

COLLOQUIUM

Mo-Faya: Socio-ecological survivals in Nairobi's outlaw settlement

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Join us on Zoom

<https://uci.zoom.us/j/9595651>

Contemporary urban planning practices in Nairobi are often framed as movements towards “world-class city” status localized within a situated “Africa rising” moment. My current work wants to move beyond the hegemony of these official narratives to think about Nairobi from its “outlaw” settlements. To do this it dwells in the social experiences of urban spatial management in Mathare, a poor urban settlement in the east of Nairobi, to draw attention to what I argue is the imperial assemblage that produces this city: one informed by political, ecological, social and economic ideas and practices that have their grounding in empire. In so doing, it connects themes often examined in silos – for example, slum fires, evictions, ‘illegal’ water tapping, cholera, extrajudicial killings, youth urban vernaculars, subject formation and floods – and draws attention to how an increasingly militarized urban planning brings about what I term ecologies of exclusion. Notwithstanding the historical neglect and force of urban governance in the poor spaces that I highlight, ultimately I would like to make evident how those framed as the city’s outlaws (shanty dwellers etc.) engage with and emerge from the many violent articulations of an imperial urban planning through dynamic socio-ecological survivals. And from within these poor urban struggles, they are able to articulate more grounded narrations of the history and possible futures of Nairobi.