"Nairobi’s Matatu Men. Portrait of a Subculture” marks the beginning of our Text series that pays tribute to the academic efforts in East Africa. Due to a rather commercial publishing industry and lack of relevant institutions, most of Kenya’s well-respected intellectuals never published a book, not even the most important work of their career: their dissertation. The consequence of this is dramatic as they are not part of a global, intellectual discussion.

Mbugua Wa Mungai tells the story of a subculture that has been iconic to Nairobi’s everyday life since the 1950s: Nairobi’s privately-owned mini buses which provide public transport. He takes this culture as an entry point into a discussion of broader issues about Nairobi and Kenyan society. The author’s previous work has inspired many scholars to interrogate various aspects of popular culture in other African cities. This book, his main academic work and a seminal contribution of Cultural Studies from Africa, opens new trajectories for the understanding of popular culture and urban life.