had. The socio-economic environment did not allow Maryam space to exercise agency or to go forward and develop her business. Her sales activity was, however, not only about survival, but also about building for a future. As Behrends (cited in Hammar 2014, 37) has noted, "[f]ocusing on economic practices to secure livelihoods also links up with the intention on building a better future as a strong compelling factor for those dealing with an uncertain and disrupted present." Constantly struggling to make ends meet, Maryam at the same time nurtured hope of a good life somewhere else. She did not see herself as having opportunities to act or take initiative to develop new activities. Her options were limited in Eastleigh, and she felt frustrated at not even being allowed to seize the opportunities actually within her reach.

Fatuma, born in 1950, had fled the havoc

in Somalia brought by the invading Ethiopian troops in 2007. After arriving in Kenya with her 17-year-old son, her life had been rather similar to that of Maryam's. As she described it:

> *When I came here, I first stayed with a relative. I was selling milk and cereals.... Six months ago I stopped doing that because the city council officers kept chasing me..... My situation [is] not so good now... I have hypertension and high blood sugar. Sometimes my uncle takes me to the hospital when I feel sick. Now he is in the UK. My son is a street vendor.... He sells water. Sometimes he makes some money, sometimes not. If I get a chance, I want to leave this place, for medical reasons and to get a better life.*

Fatuma added that her son was sometimes arrested when he could not pay bribes to the police. Despite their very long wait for their resettlement to be processed, she still saw their stay as temporary. Because of the state regulations not allowing them to sell in the streets, and the corrupt police, Maryam, Fatuma, and the latter's son could not feel themselves as part of the place, nor did they consider life in Eastleigh as being good to them. Finding ways to financially support oneself and one's children was difficult, and when one thought one had found a solution, it was often made impossible by the local police checking licenses and permits.

In addition to negatively affecting Fatuma's earnings and material quality of life, the interruption by the city council and the police affected Fatuma's ability to exercise her own agency. As Jackson (2013, 17) has observed, human beings desire not only to create a world where they can find a sense of belonging and recognition, but also "to possess a sense of themselves as actors and initiators." For developing a personal relationship to the new place and a sense of home, activi-

ties are thus of significance. To emphasize just this dimension, Brun and Fábos have spoken of 'agency-in-waiting' when discussing the "quotidian acts, social practices and meaning making" involved in such activities (Brun and Fábos 2015, 12). To become a part of a place, its inhabitants need to take up positions and contribute, through their own activities, to the closing of "the gap between person and place" (Ingold 2011, 168). For Maryam and Fatuma, this closing of the gap between their person and the place was prevented by the socio-political context of the host state, negatively affecting their relationship to the place. With the government doing its best to prevent the two from engaging in activities allowing them to earn themselves and their children a living, the women's hopes of making a good life in their present place were repeatedly frustrated by the host state. However, not all hope was lost, given its character as something defined by the simultaneous potentiality and uncertainty of the future (Miyazaki 2010, 250). The anticipation of a better life somewhere else locates the hope in a "no longer" (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 379, Miyazaki, 2006) an end to the struggles of finding ways to make a living and ways to find a home. In this situation, routines and daily practices were activities that the participants in this study felt they were able to control, presenting them as practices as hope.

Hope as a practice

My interlocutors had limited possibilities to earn a livelihood through formal employment. Accordingly, other everyday routines and practices became essential for them in their effort to gain a sense of control over their mobile life projects. What I suggest is that the seemingly quotidian activities they engaged in as a result can shed light on the value connected to hope, helping us to understand hope as a practice. As Mattingly and Jensen (2015) have argued, hope is a practice rather than an emotion, prompting people in despair to try to

create spaces of hope based on personal and social transformation (Liisberg, Pedersen, and Dalsgård 2015, 39). The reality that refugees face involves many difficulties, but in the context of hope reality can be explored "as a space of possibility" (Mattingly and Jensen 2015, 53). Some of the participants in this research were busy actively building their social networks, initiating and participating in social activities and building a sense of connection to the place.

The stories of Mustafa, Khadija, and Amina highlight how everyday routines and seemingly mundane activities helped one create a sense of home and an attachment to the place. Mustafa, born 1982, and his uncle had come to Dadaab in 2008. When the latter resettled in the United States, Mustafa left for Eastleigh. Mustafa's major leisure activity and interest in Somalia had been football. In Eastleigh, he regularly played football with a team with players from different nationalities. As he himself described it, doing that gave him "a sense of togetherness and peace." On the football field and when engage in other similar activities, he and his friends were on a relatively equal footing, regardless of their background. There, Mustafa became somebody in relation to others, which gave him a sense of belonging to the place and created a relationship between the place and himself as a person.

Mustafa's sense of belonging to the place here arose not from the place itself but from the activities he carried out in it (cf. Jackson 1995, 148). Football, for him, was a space for new becoming and a sense of place: "concentrated activity is experienced as a quickened relationship between oneself and whatever one works upon" (Jackson 1995, 148). Participating in social activities and developing routines and habits are actions that initiate social transformation. In this sense, such activities formed also for Mustafa pockets of hope and relief. This was particularly pronounced in Mustafa's relation to religious practice. A Muslim, Mustafa was rather rigorous about his religion: "I love my religion. I pray five

times a day. It gives me strength, and it is like an encouraging friend." Moreover, Mustafa's wanted to follow the values embedded in his religion, values that told him how to be a good person. In this study, the mosque and the Quran school were generally of high importance to participants. The spaces for religious practice turned Eastleigh into a more familiar place, and not only because they made it into a space for religious activity, but also because it thereby became known and recognizable.

Praying was an important practice for the Somali refugees in this study. All of them prayed at least once a day. As Khadija, born 1991, described it, praying could "highlight a boring day and bring feelings of happiness." When reading the Quran, Khadija's "stress went away," leaving her "feeling happy." According to her own testimony, Khadija prayed to become a good person and to have a good life. Hope in connections like this, however, should not only be understood as a forward-looking stance, but also as a value-making process anchored in concrete practices (Sliwinski 2012, 384). For both Khadija and Mustafa, daily prayers brought a certain value in helping them become good persons and in creating space for them for moments of relief and well-being.

Amina, for her part, who had arrived 2007 directly in Eastleigh with her mother, sister, and nephew, had derived calm from daily activities such as reading, house cleaning, and cooking. "Life is better now," she stated, comparing her present situation to the time of her arrival when she had felt lost and confused and was still unfamiliar with the place. At that time, there had been urgent practical matters that she needed to attend to full time, such as finding an accommodation, creating necessary social contacts, registering at the UNHCR, and, as she did not have any relatives in Eastleigh, she had to extend her search for all that to the entire large Somali community in the area. Having relatives would have simplified life for her in both regards, in helping her to more easily find both practical and emotional

support. Amina's mother Hawa rigorously followed the routine of going to *madrasa* on not only Sundays, but also some weekdays, besides attending to traditional Somali celebrations and festivities. As she, Hawa, reported with a big, bright smile, she and her daughters partook in the celebration of all weddings and birthdays in the Somali community, doing that whenever opportunity arose. Sometimes their Kenyan neighbours invited them to join their festivities as well. While underneath such everyday routines and practices there loomed great uncertainty over the future, they could nonetheless carry Amina and Hawa forward. The predictability of daily routines was one important factor helping one develop some sense of normality. Striving for the regularity of a normal day-to-day life even in surroundings not resembling one's permanent home, Amina and Hawa tried to make sense of their lives and create some predictability amidst all uncertainty. At the individual level, such sense of normality was important in enabling one to build a connection to the place. In addition, imaginings of a better future as part of the global diaspora appeared to be valuable to hope as a social collective practice, something that I will look at more closely in the next section.

Transnational networks

The Somali migrant and refugee community in Eastleigh was highly interconnected with and dependent upon family members in Somalia and members of the Somali diaspora in other parts of the world. The connections in question took the form mainly of business relationships, money transfers, and social media contacts. This transnational network fed refugees' dreams about life elsewhere, the imagined hope as a collective practice and unifying in its collective form.

Paid work and sales were not the only means available for Somali refugees to financially support themselves. Some of the partici-pants in this study were directly supported by more established relatives and family members in Eastleigh or friends and relatives in other diaspora communities. The information on their need for assistance these funders received through their broad networks of international contacts. Material links between Eastleigh, camps in northern Kenya, and hometowns in Somalia enabled trade and economic transactions among relatives and compatriots. One relatively common way for Somali refugees to receive support was through the *hawala* money transfer system. *Hawala*, meaning "transfer" or "trust," is an informal money transfer system where money is transmitted from the sender to the receiver through *hawala* brokers located all over the world. Most often there is some kind of personal connection such as a kinship relation between the sender and the receiver, although it is not necessary. The system is very informal, and credits without interests can also be remitted. Community leader Che, a Somali refugee who arrived in Eastleigh in the late 1990s, described the *hawala* system as follows:

> *It is about money transfers based on trust. There can be bonds like kinship between the people using the system, but friendship is more important... It is a beautiful story, and it helps maintain unity among Somalis. Somalis like to surprise you, and they want to show gratitude.*

Indeed, several interviewees brought up the significance of unity, in different contexts. The global Somali diaspora is committed to supporting fellow nationals in need, sometimes motivated also by the ambitions of the money sender to succeed in and develop his business. Receiving financial support in the form of direct payments from husbands, relatives, and friends in the diaspora was common among Somali refugees in Eastleigh as well. Amina, her mother Hawa, her sister, and her nephew stayed with people from the Somali community until they had to start paying rent. They

went to Kakuma in 2008 and returned to Eastleigh 2010 due to Hawa's deteriorating health condition. Since then, they have been living in a rented apartment with support through the *hawala* system from a relative located in South Africa. Even as Amina and Hawa had no savings or close relatives in Eastleigh, they could benefit from social capital in the form of helpful compatriots.

The *hawala* remittance system provided for Somali refugees in Eastleigh is a source for building a future and thus for hope. At the same time, however, transnational contacts made the inequality more visible. Frustrations arose when dreams could not be realized or when even their fulfilment failed to bring about the hoped-for solutions. Some succeeded with their resettlement dream, some not. In the camps the Somali word *buufis* was commonly used to refer to those among them dreaming about resettlement who are obsessed by the desire to be somewhere else (Horst 2006, 143). Indeed, a certain duality can be observed in these dreams and images: "on the one hand, images cannot be satisfied and lead to frustrations about global inequality. But on the other hand, *buufis* as a form of collective imagination provides hope in a quite hopeless situation" (Horst 2006, 152). Imaginings of a better future somewhere else were a constant theme in the interviews, emerging from the uncertainty of the displacement and the refugees' uncontrollable, transitory state. If we cannot control our world, we "take refuge in imagination" (Jackson 1995, 124). For the participants in this research, this refuge consisted in continuing on their life trajectory.

Many of my interviewees had access to the Internet and different mass media as well as to friends and family overseas, which then shaped their collective picture of a future place in which to live. The same trend of mass media contributing to changing imaginations has been observed even more broadly in recent decades. Appadurai (1996) has even gone on to claim mass media to have made imagination a collective social fact, instead of a private individual experience. Media presents images of others' lives and a rich, ever-changing store of possible lives to be lived (Appadurai, cited in Horst 2006, 151). Such images also shaped refugees' imaginations of a better future in some Western country in this study. In Eastleigh, the prospects of being able to successfully make it elsewhere were made highly tangible and apparently more available when Somalis living in Western countries came to visit relatives and look for business opportunities, often showing off their affluence and power within this global diaspora community.

For the Eastleigh Somalis, the links one had to those living back home and elsewhere in the global diaspora were as important as one's local contacts. These links alleviated one's feelings of dislocation and disconnection between self and the world. Also, and perhaps especially, displaced people need to know that they can shape their world, at least to a certain extent, and a sense of membership in different communities often helps one to better balance the relationship between self and the world. Amina and Hawa belonged to different communities: various groups of relatives living in other countries, parts of the Somali community in Eastleigh, various friends, housemates, and neighbours. As Hawa spoke of the significance of even the last-mentioned in the life of a refugee, "We invite Kenyans to our feasts, and last Christmas we were invited to our Kenyan neighbours for their Christmas party."

Unity, *midnimo,* was mentioned in many of the interviews and in different contexts. As Hawa reported: "Our culture is based on Islam, and our culture is to forgive and not to insult anybody…. As our religion tells us, we need to be in our unit, but without hostility." According to Kleist and Jansen the conception of hope is social and based on collective visions of a meaningful life (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 382). As part of communities of the above-noted kind, and through social activities, Somali refugees in Eastleigh nurtured collective visions of the future, visions that helped them

cope with their unwelcoming and unsafe environment. In their collectivity, resilience was built and "invoked as a necessary means to be able to 'realize' and get a share of societal hope" (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 384). What for Hage emerges as "societal hope" constitutes a particular form of social hope, namely, collective visions of "meaningful life and dignified social life" within a given society (Hage cited in Kleist and Jansen 2016, 382). Hope is imaginative and collective and acts as a source of resilience. Immediately after the election of the new president in February 2017I witnessed thousands of Somalis celebrating in the streets of Eastleigh throughout the night. As explained by Abdi and Amina, the winner was "a president of everybody and brings hope for *midnimo*…. [E]verybody was there [celebrating], also people from other parts of Nairobi." Although societal hopes of refugees "may be seen as disappointed, causing frustration and a sense of crisis," there is also potentiality generated (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 382). One part of that potentiality resides in connections and unity, in collective imaginations of the future, which is one essential source to resilience in forced migration.

Between past, present, and future

Developing a relationship to the place appeared to be a challenging task for Eastleigh Somali refugees, although the magnitude of that challenge depended on age, individual life trajectory, personal goals, and personality type, to mention only some factors influencing the outcome. Building a sense of belonging to the new place was, however, not only about growing familiar with that place; it was also about seeing it through the lens of one's past memories, about "a reversal of displacement, regaining what was lost" (Turner 2016, 39). In some regards, Eastleigh became familiar to all over time, in other respects it always remained an alien environment.

Before the civil war and before moving to Mogadishu, Hawa, born 1954, lived with her husband and children in the countryside. She compared her current surroundings with this place in Somalia, that was distant in time and had green pastures and trees – a landscape completely different from Eastleigh. When talking about Somalia, namely, she spoke of it as it had been before the conflict, when "life was good" and her family lived in the countryside. Her dream of a future in a third country did not preclude her from dreaming of returning to a peaceful Somalia, an "elsewhere" that was more of a utopia since she knew that she could not, and would not, ever return there due to safety risks.

The younger Somali refugees in this study did not have the same image of Somalia as their older compatriots. Mustafa, for example, had only begun to read and heard from others about Somalia before the civil war as he was himself too young to have any personal memories of it. He mentioned lost monuments and destroyed cultural sites of which he had only seen pictures. He also stated that education was one of his life goals, but that he did not see it possible for him to achieve that goal in Somalia. Having grown up in a war-ravaged Mogadishu, and fears of violence and missile attacks color his memories. Somalia is different from Hawa's. Their respective relationships to their homeland displayed generational differences, influencing the directions and objects of their hope. Nostalgic images of a distant past were typical of Hawa, and her hopes for herself were mingled with her hopes for others, particularly for a good life for her children and her grandchild. Other single mothers' statements showed that their daily struggles and mere existence in Eastleigh were purposeful owing to their striving for a better future for their children. A sense of purpose brought meaning to their seemingly hopeless situation and gave them strength to carry on, contributing to their resilience.

The interviewed Somali refugees considered both their refugee camps and their present urban settings to be but temporary places of

residence. Some of them had moved between the two multiple times already. Mustafa finished a vocational training in Kakuma refugee camp but came to Nairobi for medical reasons, deciding then to stay on to look for a job and he found a part-time job at a hotel. Yet, he kept thinking about returning to the camp for another vocational training course, although he now had a network of friends and felt safer and "more normal" in Eastleigh. Notably, Mustafa was the only interviewee to express any desire to return to the camps. What the interviewees wished and hoped for, and saw as their personal life trajectory, varied by age and gender. Mustafa saw education as a priority, because he believed that with or without resettlement, it would provide him better options for the future. He held relatively positive views on the camp because there, he quickly received histhe refugee mandate and receiving vocational training. All the same, both Eastleigh and the camp were for him temporary solutions only, as he did not see either as a place where he could have a "good future" and ultimately settle down.

Accompanied by his neighbours from his home village, Hassan had arrived at the Dadaab camp in 2008 as a 16-year-old. In the time of the interview he still did not know where his family members were, or even whether they were still alive. The family accompanying him to Kenya and Dadaab had left for the Kakuma camp, however, for reasons unknown to Hassan, and shortly thereafter also Hassan himself succeeded in relocating to Kakuma, hiding inside a food truck. At Kakuma, he had attended primary school, moving subsequently, with financial support from a relative, to Nairobi to attend secondary school and, later, high school. Looking proud and radiating with positive energy, Hassan spoke of accomplishment as follows:

> *I move freely during the day. I go to town [Nairobi city centre]. When you understand the language [Swahili], you can explain [express yourself]…. I used to*

> *fear [everything] when I arrived here [Eastleigh], but I came here to get an education. So I went to high school, a boarding school…. I have been given a great chance here that I would not have had in Somalia.*

As Hassan went on, "I have a lot of friends here – Somalis, Kenyan Somalis, Kenyans.… We talk, we make jokes, we laugh.…It releases stress." Hassan sought and found familiarity in friendships, through his large social network, and through his daily interactions, feeling himself to be part of and belonging to a community. He expressed attachment to the place through the different groups of people with whom he interacted. He had completed the first step of his goal in displacement, getting a primary education. Should he not find work, he stated, one option he saw for himself was to illegally cross the border into South Africa. Despite all the uncertainty in his life Hassan was building a life for himself. Hammar (2014, 14) has noted, "How people respond to the various forms of enforcement, of course, are expressions of their own agency." Hassan took all the chances to an education and to build a social network expressing own agency. He is an example of social mobility in displacement, something he accomplished through activity. Thereby, he succeeded in creating a relationship to the place, overcoming the difficulties associated with a sense of illegitimacy and lack of economic capital by creating for himself social capital.

People, in other words, respond to forced displacement differently, having also different abilities to psychologically cope under different material conditions. Both Hassan and Mustafa were able to identify for themselves possibilities for a certain range of mobility also physical, and seemed not to be caught in any paralyzing sense of captivity and "stuckness." Through their activities, they created a personal relationship to the place, which then positively affected their sense of hope. Miyazaki has elaborated on how hope is entailed

in knowledge and practices (2006), using the term "temporality of no longer" for the moment that is no longer (Miyazaki 2010, 249). For Hassan and Mustafa, there was certain anticipation that something could be recovered, that dreams could be fulfilled, that not all hope was lost. In that sense they had changed their perspective on life, transforming also their presence (cf. Miyazaki, cited in Kleist and Thorsen 2017, 12). For them, Eastleigh was not going to be their permanent place of abode; it, too, would at some point turn into a no longer.

For the interviewees in this study, the aspect of time was closely related to their everyday life through past memories and future visions. Hope appeared to be constituted in particular spatio-temporal practices with future and place entangled. This entanglement begat an in-between state that came with a lack of knowledge of one's own situation (Horst and Grabska 2015, 6). A return to the homeland and resettlement in a third country were imagined scenarios, while Eastleigh was the reality and the present moment was located somewhere in between the past home and the future home. According to Brun, forced migration and displacement itself give rise to a new notion of home as an "unsettled, changing, open and more mobile entity" (Brun and Fabos 2015, 7). The refugees in Eastleigh were in a process of making home ambiguous hope arises in the gap between the person and the place in displacement, between "vulnerability and agential power" (Brun and Fabos 2015, 11). In longings for familiar places and in imaginations of future places somewhere else, time and place become intertwined. Hawa and her daughters had applied for resettlement, as had most of the refugees I interviewed; they were now in the last stage of the process, just waiting for their resettlement decision. For Amina, that meant hope for another life somewhere else:

> *The definition of life is not this life here and now, but going to Europe or Amer-ica where we can have human rights and where we get properly taken care of in terms of food, housing, and medical treatment for refugees. In the future, I want to be where there is no conflict or war, and where I can have a good job.*

The interviewees all hoped for a good life, which Amina saw possible in a place where there would be peace, respect for human rights, and opportunities for decent work for her. Whenever she received funds from her relatives, she took time out to study as much as she could. Accordingly, her stay in Eastleigh became very purposeful: the place connected her to the possibility for a better future somewhere else.

Concluding thoughts

Examining refugeeness in relation to hope among Somalis in the Eastleigh Estate of Nairobi, Kenya, I have shown how this relation is constituted in and through everyday social practices. Refugees in transit live in an in-between state both temporally and spatially, and their relationships to their place are affected by the contradiction inherent in the task of becoming part of their current place while desiring resettlement. The Somali refugees in Eastleigh considered their lack of legal status a clear indication by their host state that they did not belong where they were. Imaginings about a future safe and better place somewhere else made, however, their stay tolerable. Those imaginings also included the prospect of obtaining a Western passport, which for them was the equivalent of legitimacy and freedom of movement.

Despite their transit state, the interviewees were all busy engaged in activities having to do with creating a sense of home in familiar daily practices, and in social activities similar to those they had been engaged also in the past. In their strive for a normal life and home-like atmosphere in a place seen as being only

temporary in nature, daily practices and social activities contributed to the establishment of a home in mobility. With the host state experienced as hostile, clusters of social contexts became spaces of kindness and social transformation. Contact with such groups of close persons (e.g., family, relatives, neighbours, helpers) and more distant ones in the diaspora offered a space for collective hope for oneself and others. The refugees in Eastleigh hoped for a better future, and in their daily practices and activities there was, besides frustration, also a potentiality. However, the home-creation practices in which many of the interviewees were engaged did not include any attempts to put down roots (cf. Turner 2016, 38); rather, they represented, for them, a way of taking control in a state of transfer.

For refugees living in a state of forced on-going displacement, their economic and socio-political contexts can cause great uncertainty. Social networks and participation in social activities close the gap between the person and the place, and this closure in turn opens for hope. As this article suggests, social transformation through activity may be essential for resilience in forced migration and it can serve an important purpose in hope for a better future. Hope arises from the activity itself, the value of being a good person, the creation of a good future, and an awareness of openings for social and personal development.

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