Imperial Remains and Imperial Invitations

Imperial Remains and Imperial Invitations: Centering Race within the Contemporary Large-Scale Infrastructures of East Africa

Wangui Kimari [1] and Henrik Ernstson [2]

[1] African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town; [2] Department of Geography, The University of Manchester.

Abstract: In this paper we combine infrastructural studies and black radical traditions to foreground how imperial remains deeply inform the logics that bring forth contemporary large-scale infrastructures in Africa. The objective, prompted by the ongoing avid promotion of such architectures on the continent, is to contribute to an analysis that centres race in these projects. Our argument is that these infrastructural initiatives have to be understood in relation to inherited material and discursive scaffoldings that remain from the colonial period, through what we refer to as imperial remains and imperial invitations. These remains and invitations demonstrate how contemporary infrastructures inhere, in their planning, financing and implementation, a colonial racialism, despite rhetorical claims to the opposite. Empirically, we draw, principally, on China built and financed infrastructure projects from Kenya, and theoretically upon black radical traditions in order foreground a longer genealogy of black pathologizing and resistance to it on the continent.

Key words: imperial remains, imperial invitations, infrastructure, black geographies, racial capitalism, China in Africa.

In colonial and settler colonial contexts, infrastructure is often the means of dispossession and the material force that implants colonial economies and socialities.

Deborah Cowen, "Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance," 2017

Railways open up further layers of meaning. Beyond their iconic presence in discourses of modernity and progress, they were the material and tangible vehicle of imperial expansion that transformed vast parts of late nineteenth and early twentieth century worlds.

Giorgio Miescher, "Arteries of Empire," 2012

Introduction

Enkare Nyrobi, the "place of cool waters," was a swampy but picturesque meeting point between fluid Maasai and Kikuyu borders. Situated halfway between Kampala and Mombasa, this site, now known as Nairobi, was initially just a stop on the way to serve more pressing imperial British interests in Uganda, and never actually intended to be one of the British empire's chief commercial outposts (Hake 1977; White 1990; Owuor and Mbatia 2008:1-2). In an accident of colonial geography, the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), administrating what it mapped as *its* African territory from Uganda, proposed Nairobi as a critical railway stop on the way to the coastal town of Mombasa, where it would then unload, pack and ship off to Mother England whatever goods it had acquired from "trade."

When the railhead to facilitate this British colonial enterprise reached Nairobi in 1899, a development characterized by the violence of forced labours and later dubbed the "Lunatic Express" (Figure 1), it was here that the blueprints of an imperial city were established.[1] It is the arrangement of this initial cluster of tents, situated to take advantage of a cool and adequately watered terrain to build a railway station, which imprinted Nairobi's spatial order for years to come (Chiuri 1978; Hake 1977; White 1990; White, Silberman and Anderson 1948; Owuor and Mbatia 2008). Akin to similarly embarked on, though not fully materialized, locomotive projects such as the Cecil Rhodes' affiliated "Cape to Cairo" railway, the Lunatic Express acted as a "technology, vehicle and medium" (Miescher 2012)

for racial capitalism (Robinson 2000). In this way it reshaped lives and landscapes towards the goals of empire, becoming an instrumental pioneer "circulatory system" (Scott 2018) for entrenching imperial expansion and violence in this region.

Our article departs from this first railway project in Kenya to track how imperial processes continue to scaffold contemporary large-scale infrastructure projects in East Africa. As materiality and metaphor, the 1899 train evidences the brutal socio-material modes through which the railway-as-infrastructure became part of the landscape, and created the conditions of possibility for current racialized infrastructural regimes in Kenya and neighbouring spaces. Central to this paper, we view these conditions as sustained by what we articulate as "imperial remains" and "imperial invitations." These are entangled colonial practices that have racialism immanent to them, and which continue to occur in an, ostensibly, postcolonial state.

The goal of this paper is threefold. First, we argue that current infrastructure projects planned and constructed by new "partners" such as China and, though not attended to within this paper, even Brazil (see Pickup 2016), who get this distinction, habitually, because of their lack of colonial history in Africa, engage and build on longer dynamics of a pathological racialization of Africa and Africans even amidst claims to horizontal "South-South" cooperation and "win-win" bromides. Though these more recent partners engage in long established material and vernacular tropes that frame Africa simultaneously in terms of deficit and as the next frontier, prevailing discourses about their presence rarely attend to the racializations they build on and reproduce. Second, in making this argument we are not seeking to contribute to polarizing binary discussions about the "potentials" or "perils" of China in Africa (Lee 2018) (or BRICS in Africa), even as we draw, overwhelmingly, from mega projects enabled by Chinese state funds and construction firms. Though we learn from these debates, neither is it our intention to engage in the ongoing Kenyan debates about the need for and the cost of the Standard Gauge Railway (for this see, for example, Ndii 2018). Rather, instead of dwelling in discussions about the merits or demerits of these investments, we want to show how more recent large-scale infrastructural relations in Africa build on longer histories of an imperial racial pathologizing of Africa, despite rhetorical claims to the opposite. This occurs, we argue, through the rekindling of what Stoler (2008, 2013) and others refer to as imperial remains, and the ignition of what we term imperial invitations. If *imperial remains* are theorized as the residues—or, in Stoler's term, "durabilities"— of

racism and colonialism in the present, and which travel as "unspoken distinctions" into "the fabric of contemporary life […] as if everywhere and nowhere at all" (Stoler 2016: 5), we develop *imperial invitations* as way to think through how current geopolitical formations, beyond the usual North/South configurations, participate in reproducing, even in their denial, what Sarkozy infamously refers to as "the tragedy of Africa."[2] This "South-South" anti-black humanitarianism, that, we assert, is solicited by African states, is severely understudied, and requires, we argue, a theoretical language intent on marronage (Roberts 2016), which also illustrates how, together, remains and invitations reaffirm the durability of empire.

Third, in making these arguments, we are influenced by the "accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle" that constitutes the black radical tradition (Robinson 2000: xxx). While recognizing the many unknown and defiant people who shaped them, here we draw from the prophetic visions of Mugo wa Kibiru and Mekatilili wa Menza, Fanon (1963), Rodney (1972), Robinson (2000), Moten (2008), Roberts (2016) and Hirji (2017). But also, above all, on the everyday material and enunciatory practices of people in East Africa, which insist on centering race and empire in their analysis of and resistance to contemporary large-scale infrastructures in the region. Though the product of a transcontinental praxis, the black radical tradition is predominantly used to think through African diasporic spaces. We argue that there is much to be gained by letting it "return" to Africa—or, rather, be re-translated (Said 1983; Rich 1984). In so doing, we are able to extend similar efforts to centre race in discussions of infrastructure in Africa, and this allows us to understand how these architectures operate, as rhetoric, discourse and practice, to establish "differential rights" (Anand et al. 2018) and "racialized allocations and appropriations" (Stoler 2008) both in the future and in the here and now.

Importantly, it is also not our objective to trace the intricate mechanisms by which particular projects became instantiated. This would require an ethnographic and historical undertaking beyond the scope of our article. Rather, we write, in the vein of global and black studies, with an aim to excavate the racialized conditions of possibility that make current large-scale infrastructure from "new" partners conceivable. In this we recognize that, while the racial pathology that layers these architectures may not always be evident in direct causal and predetermined ways, their imperial hauntings are part of an enduring drama; a spectre that shapes material configurations as well as views, thoughts, and logics both public and intimate. As they exist alongside what Roy (2006) calls the "present history," our interest is

to detail how these *remains* animate and re-emerge vividly in the social and material relations that produce and sustain *invitations* by African states for mega infrastructure investments. These projects revel in and spread simplistic narratives of an "Africa Rising," and are positioned to represent a rupture of imperial relations, a break with the past, or even the "anti-hegemony" (Lee 2018: 34) that will launch African states and their cities into the hyper-modern futures they desire (see, for example, NIUPLAN 2030; Plano Luanda 2030; cf Cote-Roy and Moser 2018), even when they are firmly emplaced within an anti-black machinery.

It is from the perspective of imperial hauntings that we can return to our introductory vignette and view President Uhuru Kenyatta when he launched the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) on May 31 2017—one hundred and twenty years after the inauguration of the initial "Lunatic Express" railway line (Figure 2). Constructed alongside the railway tracks laid by IBEAC a century earlier, this new locomotive was built by another foreign company: the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC). In his speech, the President spoke of how this new train, the *Madaraka Express* ("Freedom Express"), heralded a "new dawn for Kenya," and would "begin to reshape the story of Kenya for the next 100 years."[3]

Without a doubt, a new train has replaced the 1899 version and, in this sense, a different moment has been unveiled. While the speed and the aesthetic of this locomotive may have, ever so slightly, changed, rather than a break, we understand this event differently: as an example of the durability of imperial genealogies. It is our position that both the initial railway and the Madaraka Express are from the same family tree, their genus unquestionable. Viewed as configurations of racial capital, we can see that each colonial moment is bringing forth its own train. Materially and metaphorically both infrastructures run on the same tracks, anchoring our argument that empire persists no longer, principally, through cooptation, but via state *invitations*.

The parallels between the initial railway architecture and the present day "Freedom Express" call attention to the uneven racialized power dynamics that brought forth the colonial railway venture in Kenya, and that, we argue, created the conditions of possibility for the current Madaraka Express. We do this not merely because both projects were the largest infrastructural projects of their time in Kenya, nor because the new railway sleepers have been built alongside those of a previous century, in this way mirroring the same trajectories across the savannah. Nor is it solely because the dire working conditions or the immoderate expenses of both constructions seem to reflect each other across centuries.[4]

Rather, by making our arguments we hope to make possible two types of interlinked studies: 1) an exegesis of large-scale infrastructure in Kenya as (spatialized) empire in the *longue durée,* which requires a vision of continuity even amidst spatial and temporal change, and; 2) to privilege theorizations of (imperial) space in Africa that foreground racial effects even when these are tenaciously denied by global and local "elite stakeholder rhetoric" (Cote-Roy and Moser 2018). It is our hope that since our analysis draws from and is inspired by everyday people-centred discernments of the durability of empire in their lives, that it can have purchase "beyond the enclave of urban theory" (Zeiderman 2018). In this pursuit, we begin by discussing the context and literatures we are engaging, and thereafter move on to discussing the key terms that frame our argument: imperial remains and imperial invitations.

It is important to note that when we discuss infrastructure projects, we refer to large scale physical constructions taken as unquestionably imperative to the running of economies, including transportation, energy, communication and waste management systems and so on. These aim "to integrate territory with global networks of production and trade" (Schindler and Kanai 2019), and are viewed as "engines of modernity" that connect rural and urban geographies. Certainly, they are intended to render civilizatory facades and comply with (physically) absent (but mentally) present evolutionary trajectories of progress and development. The trains we focus on here are merely one example of these infrastructures, but are, at the same time, intelligible as important symbols of enduring colonial racialism in African spaces.

Between Boosting and Hesitating

The discursive context in which our argument is situated is one of calculated assertiveness on the one hand, and situated hesitancy on the other. Current mainstream analyses, which are often scarcely concealed boosterist attempts to extol the profits attendant to "modernizing" African spaces through large-scale infrastructure projects, must first be placed in the cross hairs. While, apparently, seeking to provide blueprints for profitable and "shiny African cities" and their hinterlands (Cote-Roy and Moser 2018), they also intend to generate immediate benefits to transnational companies, banks and local and international elites. These narrative products (see, for example, McKinsey 2010), often developed and cheered on by multilateral institutions, consulting and development agencies (Schindler and Kanai 2019), work within a presentist and a-historical optic that disregards, or, in a fairly calculative

6 (30)

fashion, places historical "stuff" such as colonialism, inequality and distorted international relations outside of view. Africa now, while perhaps not viewed as a completely clean slate, is still "ripe" for "development" within a still unquestioned hyper-neoliberal arena (but now certainly also intersected with Sino-led "authoritarian capitalism" (Bloom 2016; cf. Lee, 2018)).

The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), an initiative implemented by the African Development Bank (ADB),[5] provides a good example of these discourses. Within the "ready list of priorities" for infrastructure on the continent that PIDA offers, it, unashamedly, reproduces the colonial narrative of an Africa of *lack* and as the next frontier for extraction, when it declares (PIDA 2012:1, our emphasis):

> Africa commands a powerful position on the world stage. It is seen as a land of opportunity— an *emerging* destination of choice for many investors and development actors as they look for high-growth markets, despite the ongoing economic turmoil and the lingering effects of the financial crisis and recession. In this rapidly changing global environment, Africa needs to seize the initiative and take advantage of these emerging conditions that will substantially boost trade, spark growth and create jobs. *But right now, it is not capable of seizing the initiative or reaping the full benefits of its resources*. A major problem: infrastructure. The solution: PIDA [Programme for Infrastructure Development of Africa].

In this and similar discourses,[6] a 1884-85 Berlin-conference era problematique is reified: Africa is at once a place of deficit, of "not capable," lagging behind, the "least" developed continent. It is also the site of unexploited capitalistic potential, an emerging "destination" that is offered to further fulfill more Cecil Rhodes or Indiana Jones like plunder: othered for, ostensibly, benevolent "trusteeship" purposes and for its "freedom" (cf. Roy 2006). This logic of unfettered bounty, never mind the desires and conditions of its people, is made possible by a consortium of local elites and non-local states and institutions, attracted by both resources and a "business friendly" (read intentionally fragmented) regulatory regime. Africa is considered, as Cote-Roy and Moser (2018) document, the "last piece of cake." That is why Trump can, in a 2018 speech to African presidents in Washington D.C., state in such a cavalier manner that "Africa has tremendous business potential. I've so many friends going to your countries, trying to get rich."[7] Amidst the promises of wealth, and opportunity targeted at "investors" and "development actors," there is a return to earlier times, a doubling

back, even as the core extractive rationale is discursively disarmed by references to regional developmentalist dreams.

In the case of PIDA, its progenitors assert that they are launching an "African-owned and African-led" initiative (PIDA 2012: 12). However, habitually the financing, planning and implementation of these projects brings to light the reinstantiating imperial logics of space and spatial governance in East Africa. As but one illustration of this, Klopp's (2012: 22) in-depth political economy analysis of the transport infrastructure sector in Kenya, shows that (our emphasis):

> The first striking aspect of Kenya's transportation sector is the role of external actors. For example, if we look at road construction and rehabilitation, 56% of the finance between 2003 and 2008 came from external grants and loans from donors including prominently the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the EU and increasingly the Chinese government [...]. These donors work with the Ministries of Finance, Roads, Transport and Public Works *to make decisions on transport planning*, and they negotiate on contracts to do planning, feasibility studies, engineering design and road construction.

In an era ironically referred to as postcolonial, often doubly synonymous with *post*racial on the continent and elsewhere, the machinations within the transport sector in Kenya belie PIDA's pan-African declarations of African-owned and initiated large-scale infrastructure projects. Certainly, there are diverse ways that infrastructures are negotiated in situ, ensuring that people and places are not simply passive receivers of "exploitation" since they can provoke, however temporary, novel agential trajectories of capital and its products.

What we insist on, however, while recognizing that we need to guard against simplified readings of what infrastructural capital circulation means in today's increasingly multi-polar world (Lee 2018; Anand et al.2018), is the presence of the colonial, its active remains. *What* infrastructures are imagined and *how* they are implemented—indeed who gets to define infrastructure and its benefits—continue to emerge from historically colonial and racialized processes. Rodney (1972) consistently warned against the hegemonic "development" imbued with Western hierarchies and invested in Eurocentric measurements of progress that African states continue to uphold. And with regards to road infrastructure, Klopp (2012: 5) pointedly highlights how imperial "mental models" continue to shape much of these infrastructural initiatives on the continent. These extant conditions point to the need

for studies on African geographies to have a more historical and racialized understanding of their "infrastructural now"; a reading, we suggest, that foregrounds *longue duree* racial effects, and understands current and proposed mega projects not so simply as a profitable and/or useful a-historical connective architecture but, akin to Kenya's first train, as a "means of dispossession and the material force that implants colonial economies and socialities" (Cowen 2017). It is precisely the histories of infrastructure as a "means of dispossession," that do *not* feature in the boosterist literature that rallies new architectures as a "right to develop" and "Africa's turn" to be on the global stage (Cote-Roy and Moser 2018), tropes that, in and of themselves, derive from and revive colonial discourses.

While the seductive manuals from multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) or the African Development Bank (ADB) are quite clearly problematic in how they reproduce extractive colonial logics (while perpetuating a contradictory and classed "Africa Rising" narrative), we also find a problem closer to home in critical urban studies.[8] Here the problem lies in an empiricist and situated hesitancy to pull out how a colonial racial disposability operates in-and-through infrastructures and urban spaces.

Over the last two decades, much labour has gone into developing analyses of infrastructure that seek to decentre and provincialize the "network ideal" embedded within Euro-American thought. Urban studies has led the charge to profoundly re-think how infrastructure operates, produces space, is known and planned; it has also sensitized interdisciplinary geography-based theory to everyday conditions and the operations of power (Simone 2004; Pieterse 2008; for review, see Ernstson et al. 2014; and Ernstson and Sörlin 2019). This has expanded a narrow focus on large-scale and "hard" infrastructure, to the scale of the everyday through notions of incremental, peopled and heterogeneous infrastructures (as but a few examples of this, see Fredericks 2014; Furlong 2014; Lawhon et al. 2014; Silver 2014; Monstadt and Schramm 2017). Nonetheless, in these sophisticated and well-grounded empirical analyses there is, we sense, not enough explicit attention to the constant layering and refractions of the colonial in the present. While they highlight how imperial legacies scaffold the contemporary urban form, there is as-yet an untapped radical possibility to analyze how the everyday grinding scale intersects with the financing, planning and implementation of large-scale infrastructural developments, including how they continue to

carry into the present "deeply embedded racial assumptions and stereotypes" (Brahinsky et al 2014:1138).

In this literature (to which we have also contributed, see: Ernstson et al. 2014; Lawhon et al 2014; 2017), the staying power of racialization across scales may be highlighted, but tends to slip in and out of view. The "racialized relations of allocations and appropriations" (Stoler 2008) that these imperial dynamics reproduce are not explicitly interrogated as a central force, even while their effects are made evident in great ethnographic detail. For instance, the focus on the innovative infrastructural and incremental practices of the marginalized, which are crucial sites to re-think spatial distributions of power, run the risk in wider policy discussions of being viewed merely as "making do" or "filling gaps," which risks taking attention away from the fastidious ways in which the active remains of empire— and their associated imperial invitations—are extending their grip. These are, for instance, through more land evictions, extrajudicial killings and the militarization of urban space, as but some of the modalities that proliferate the "exclusions" that urban dwellers face, but which rarely, if at all, make it into broader African urbanist literature (see, for example, MSJC 2017; Kimari 2018).

While we are supportive of bids to engender situated possibilities for improved basic services, we sense a more radical edge harbouring within this work that could help reinterpret how the scales of the everyday and the global-imperial intersect. This paper strives to contribute to such a radical standpoint about infrastructural development; we aim to contribute to and support a position that foregrounds the colonial racialism that continuously shapes and jeopardizes the lives of many African citizens.

Similar to Sexton and Copeland (2003: 54), we argue that there is a "kind of willful blindness that cannot be overstated" in the reluctance of both boosterist and Southern and Africanist urban literature to recognize the persistence of racialization within current mega projects and spatial governance on the continent. While the profound racial effects of Kenya's first railway may be undeniable, its current version, the Standard Gauge Railway, is discussed in terms that render invisible the coloniality and racial capitalism it draws from. To discuss the imperial remains and related imperial invitations from which this racialism emerges, and that, we argue, continues to scaffold contemporary realities, infrastructural and otherwise, on the continent, we draw from the black radical tradition to take a position that allows us to trace how racial logics in these spaces have been "engineered into their building

blocks, facades, plumes of dust, streams, forests, and air circulation" (Heynen 2016: 4). We also draw from settler colonial theorizations, urban political ecology, the anthropology of empire, and multiple discussions from postcolonial studies. Without a doubt, these important interdisciplinary perspectives have influenced scholarship across the Americas (see for example Perry 2005; Vargas 2006, 2010; McKittrick and Woods 2007, Heynen 2016; Alves 2014, 2018), but have not extensively been put in communication with African spaces and their infrastructures (with the exception of e.g., Pithouse 2005; Neocosmos 2012).

As we foreground racialization and empire in our discussions, inevitably this then also constitutes a critique of the business and policy oriented theorizations of African spaces that work to narrow the lenses through which we can understand them and their histories. Our problematizing in the next section, on imperial remains and invitations, intends to expand these optics: to show how African geographies are consistently "positioned in the world by an order of knowledge that produces and enforces links, discursive and material" between the past and the present (Sharpe 2014: 62), and to indicate the need for emancipations not just from the 1899 or 2017 trains that we started this paper with, but from the very logics that seem to make these imperial infrastructures the only option.

Imperial Remains and Imperial Invitations

The desire for large-scale infrastructure, in the vein through which, for example, PIDA imagines it, has a tendency to be seen as *natural*. What counts as appropriate infrastructure, and who is deemed its progenitor—who gets to imagine, draw, finance, implement and manage it—is already established within taken for granted processes, *naturalized* in Kenya since the first colonial interventions (roads, railways etc.,) to "open" particular areas for "trade." Commenting on this "naturalization" within road building operations in the country, Klopp (2012: 31) states:

> [Currently] this dynamic is made even more complex by the fact that competing foreign interests aim to benefit home companies in projects including those to build or upgrade Kenya's roads. They are also interested in broader economic objectives such as facilitating exports of coffee, tea and other products. It is possible that some interest in roads in Africa is linked not only to oil and minerals, but to the growing interest in the last arable agricultural land on the continent, which will become increasingly valued with increased global food

demand. This can also mean that roads are not being built with accessibility to services for local citizens in mind or with strategies to improve local employment and businesses.

Since these dynamics occur in tandem with and, in some ways, prompt the demands by the Kenyan government that local companies need experience conducting "big" projects, these stipulations inevitably favour foreign companies that already have credit and lobbying support from their governments (see also Power's (2012) discussion of similar practices in Angola). That, even, the blueprints for these schemes[9] emerge via consultancies given to non-local companies, further evidences the naturalization of who gets to think infrastructure, and the racialized power asymmetries that continue to produce both rural and urban spaces on the continent.

Certainly, while the "promise of infrastructure"[10] from the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) may be "global participation"[11] and, broadly, "modernity" and "development," the "multivalent political trajectories of infrastructure" (Anand et al. 2018:3) ensure that they do not hit the ground in the same way. Beyond the much touted, though important, fears of "debt-trap diplomacy" (or, why not, debt-trap kleptocracy),[12] there are other situated and deeper events that evidence the "differential provisioning" of these architectures (Anand et al. 2018:3).

Kenyan legal scholar Yash Pal Ghai highlights the hidden nature, or deliberate opacity, of the contractual conditions for the loans taken to finance and build recent infrastructure projects in Kenya, including its latest railway. From the documents Ghai (2019) was able to access, he cites the likelihood of asset vulnerability for Kenya—that China can claim unnamed local resources as collateral—if the Kenyan state is unable to pay these loans back. What is more, he shares how solely Chinese and not Kenyan law governs these agreements, and, as a consequence, any disputes can only be adjudicated by the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission (Ghai 2019). One could rightly argue that these uneven terms are a replication of the agreements Kenya has with former colonial powers and multilateral organizations. Of interest to us is not so much the mirroring in this instance, but *the denial of mirroring* in the case of China (and other BRICs countries) since these new relations are chronicled as exempt from a colonial ordering and othering. Beyond contractual documents, on the ground, the racism on the tracks further articulates

violent racial relations since Chinese Standard Gauge Railway workers engage in everyday colour bar practices.

In mid 2018, stories emerged in the Kenyan media about the unequal treatment of workers involved in the Standard Gauge railway operations: Chinese workers of the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) are paid up to three times more than Africans for the same work, intentionally do not sit on the same lunch tables or in the same work transport van as local staff, and have been accused of treating Kenyan workers inhumanely. Furthermore, Kenyan train drivers have still not been able to take over the wheels of the Madaraka Express despite adequate training, since it is only Chinese drivers who are allowed to conduct these technical operations (see Wafula 2018; Ghai 2019; Okoth 2018; Wasonga 2018). This "mistreatment" has compelled both the Kenya Railways Cooperation and the Ministry of Labour to probe these allegations, and the latter, likely seeking to conduct public relations management from the outset, avoided any reference to racism and suggested that these events occurred likely because of "misunderstanding[s] and unresolved cultural differences" (Okoth 2018).

Comparably, in a recent commemoration of Sino-Africa ties broadcast on China Central Television (CCTV) in 2018, a skit about the Standard Gauge Railway took center stage. In this theatre, and quoting from Madrid-Morales (2018),

> a well-known Chinese actress in full blackface comes on stage wearing a colourful yellow dress, fully equipped with oversized butt pads, carrying a fruit plate on her head and leading a cheerful monkey played by an unidentified African actor.

Without a doubt, the "stereotypes about Africa that the Chinese media claim to be debunking in their public diplomacy activities in the continent" were upheld by this performance (Madrid-Morales 2018). Even against the pejorative theatre of blackface and the excessively buxom representations of African womanhood, the Chinese embassy in Nairobi denied that this skit was racist. Their argument was that "any perception of ill-will was from people who are not happy with Beijing's cooperation with Africa" and that Kenyan media's reporting of this event as racist was a result of blindly following these assertions in the Western press (Ondieki 2018).

As the Chinese Embassy spokesman declared as part of a formal response to the Kenyan media's highlighting of the racist skit: "We will work with our African friends to

build a community of common destiny for all mankind. Justice naturally inhabits man's heart. Who is sincerely helping Africa? Who is Africa's trustworthy partner? We could draw a fair conclusion from the facts" (Ondieki 2008). Drawing what we believe are fair conclusions from the facts, we can see how these official assertions are intended to mask the deep racial strata that layers formal China-Africa relations. What's more, pronouncements of "sincere" help to Africa sustain a reason that has immanent to it the consideration of the continent, its people and spaces as problems replete with deficits, "failed states" (Main 2012), which necessitate further incorporation into global capital regimes to realise their potential. That the supposed "trustworthy partner" of Africa celebrated this relationship in blackface, and negated the legitimacy of local voices who denounced this presentation, further illustrate the racial logic that is extended within these recent large-scale infrastructural arrangements in Africa.

Though these events are not to be projected on the 40,000 individual Chinese who are making their home in Kenya, and also cognizant of the local Sino-phobia that we do not interrogate on the continent, what we want to highlight is the wider operation of a colour bar; that racialization is an intricate part of current infrastructural processes. These experiences highlight the empty performativity of postcolonial sovereignty that these projects are meant to symbolize, and allow us to peel back their strata to show the interoperability of independence charades with empire. This is what we call imperial invitations: a situation where African states assert a postcoloniality through the pursuit of, for example, infrastructure development, but then *invite* other states (or corporations who represent them) to control these projects upheld as engines of modernity. Since both the invite and the acceptance of the invitation are embedded in racial capitalism, and are scaffolded by colonial remains, they enable a situation where the "postcolonial operates simultaneously as the colonial" (Day 2017). Where the "new dawn" of the "Freedom Express" exists simultaneously with racism on the tracks.

Undoubtedly, empire is *vitally* refigured in the present (Roy 2006; Stoler 2008:194). Our task here, amidst a changing landscape of investors, state agencies, projects and forms of capital, is to clarify a standpoint that can foreground the connective tissue between, in the Kenyan case, the l899 railway and the 2017 "Freedom Express." Broadly speaking, we mean that these latest infrastructure projects, which are couched in nomenclature that deflects the colonial through, for example, pronouncements about African-owned initiatives, embody

imperial "afterlives." Despite their hypermodern appearance—overwhelmingly embroiled in nationalistic, technocratic and economistic descriptions—these projects are re-activating the imperial remains immanent to many African spaces, and when viewed as imperial invitations, we find they inhere at least three central features.

1. First, because of the long histories of colonial infrastructure expansion at the expense of land and people, imperial invitations are anchored in long standing and metamorphozing colonial processes across (state) institutions, subjectivities, landscapes and already existing infrastructure. That is to say, imperial invitations operate from within imperial remains—which we understand as colonial afterlives.

2. Second, though infrastructures emerging from imperial invitations are said to represent a "new dawn" from "new" partners, they do not help shift the centers of knowledge, or in fact provide the space for other epistemes about what else (or who else) can count as appropriate infrastructure (cf. Gordon 2011). These large-scale projects uphold that there are limited centres from where infrastructural knowledge is constructed. And this centre is never Africa.

3. Third, because large-scale infrastructure development appears to have become the primary objective for many African states—the aspirational but never fully attained modern architectures—they act as a bar: an ideological and material colour bar whose goal posts are made ever more distant by the places and circuits upheld as knowledge centres. As a consequence, the desire for specific forms of infrastructure becomes both a self and globally imposed barrier to evolutionary "progress." In this way, against the backdrop of new master plans, visions and infrastructural manifestos recently launched by a variety of African countries and institutions (e.g., PIDA, Kenya Vision 2030 etc.) the connected absences, aspirations and "failures" of infrastructure developments become a self-imposed noose that re-establishes a subordinate subject position—one that provokes the subject(ed) to continue to extend imperial invitations.

Due to these animating logics, the legitimacy and justification for large-scale infrastructure projects are never in question. They are taken as Africa's turn for development, and, in fact, are adopted as symbols of the disavowal of empire, the anti-imperial benevolence of, for example, China and Brazil in Luanda, Nairobi, Lusaka and elsewhere (recall the Chinese Embassys' spokesman's proclamation about "Africa's trustworthy partner"). Even as these projects reify, globally and locally, gradated citizenships, they are performed as the only possible course despite their "deep geneaologies" from within historically violent processes (Stoler 2006:143). And these imperial remains and invitations continue to metamorphosize, and in their co-dependent simultaneity "give rise both to new zones of exclusion and new sites of—and social groups with—privileged exemption" (Stoler 2006: 128).

Despite the mirroring of centuries old processes, in the technocratic literature assembled as part of national and regional modernist mega projects, large-scale infrastructure developments continue to be understood as a plan to "integrate" and "develop" Africa, a mission to "empower" the whole continent. These bravado discourses have auxiliary tropes that continue to position Africa as the final borderland, which, in this neoliberal-cum-Sino-authoritarian-capitalist age, needs to be, yet again, conquered for "new markets." This is a task that comes with its own re-configured civilizing project. Firmly in this vein, a United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2016: xii) document provides that:

> By 2012, there were over 800 active infrastructure projects worth over $700 billion across Africa: 41 percent in transport and 37 percent in power. These two sectors are crucial to Africa's industrialization; yet due to their poor state, their contributions to GDP have been negligible. ECA [Economic Commission for Africa] studies show that infrastructure development in Africa can potentially raise GDP by 2 percent and develop the backbone for rapid industrialization, boosting the capacity to generate more domestic resources. Industrialization is, therefore, at the core of Africa's structural transformation and infrastructure is its catalyst. There is broad consensus on this. The Action Plan of the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa (AIDA) identifies "infrastructure development" as a priority while Africa Union's Agenda 2063 anticipates that "world class integrative infrastructure" will propel intra-African trade to 50 percent by 2045 and Africa's share of global trade from 2 percent to 12 percent.

While, perhaps, at first glance, the above statement may appear to be a rare commendation of Africa's "potential," a more historical reading will make out the persistence of the enduring trope of the unrealized prospects of Africa in terms of capitalist expansion—a flashback narrative that echoes the tenor in the boardrooms of the 1884-85 Berlin Conference to carve up the continent. Today, it is "world class integrative infrastructure" that orients and prompts this promissory lament about the continent, and that will save it from itself.

It is important to note that the funding for these "evolutionary ways of thinking" about infrastructure projects (Larkin 2013: 332)[13] comes from "lead government agencies, DFIs, private equity investors, infrastructure funds, commercial banks, pension funds, and insurance companies" all of whom have one goal in common: "a desire to identify and fund well prepared bankable projects in line with the *growing investor appetite for infrastructure assets in Africa*" (UNECA 2016: 3, our emphasis). The solution to the centuries old "Africa problem," it seems, as the PIDA document discussed above reiterates, is infrastructure. In view of the global and local exclusions these projects reify, Cowen (2017) argues that "repairing infrastructure demands investment in its fugitive forms." Indeed, charging against imperial processes are always the fugitive movements (Moten 2008) by "those-who-do-not-count," their practices constituting a "movement out of place (and 'out of order') which is at the origin of any genuine politics." (Neocosmos 2012: 531). These are actions that express a political subjectivity against the concrete and rhizomatic qualities of empire—race in the concrete, even when the status quo seeks to maintain the "comforting contention that there really is no imperial order of things" (Stoler 2016: 26).

It is to the fugitivity enacted against and within these large-scale infrastructures, which speak of alternate and decolonial worlds—however temporary, that we conclude with.

Fugitive movements on the tracks

> What's at stake is fugitive movement in and out of the frame, bar, or whatever externally imposed social logic—a movement of escape, the stealth of the stolen that can be said, since it inheres in every closed circle, to break every enclosure.
>
> *Fred Moten,"The Case of Blackness," 2008*

Gikuyu oral narratives document that Mugo Wa Kibiru, a much revered seer, had already prophesized the 1899 railway and the wrath it would enact, years before its first sleepers were

laid. Akin to other Maasai, Kalenjin and Kamba indigenous prophets, Mugo, a Kikuyu sage, had spoken of the arrival of a long iron snake that would connect two bodies of water—the Indian Ocean and what, unfortunately, remains known as Lake Victoria—and would belch fire as it moved across the terrain. Impacted by what he saw in his visions, Mugo shared that this infrastructure would herald the changing of worlds: cultures and landscapes would be disrupted and this violent flux would catalyze death and disposability. Since then, in response to the effects of the iron snake that pierced the country's terrain, facilitating extraction and settler-colonialism, there have been "acts or flights of escape and creative practices of refusal, nimble and strategic practices that undermine the category of the dominant" (Campt 2014).

In the nineteen forties and early fifties, the Kenya Land and Freedom Army, more popularly known as the Mau Mau, established a situated underground railroad that militarily and ideologically sought to undermine the multiple imperial infrastructures that held up the colony of Kenya. They were fighting another "negro removal," seeking to undo the effects of colonial architectures of dispossession and containment—materially, culturally, and mentally—that were steadfastly encroaching on their lives.

Decades later these dislocations continue and are paid for by citizens already burdened by the costs of "development." Evidencing this, loans for infrastructure from China currently account for roughly 66% of Kenya's external debt (Omondi 2018) and the liabilities from the financially ineffective Freedom Express far surpass the fiscal obligations of other projects (Ndii 2018). This indebtedness illustrates the multiple scales through which the iron snake, from both periods, *railroads into our lives*; has bearing on our economic, socio-cultural, ecological and political publics and intimacies. Against such a debt level, the future portends a financial noose for the coming generations that have been encouraged to seek the benefits from these "bankable" projects since "infrastructure is by definition future oriented; it is assembled in the service of worlds to come" (Cowen 2017). But with the reproduction of colonial debts, these promised worlds will not come. Instead, we witness flashbacks to a past when Mother England was anxious to get back debt accrued from building the 1899 railway, and so multiplied the imperial extractions that continue to jeopardize local lives (White 1990: 35). Within these returns to material and discursive remains, we also make out the gaining prominence of imperial invitations and their colour bars.

But, even with these reinstantiating colonial tides, communities are seeking to make alternative decolonial futures. Though it becomes hard to argue against "development"

especially when one has seemingly no control over it, and the urgencies of daily life make survival more crucial than visible mobilizations against a train, thus enabling a reluctant complicity in our imperial order of things, many continue to speak and act against the displacement, debt and empire embodied by the Standard Gauge Railway. Its African workers have protested the racism and unequal conditions silently condoned by their government.[14] Other citizens have marched against the expropriations of land and destroyed livelihoods that this and other large-scale infrastructures have enabled.[15] Drawing from a long history of African resistance at home and abroad, they have, in both legible and illegible ways, contested more snake fire, engendering delays, diversions and even concessions in the construction of this train. In this way, and even against the threat of violence, even death, they continue to remobilize and, however momentary, engage in a "constant escape of their own rehabilitation" (Moten 2008: 215) seen as only possible through infrastructure. And while these actions render collective and subject agencies that are sometimes contradictory, they challenge empire's remains and its interlocking invitations; enact fugitive movements, however temporary, that bring to light the durability of imperial moments, which extend, metamorphosizing, like Mugo Wa Kibiru's iron snake.

In this paper we have called for a reading of recent large-scale infrastructure projects in Kenya, and East Africa broadly, which recognizes the colonial racializations they build on. Our argument has been that the planning, financing and implementation of these infrastructures are embedded in both imperial remains and imperial invitations, and in this way reproduce empire in the landscape. Here we have focused on challenging the mainstream "boosterist" and developmentalist literature, and our critique has an uncanny resemblance to Dar-es Salaam-based Hirji's (2017: 25) analysis of "the standard works on African history produced during the colonial era," and that contained two discursive strands:

> The pro-imperial, plainly racist, strand depicted Africa prior to the arrival of the Europeans as a bleak continent populated by uncivilized tribes engaged in primitive modes of living and continual local conflict. It was claimed that Africa, particularly the sub-Saharan areas, had no machinery of the state to speak of. Hence the outsiders were doing its people a favor by imposing a sense of order, civility and material progress onto their lives. The other, the liberal, Africanist strand, conceded that Africa had, on its own, made some strides towards a civilized way of life. But the continent now needed assistance from Europe to become a modernized place. It also conceded that the colonial powers had not always behaved in a just

or decent manner towards the people of Africa. But the past was the past. A partnership based on harmony and mutual interests of both the parties was now advisable and essential for Africa to progress. Both strands reflected the visions and interests of the respective colonial powers as they both accepted that colonial rule had to continue, at least for the foreseeable future.

We have also tried to "nudge" the critical and constructive, but still somewhat hesitant, Southern urban studies of heterogenous and incremental infrastructure. In this emergent subfield, there is a real possibility to more explicitly account for, from a black radical standpoint, how the everyday and global-imperial scale intersects. Both then and now, here and elsewhere on the continent, mega projects that are framed ideologically and materially as "resource potential," "trade," "development," "progress" and helping Africa "leave poverty behind," have to be unpacked and studied from the ground-up. Our contribution has been to examine the reproduction of a permanent subtext of racialization across centuries: lack and pathology endure as lexicons that animate large-scale infrastructural developments, normalizing and reifying colour bars that bury situated issues such as tenure security, land redistribution, basic services and social justice.

Grounded and textured studies from a black radical standpoint are much needed in this moment of "infrastructure-led development" (Schindler and Kanai 2019), both to expose its fatal reproduction of racial disposability, and for building solidarity with those who resist it. Colonial encounters are remade through a "help" that obscures imperial processes: its remains and invitations. However, as recounted above, there is always resistance on "the tracks of development" (Figure 3). Everyday black agency continuously calls attention to the *longue durée* of racialization, despite the impermissibility of this knowledge in both technocratic and academic reflections. These unequal, complex and often unexpected fugitive actions are "the simultaneous embodiment of life, culture, and pathways to freedom on the one hand, and the singular exposure of the state as a tenuous system of unstable structures constantly teetering on the brink of illegitimacy, on the other" (Sojoyner 2017: 526 -7). The marronage immanent to these actions enable fought-for-openings for freedom and equality by those from "modernity's underside" (Roberts 2016) — from the downed tools of the Kenyan workers of the Madaraka Express;[16] the over two-year long sit-in by women farmers in Kajiado protesting displacement and inadequate compensation;[17] and the continuous imagination of citizens (and their insults to the executive) to think beyond the mainstream

narratives traded about large-scale infrastructures. We can also see fugitivity in Mugo wa Kibiru's iron snake, Koitalel Arap Samoei's eleven year protest of the Uganda-Kenya railway, and the consistent and ongoing local reference to the train as a colonial relation of being that has been (re)extended by the government. For those so often moved off stage, the connection between imperial remains and imperial invitations is not surprising; it is already part of their grounded analysis. As a consequence, their fugitive actions are important decolonial deterritorializations, infrastructures of resistance (Cowen 2017), that however small or temporary, allow for actions against empire both on and off the tracks.

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

African Development Bank (AfDB) n.d. *Closing the Infrastructure Gap Vital for Africa's Transformation*. Tunis: ADB

African Union Commission (AUC), African Development Bank (AfDB) and Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) n.d. *Plan for Infrastructure Development Africa: Interconnecting, integrating and transforming a continent*: https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/PIDA%20note%20English%20for%20web%200208.pdf

Aiyar S (2015). *Indians in Kenya*: The Politics of Diaspora. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Alves J (2014) From Necropolis to Blackpolis: Necropolitical Governance and Black Spatial Praxis in São Paulo, Brazil. *Antipode* 46(2): 323–339

Alves J (2018). *The Anti-Black city: Police terror and Black urban life in Brazil*. Minnesota: U of Minnesota Press.

Anand N, Gupta A and Appel H. 2018. *The Promise of Infrastructure. The Promise of Infrastructure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ba D (2007) Africans still seething over Sarkozy speech. *Reuters* 5 September

https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-africa-sarkozy/africans-still-seething-over-sarkozy-speech-idUKL0513034620070905 (last accessed 7 October 2019)

BBC (2010) Brazil's Lula pays tribute to Africa's historic role. *BBC News* 4 July https://www.bbc.com/news/10500100 (last accessed 17 May 2019)

BBC (2017) Kenya opens Nairobi-Mombasa Madaraka Express railway. *BBC news* 31 May https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-40092600 (last accessed 7 February 2019)

Bloom P (2016) *Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Brahinsky R, Sasser J and Minkoff - Zern L (2014) Race, space, and nature: An introduction and critique. *Antipode* 46 (5): 1135-1152

Campt T (2014). Black Feminist Futures and the Practice of Fugitivity. Helen Pond McIntyre '48 Lecture, Barnard College. 7 October bcrw.barnard.edu/blog/ black-feminist-futures-and-the-practice-of-fugitivity.

Chiuri W (1978). *Mathare Valley: A Squatter Settlement in Nairobi: A Case Study*. Nairobi: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Côté-Roy L and Moser S (2018) 'Does Africa not deserve shiny new cities?' The power of seductive rhetoric around new cities in Africa. *Urban Studies* 0042098018793032

County of Nairobi, and Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) (2014) *NIUPLAN/The project on Integrated Urban Development: Master Plan for the City of Nairobi in the Republic of Kenya (Final Report)*. Nairobi: County of Nairobi and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency.

Cowen D (2017) Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance. https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3067-infrastructures-of-empire-and-resistance

Day I (2015) Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiblackness, and Settler Colonial Critique. *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1(2): 102-21

Fanon F (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Fredericks R (2014) Vital Infrastructures of Trash in Dakar. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34 (3): 532–48.

Furlong K (2014) STS beyond the 'Modern Infrastructure Ideal': Extending Theory by Engaging with Infrastructure Challenges in the South. *Technology in Society* 38: 139–47.

Ghai Y (2019) Is Kenya a beneficiary or victim of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative? *The Star* 28 April https://www.the-star.co.ke/siasa/2019-04-28-is-kenya-a-beneficiary-or-victim-of-chinese-belt-and-road-initiative/ (last accessed 28 April 2019)

Gordon L R (2011) Shifting the geography of reason in an age of disciplinary decadence. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1(2)

Hake A (1977) *African Metropolis: Nairobi's Self-Help City*. New York: St. Martin's Press

Heynen N (2016) Urban Political Ecology II: The Abolitionist Century. *Progress in Human Geography* 40 (6): 839–845

Hirji K (2017) *The Enduring Relevance of Walter Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Daraja Press

Kaiman J (2017) China says it built a railway in Africa out of altruism, but it's more strategic than that. *Los Angeles Times* 4 August http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-china-africa-ethiopia-20170804-htmlstory.html (last accessed 7 February 2019)

Kimari W (2018) Activists, care work, and the 'cry of the ghetto' in Nairobi, Kenya. *Palgrave Communications*, *4*(1), 23

Klopp J (2012) Towards a political economy of transportation policy and practice in Nairobi. *Urban forum* 23 (1): 1-21

Kuo L (2016a) Kenyan rail-workers are protesting against their Chinese-employer for a raise to $5 a day. *Quartz Africa* 3 August https://qz.com/749177/kenyan-rail-workers-are-protesting-against-their-chinese-employer-for-a-raise-to-5-a-day/ (last accessed November 12 2018)

Kuo L (2016b) China now owns more than half of Kenya's external debt. *Quartz Africa* 15 June. https://qz.com/707954/china-now-owns-more-than-half-of-all-of-kenyas-debt-2/ (last accessed November 12 2018)

Kuo L and Noko K (2018). What is China's Belt and Road Initiative? *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2018/jul/30/what-china-belt-road-initiative-silk-road-explainer (last accessed April 24 2018)

Lawhon M, Ernstson H and Silver J (2013) Provincializing Urban Political Ecology: Towards a Situated UPE Through African Urbanism. *Antipode* 46 (2): 497–516

Larkin B (2013) The politics and poetics of infrastructure. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42: 327-343.

Lee C (2018) *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labour and Foreign Investment in Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Leipapa N (2018) Kenyan Women Farmers Protest Losing Their Land in the Name of Progress. *Women's Advancement Weekly* 29 August https://www.newsdeeply.com/womensadvancement/articles/2018/08/29/kenyan-women-farmers-protest-losing-their-land-in-the-name-of-progress

Lui K (2017) Trump Tells African Leaders His Friends Go There to "Get Rich." Awkward Silence Follows. *Time Magazine* 21 September http://time.com/4951006/trump-africa-get-rich/ (last accessed April 24 2018)

Madrid-Morales D (2018) China's media struggles to overcome stereotypes of Africa. *The Conversation Africa* 26 February https://theconversation.com/chinas-media-struggles-to-overcome-stereotypes-of-africa-92362 (last accessed February 28 2019).

Mains D (2012) Blackouts and Progress: Privatization, Infrastructure, and a Developmentalist State in Kimma, Ethiopia. *Cultural Anthropology* 27(1): 3 – 27

Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC) (2017) Who is next? A participatory action research report against the normalization of extrajudicial killings in Mathare http://www.matharesocialjustice.org/who-is-next/

McKinsey Global Institute (2010*). Lions on the move: The progress and potential of African economies.* McKinsey Global Institute https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Middle%20East%20and%20Africa/Lions%20on%20the%20move/MGI_Lions_on_the_move_african_economies_Exec_Summary.ash

McKittrick K and Woods C (2007) *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Boston: South End Press

Miescher G (2012). Arteries of empire: on the geographical imagination of South Africa's railway war, 1914/1915. *Kronos*, *38* (1), 22-46.

Monstadt J and S Schramm (2017) Toward The Networked City? Translating Technological Ideals and Planning Models in Water and Sanitation Systems in Dar Es Salaam." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 41: 104–25.

Moten F (2008) The case of blackness. *Criticism* 50 (2): 177-218

Ndii D (2018) SGR by the numbers – some unpleasant arithmetic. The East African Review 21 July https://www.theeastafricanreview.info/op-eds/2018/07/21/sgr-by-the-numbers-some-unpleasant-arithmetic/ (last accessed 25 March 2019)

Neocosmos M (2012) Are Those-Who-Do-Not-Count Capable of Reason? Thinking Political Subjectivity in the (Neo-) Colonial World and the Limits of History. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 47 (5): 530-47

Okoth B (2017) Uhuru launches Madaraka Express SGR amid death warning to vandals. *Citizen News* 31 May https://citizentv.co.ke/news/uhuru-launches-madaraka-express-sgr-amid-death-warning-to-vandals-167127/ (last accessed November 8 2018).

Okoth J (2018) Kenya must face up to rising claims of racial discrimination by Chinese against locals. *Quartz Africa* 15 October https://qz.com/africa/1423930/kenya-must-deal-with-chinese-racial-discrimination/ (last accessed 15 May 2019)

Ombuor R (2018) Environmentalists in Kenya Protest China-Backed Railway Construction. *Voice of America* (VOA) 1 March https://www.voanews.com/a/environmentalists-in-kenya-protest-china-backed-railway-construction/4275964.html (last accessed March 8 2018)

Omondi D (2018) China now controls 66 percent of Kenya's bilateral debt. Standard Digital 3 May https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001279079/kenya-s-debt-to-china-balloons-to-sh478-6b (last accessed 15 May 2019).

Ondieki E (2018) China "blackface" skit on SGR raises racism storm. *Nation Newspaper* 17 February https://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/China--blackface--skit-on-SGR-raises-racism-storm/1066-4309462-ldficrz/index.html (last accessed March 4 2019)

Owuor S and Mbatia T (2008) Post-Independence Development of Nairobi City, Kenya. Paper presented at Workshop on African Capital Cities organised by CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, September 22–23.

Patterson J (1907) *The man-eaters of Tsavo and other East African adventures*, by Lieut.-Col. JH Patterson, DSD, with a foreword by Frederick Courtney Selous. With illustrations. London: Macmillan Publishers.

Perry K (2005) Social Memory and Black Resistance: Black Women and Neighborhood Struggles in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. *The Latin Americanist* 49 (1): 7–38

Pickup M (2016) Foreign Policy of the New Left: Explaining Brazil's Southern Partnerships. *Contexto International* 38 (1) 55 – 93

Pieterse E (2008) *City Futures: Confronting the Crisis of Urban Development*. London: Zed Books

Pithouse R (2005) The Explosive Alliance. *CLR James Journal* 11 (1): 44–78

Plano Luanda (IPGUL) *Plano Luanda: viva a nossa cidade.* Instituto de Planeamento e Gestão Urbana de Luanda (IPGUL) http://www.ipgul.net/media/attachments/2017/03/17/158000-ap-pdgml-apresentacao-a08-r00.pdf

Power M (2012) Angola 2025: The Future of the "World's Richest Poor Country" as Seen through a Chinese Rearview Mirror. *Antipode* 44 (3): 993-1014.

Roberts N (2015) Freedom as Marronage. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Roberts N (2016) On Freedom and Radicalizing the Black Radical Tradition. *African American Intellectual History Society* 18 June https://www.aaihs.org/on-freedom-and-radicalizing-the-black-radical-tradition/ (last accessed 7 October 2019)

Robinson C (2000) *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical tradition*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press

Rodney W (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications

Roy A (2006) Praxis in the Time of Empire. *Planning Theory 5*(1): 7-29

Schindler, Seth, and J Miguel Kanai (2019) Getting the Territory Right: Infrastructure-Led Development and the Re-Emergence of Spatial Planning Strategies. *Regional Studies*, First Online 3 October, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1661984.

Sexton J and Copeland H (2003) Raw life: An introduction. *Qui Parle* 13 (2): 53-62

Sharpe C (2014) Black Studies: in the wake. *The Black Scholar* 44 (2): 59-69

Scott M (2018) *Transcontinentalism: technology, geopolitics, and the Baghdad and Cape-Cairo railway projects, c. 1880-1930* (Doctoral dissertation, Newcastle University)

Silver J 2014. "Incremental Infrastructures: Material Improvisation and Social Collaboration across Post-Colonial Accra." *Urban Geography* 35 (6): 788–804.

Simone A (2004) People as infrastructure: intersecting fragments in Johannesburg. *Public culture* 16 (3): 407-429

Sojoyner D (2017) Another Life is Possible: Black Fugitivity and Enclosed Places. *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (4): 514-536

Stoler A (2006) On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty. *Public Culture* 18 (1): 125 – 146.

Stoler A. (2008) Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination. *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (2): 191–219

Stoler A (2013). *Imperial debris: On ruins and ruination*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (2012) *Financing of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Available at:
http://www.g20dwg.org/documents/pdf/view/26/

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (2016) *16 Infrastructure Projects for African Integration.* Addis Ababa: United Nations and NEPAD

Vargas J (2006) When a Favela Dared to Become a Gated Condominium: The Politics of Race and Urban space in Rio de Janeiro. *Latin American Perspectives* 33 (4): 49-81

Vargas J (2010) *Never meant to survive: Genocide and utopias in black diaspora communities*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Wafula P (2018) Revealed SGR workers treated badly by Chinese masters. *Standard Digital* 8 July https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001287179/revealed-sgr-workers-treated-badly-by-chinese-masters (last accessed 15 May 2019).

Wainana W (2019) SGR workers hold demo after colleague dies. *Standard Digital* 20 August https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/article/2001338730/sgr-workers-hold-demo-after-colleague-dies (last accessed 21 August 2019)

Wasonga C (2018) Workers' lobby wades into SGR mistreatment claims. *Business Daily* 10 July https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/news/Workers-union-wades-into-SGR-mistreatment-claims/539546-4655828-2uqf5w/index.html (last accessed 17 May 2019)

White L, Silberman L and Anderson P (1948) *Nairobi, Master Plan for a Colonial Capital: A Report Prepared For the Municipal Council of Nairobi*. Nairobi; HM Stationery Office

White L (1990) *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

World Bank (2010) *Africa's Infrastructure: A Time for Transformation*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. The Lunatic Express, circa 1899.

Figure 2. The Madaraka Express, the "Freedom Express," launched by the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta on May 31, 2017.

Figure 3. Fugitivity on the tracks. Photo by Georgina Goodwin. Available at:
http://georginagoodwin.net/album/financial-times/

---

[1] The grave labour conditions involved in building the Kenya-Uganda railway, led to the deaths of thousands of indentured workers from India who were brought to construct it by the British (Patterson 1907; Aiyar 2015).

[2] From French President Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 speech in Senegal. See more about this see Ba (2017).

[3] BBC (2017) "Kenya opens Nairobi-Mombasa Madaraka Express railway" &
Okoth (2017)"Uhuru launches Madaraka Express SGR amid death warning to vandals."

[4] There have been many protests by Kenyan workers of the CRBC, because of poor wages and working conditions. See for example Kuo (2016a) on this.

[5] The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) is led by the African Union Commission (AUC), together with the NEPAD Secretariat and the African Development Bank and aims to "develop a vision and strategic framework for the development of regional and continental infrastructure (Energy, Transport, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Trans-boundary Water Resources)." NEPAD is the Development Agency of the African Union and stands for The New Partnership for Africa's Development. The role of the African Development Bank "covers the responsibility for contractual, financial, technical and administrative management of the programme including responsibility for procurement procedures." See: https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/programme-for-infrastructure-development-in-africa-pida/,

[6] See also McKinsey Global Institute (2010). Lions on the move: The progress and potential of African economies."

[7] See more in the Lui (2017) Time Magazine article: "Trump Tells African Leaders His Friends Go There to "Get Rich." Awkward Silence Follows."

[8] Though our focus is on how infrastructure shapes social and material space more generally, "the urban," is often the locus for the conception and implementation of large-scale architectures, and it is also the muse for much recent critical interdisciplinary scholarship on space.

[9] A good example of this is that the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) designed a transport master plan for Nairobi in 2006, and this was also instrumental to the production of the 2014 new masterplan for Nairobi -- the Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Plan (NIUPLAN)

[10] See "The Promise of Infrastructure" by Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta and Hannah Appel (2018)

[11] Kuo and Kommenda (2018) "What is China's Belt and Road Initiative?"

[12] Thanks to Jia-Ching Chen, a scholar of Chinese urbanism at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who suggested "debt-trap kleptocracy" as a more fitting expression than the so called "debt-trap diplomacy."

[13] Similarly, Larkin (2013, 332) states that it "is very difficult to disentangle infrastructures from evolutionary ways of thinking not the least because this is such an intimate part of their appeal."

[14] For one example see Wainana (2019)

[15] See Kaiman (2017 and Kuo (2016a).

[16] See Wainaina (2019).

[17] See Leipapa (2018).