



Global Retail Capital and Urban Futures: Feminist Postcolonial Perspectives

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Abstract

Critical scholarship on urban development and displacement has a long history in geography. Yet one emergent driver remains strikingly understudied and poorly understood: global retail capital. In constructive tension with Marxist urban geographies of displacement, antiracist, feminist, postcolonial, and queer scholarship disrupts Anglo Euro-American and capitalo-centric intellectual modes of thought. It pushes for an intersectional understanding of capitalism, including its work driving urban displacement, as always co-produced through gender, racial, heteronormative, nationalist and other power-geometries. This essay reviews and connects these literatures, using feminist postcolonial work to theorize from the processes, drivers, impacts of and scholarship around global retail capital emerging in urban East Africa. With this we assert that feminist postcolonial interventions, engaging but other-than Marxist norms, and grounded in African continental critical feminist work, offers more complex and historicized understandings of those urban transformations, displacements and resistances driven by global retail capital. feminist postcolonial geography helps us imagine other urban futures, with and beyond Africa, that are critical of colonial past-presents; free of the modernizing imperatives of normative urban planning; and that recognize the work and insights, intellectual and material, of African women.

Keywords

feminist postcolonial geographies, gentrification, retail, urban geography, Africa

1. Masterplans and the global retail makeover

“The City Centre is not the appropriate location for fresh produce and basic foods markets, nor for trade in basic household products. Their location in the CBD ... physically degrades the CBD, disrupts its functioning and compounds its traffic problems [and]...constitute serious health and fire hazards.” (Kampala Capital City Authority, 2011, p. 105-106)

“Urban development and planning in Ibadan from women’s perspective, is incompatible with their needs, priorities and concerns...Valuing low-income women’s experiences and knowledge would ultimately lead to their inclusion, and via this inclusion, more insight could be gained on how to make the urban more liveable through attentiveness to issues of equity.” (Adeniyi Ogunyankin, 2019a, p. 439)

Funded by the World Bank, the 2011 Kampala City Physical Development Plan (KCCA, 2011) proposes a “Markets Master Plan”. Promising “to stop the endless linear sprawl of shops and public services” (KCCA, 2011, p. 37), the plan aims to transition the city from its open market spaces and small scale enterprises to a series of newly constructed, modern shopping malls. Part of a broader effort to “makeover” Kampala (KCCA, 2011, p. 98), and amidst concerns about informal economic activity and urban “overpopulation”, *retail-led development* has become a key component of the KPDP and urban restoration projects in the city more broadly. With the assertion that “the City has lost its form, attractiveness and identity as the Garden City of Africa” (KCCA, 2011, p. 21), city planners and government officials position new retail spaces and the foreign investments they bring as both lucrative and as central to

transforming, modernizing, and making global the city of Kampala (KCCA, 2011; see also KCCA, 2014; World Bank, 2014).

Kampala, Uganda is a deeply instructive space from which to build a better understanding of urban transformation. As Peake and Rieker argue, neoliberal shifts “have been actualized at the urban scale through varied and complex transformations of urbanisms, resulting in a new range of urban spatialities” (2013, p. 3). Uganda is recognized as one of, if not *the* most, rapidly neoliberalized economies in Africa (Harrison, 2006; Wiegratz & Cesnulyte, 2016) and in the last decade this economic restructuring has facilitated dramatic globalized retail capital investment. But while González describes retail-based marketplaces as “frontier spaces for processes of gentrification, displacement and dispossession” (2019, p. 4), we have limited scholarly understanding of the grounded operations of global retail capital, how it is reconfiguring city-spaces, and both the impacts and strategies of negotiation, compliance, and resistance taken up by city residents.

A feminist postcolonial eye on the urban, one attentive to and informed by African thought, is vitally instructive for understanding and navigating these shifts. First, these contemporary urban changes have sedimented colonial grounds (Hungerford & Smiley, 2016; Myers, 2014; Njoh, 2008). Deeply significant to British colonial administration in East Africa, Kampala’s contemporary urban development is entangled in this past. Second, and as this language suggests, urban past-presents are always deeply *embodied*, rooted in relational and global intimate forms of racial, gendered, classed power, lived, resisted and remade emotionally and viscerally in the everyday -- and by those, like the Nigerian women Grace Adeniyi Ogunyankin makes visible -- who are so often elided, overlooked or dismissed. As Peake and Rieker argue, “there have been no systematic efforts by urban scholars to...ensure that a

theoretical engagement with gender relations and an empirical concern with women's everyday lives are undertaken, not in separate spheres of north and south but in productive engagement with each other" (2013, p. 4). In this essay, we take the words and thought of Adeniyi Ogunyankin as our departure point. We argue for a feminist postcolonial approach to the new machinations of global retail capital, and its transformation of urban space and urban life.

2. Retail Gentrification, Globalizing moves

In the last decade, control of retail economies has moved from that of large multinational corporations into financialized clusters; connected webs of companies and their shareholders. (Bromley & Mackie, 2009). This marks a dramatic transition, merging into highly globalized, footloose and powerful clusters of "global retail capital" (Mermet, 2017). This restructured retail capital has undergone concentration, internationalization, and financialization (González, 2019; Mermet, 2017) with investors increasingly identifying lucrative global opportunities (Burnett, 2014; Ducatel & Blomley, 1990). Mermet has recently argued that global retail capital investment is one of the most significant but poorly understood drivers of contemporary urban development and displacement (2017).

Critical scholarship on urban development and displacement, typically framed via the language of gentrification, has a long history in American-European Anglo geography (Harvey, 2003, 2008; Lees, 2000, 2002; Ley, 1994, 1996; Slater, 2006; Smith, 1979, 1996, 2002). Much of this work centers a class-based account of disinvestment, reinvestment, and typified by a move by the middle class into working class parts of the poor urban core (Glass, 1964). Varied 'waves' of urban transition, transformation, and loss are viewed here as central to the process of gentrification, including: the devalorization and reinvestment of inner city spaces, rising rents,

and state-driven urban renewal policies (Davidson & Lees, 2005; Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Geographic analyses, strongly informed by political-economy perspectives, understand these waves as a form of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2003, 2008; Smith 1979, 1996).

While geographic research on urban displacement is rich and longstanding, scholarship connecting *urban* and *retail* development has only recently emerged (Burnett, 2014; Drechsler & Maginn, 2018; González, 2019; Mermet, 2017; Monroe Sullivan & Shaw, 2011; Salo, 2009; Shkuda, 2013; Verhetsel et al., 2018). This is surprising given that retail developments have long been central to urban planning decision-making and vice versa, and retail outlets often act as a centerpiece for urban reinvestment and ‘renovation’ (Kok & Bergman, 2018). Responding to this gap, a small, yet innovative body of work has begun to examine and classify the global phenomena of ‘retail gentrification’ (González & Dawson, 2017; Hubbard, 2018). Revealing the increasing connections between retail expansion and urban (re)development, González & Waley define this as a,

“cycle of disinvestment (by local authorities) and displacement (of longstanding market stall holders and customers) followed by rediscovery of the commercial and real estate value of markets and plans to rejuvenate and regenerate through the insertion into the market of stalls selling upmarket products, the relocation of markets to shopping centres or their complete ‘boutiquing.’” (2012, p. 971)

In the last fifteen years a large body of work has emerged on the “globalization of gentrification” more broadly (Ghertner, 2014), and examining its operations in, for example, China, Pakistan, India, Korea, Ethiopia and South Africa (Banerjee-Guha, 2011; Desai, 2012; Gooptu, 2010; Harris, 2008; Lees, 2011; McDonald, 2008; Muzein, 2017; Shin, 2009a, 2009b). This is provoked in part by Smith’s claim that gentrification now forms a “global urban strategy”

(2002). This has prompted efforts to generalize the gentrification thesis (Smith, 2003), fostering a “new comparative urbanism” (Clark, 2005; McCann & Ward, 2011; McFarlane, 2008, 2010; Robinson, 2002, 2011) and critiques of a “planetary urbanization” (Brenner & Schmid, 2014; Merrifield, 2013; Schmid, 2014). These linked bodies of work interrogate the primacy of capital in urban development and displacement and seek to build generalizable, but place sensitive, theories of urbanization from a multiplicity of case studies (Robinson, 2016).

We see the influence of this thinking in work on global retail capital, particularly as global south cities are targeted as key sites for this kind of investment. With growing middle classes, affordable land, and competitive tax rates for international investors and other incentives, dramatic retail development is occurring in these urban spaces (Andersson & Forslid, 2003; kmgp.com/Africa, 2016; Livingston et al., 2018; Moriarti et al., 2015; Sotunde, 2014). The activities of major multinational, national and city-level entities to address corruption and improve transparency (Doshi & Ranganathan, 2018), regularize and expand taxation, and neoliberalize trade (Grunberg, 1998; Livingston et al., 2018; Martin & Beck, 2018) all support these moves. Indeed, global South cities have seen *most growth* in global retail capital investment, with African cities offering huge potential for investors.

Given these shifts, scholars are increasingly identifying global retail investment not only as a common output of gentrification, but also as its “initiating force” (González, 2019, p. 5). Yet, as González (2019) notes, this work has primarily documented this process in Global North settings such as London (González & Dawson, 2017), Barcelona (Hernández & Andreeva, 2017), Lisbon (Guimarães, 2018), and Paris (Mermet, 2017). Much less attention has been paid on Global South cities (with the notable exception of Santiago de Chile (Schlack & Turnbull,

2015) Seoul (Jeong et al., 2015) nor to the *differentiated* impacts in terms of class, race and gender or their colonial grounds.

3. Decentering gentrification: Critical tensions in urban geography

What then do feminist and postcolonial approaches offer? How can they help us understand the drivers and impacts of global retail capital otherwise? And from elsewhere? In constructive tension with the well-established work on gentrification are critical efforts from antiracist, feminist, postcolonial, and queer scholarship (Oswin, 2016). These disrupt Euro-American Anglo and capitalo-centric intellectual modes of thought. Feminist geographers have long attend to women, gendered labor, and feminized spaces in economic processes (Massey, 1995; McDowell, 1991; Monk & Hanson, 1982; Nagar et al., 2002) including in informal economies and in the making and remaking of urban space (Nagar et al., 2002; Oberhauser, 2017; Roy, 2005; Sanders, 1987; Vasudevan, 2015; Wright, 1997). More, broadly these critical bodies of connected work interrogates how gender, race, class and heteropatriarchial power work *in concert* to structure the economy, economic impacts, and economic beneficiaries. It demands we connect macro-economic processes with the intimacies of everyday life (Mountz & Hyndman, 2006). And it is attentive to connections between the past-presents of colonialism (Arefin, 2019; McKittrick, 2011), racial logics (Mollett & Faria, 2013; Vasudevan, 2019), patriarchy and class-power (Mullings, 2009; Noxolo, 2011; Pollard et al., 2009; Pollard et al., 2011). In these ways, it pushes for an intersectional understanding of capitalism, one always co-produced through gender, racial, heteronormative, nationalist and other power-geometries (Caterall, 2014; Derickson, 2014, 2015; Gilbert, 2010; Gilmore, 2002, 2007; Heynen, 2014;

Mullings & Kern, 2013; Peake, 2016; Peake and Rieker, 2013; Pratt, 2015; Roy, 2011a; Vasudevan & Smith, 2020).

These interventions have crucially complicated work on capitalism and the urban (Peake & Rieker, 2013). Feminist geography brings an ethnographic, embodied, global-intimate scalar analysis to our understanding of urban development and displacement, linking between structural and intimate violences that shape urban spaces and everyday adaptations to urban life (Datta, 2016). This approach decenters the usual city-suspects of urban geography to make space for detailed and *differentiated* (Doshi, 2012; Varley, 2013) accounts of those subjects and spaces, such as women, too often left out of urban studies (Béneker et al., 2010; Chlala, 2020; Doshi & Ranganathan, 2018; Iverson & Sanders, 2009; Peake & Bain, 2017; Silvey, 2004; Wright, 2013). Feminist work has been vital in recognizing their varied forms of negotiation, resistance, agency, and political subjectivity (Buckley, 2014; Faria, 2010, 2014; Kanai & Kutz, 2013; Nelson, 2004; Schlyter, 2009; Staehli, 2013; Wright, 2004), and their own work producing and remaking urban space in their efforts to make life livable (Das, 2007).

Connected *de* - and *postcolonial* efforts dovetail with, deepen and complicate feminist work on the urban. As Peake and Rieker have lamented, “why does the bulk of academic work on women in the global south remain committed to the deeply ethnographic frame, rarely theorizing its interventions within an urban geography frame? And why does feminist theorizing from the north not engage with rich theoretical literature from the south?” (2013, p. 5). De- and postcolonial work is typically rooted in global south contexts, but connects global north *and* global south people, places, and processes in the way that Peake and Rieker call for. This body of work aims to “provincialize” Europe and North America in these debates (Sheppard et al., 2013; following Chakrabarty, 2000). That is, it works to disrupt Anglo-Euroamerican norms of

modernity, rationality and universality that infuse (even critical) arguments about, say, “planetary urbanization”, “global cities” and the “urban age” (Doshi & Ranganathan, 2018; Roy, 2011b). It attends to global south realities, frames of thinking, and methodologies (Doshi, 2012; Ghertner, 2013; Roy, 2011a; Sequera & Janoschka, 2016), largely deemed “off the map...structurally irrelevant to the commanding heights of the global economy” (Roy, 2011b, p. 10). Part of their important work is to highlight where forms of gentrification are operating in the global south, but also *the limits* and *coloniality* of this framework – where other processes specific to the particularities of place, socio-cultural, political-economic, and temporal context are at work, and where different forms of resistance emerge.

Particularly useful for this project are frameworks developed by feminist postcolonial intellectuals like Doshi (2015, 2016), Doshi & Ranganathan (2018), and Adeniyi Ogunyankin (2015, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). In her study of development and dispossession of poor communities in Mumbai, India, Sapana Doshi pushes against Marxist gentrification analyses in the Indian context arguing that,

“understanding socio-spatial transformation in Indian cities requires a processual analysis of how public space is enclosed rather than simply the outcome of class-based displacement. Indeed most studies of urban transformation in India use concepts other than gentrification because urban transformation in India has advanced through a different set of extra-economic processes and conditions...Resisting the notion of an Indian style gentrification is crucial not only for more accurate analyses but also for effective political practice.”(2015, p. 114-115)

Doshi extends the critical feminist, antiracist, and queer moves described above, with postcolonial interventions. She calls for an “embodied urban political ecology” approach (2016)

that attends to: the intimate, embodied, and affective experiences and processes of urban life (Datta, 2016; Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2013; Sultana, 2011); to the labor of social reproduction (Federici, 2004; Katz, 2001), the connected, intersectional work of power, for example as it is expressed via racial and masculinist capitalism; and the varied ways that political subjectivity, shaped by these intersectional markers of power, are produced through and productive of urban spaces (Doshi & Ranganathan, 2018).

Doshi's intervention dovetails with the innovations of Adeniyi Ogunyankin, who calls for "Afro-futurist imaginings" and place-making practices (2018, p.1161; 2019a). She engages with Ananya Roy's critical work on neoliberal urban "worlding" efforts (including "from below", ie from the global south (Simone, 2001). But for Adeniyi Ogunyankin,

"Afrofuturism is relevant here because inherent to the Africa rising rhetoric is a desire to break away from the past in efforts to "world" Africa, whereas Afrofuturism not only reclaims the history of the future but also of the past." (2018, p.1161)

She calls for alternative and embodied urban futurities envisioned and enacted by those Africans ignored, maligned or abjected by dominant urbanisms. The African subjectivities valorized in these efforts should not, she asserts, be those aligned with world class identities, as per Afropolitan narratives, but rather "promote survival and activism...in an increasingly competitive global political economy" (2018, p.1162). It is an African urbanity that centers social justice and that recognizes and values African women as urban thinkers and creators.

4. Urban African Past-Presents

Adeniyi Ogunyankin joins a body of scholars making key postcolonial interventions on the urban (2019b). This body of work highlights how hegemonic African urban thought is deeply infused by fifty years of developmentalist and modernist ideologies (e.g. World Bank, 1991;

Friedmann, 1986), which typically position African cities as unplanned, informal, overpopulated, overurbanized, and behind. These are binaries with deep roots in colonialist arguments that positioned colonial cities as civilizing spaces. They not only reproduce orientalist imaginaries of the African continent but also work relationally to reproduce an ideal, modern western city (e.g. McCall, 1955 in Adeniyi Ogunyankin, 2019b; see also Myers, 2011). In Uganda -- as elsewhere in the global south (Lloyd-Evans, 2008; Meagher, 1995; N'guessan, 2011), but grounded in different ways (Njoh, 2008) -- contemporary urban development plans contain the “imperial debris” (Stoler, 2008) of colonial projects and discourses of modernization and/as development. This includes the 1906 construction of Nakasero Fort, the 1951 Kampala City Plan, and the subsequent creation of African residential zones: Nakawa and Naguru – all in the Kampala area. These planning schemes were explicitly concerned with racial segregation and the strict control of African people to produce “safe” and “hygienic” urban landscapes (authors et. al, in review; Byerley, 2013; Omolo-Okalebo et al., 2010). While these assumptions hold powerful popular, policy-based and academic sway, including in contemporary urban planning efforts in Africa, and as our opening quote from the Kampala City Plan suggests, there is now sustained critique from critical scholars of urban African and African urban planning, in concert with wider post- and anti-colonial, anti-capitalism and anti-development thought on the urban (Simone, 2004; Robinson, 2013).

As we describe above, some of this critical work takes up those Marxist frameworks of gentrification, globalizing them and grounding them in new ways in global south contexts. But African urban scholars also complicate, extend and discard Euro-American models of gentrification in their work on urban displacement, marginality, poverty, and planning. In line with calls to “Writ[e] the World from an African Metropolis” (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2004), an

important body of work has emerged to think through, theorize from, and produce new radical imaginings around urban Africa (see Kinyanjui, 2014; Simone & Abouhane, 2005). This not only critiques modernist narratives of “the urban civilization thesis” (Bissell, 2007 in Adeniyi Ogunyankin, 2019b) but complicates Capitalo-, American-, Anglo- and Euro-centric Marxist critiques of urban displacement that seek, often in the same vein as this work, to hypothesize the urban (Friedmann, 1986; Smith, 2002). It includes work on the possibilities and limitations of sustainable development, “green urbanism”, transportation fixes (e.g. Cobbinah et al., 2015) and a rich scholarship on agency and resistance strategies in urban African residents’ engagement with the state, international development agencies and other entities that structure urban life (Acey, 2018; Attia & Khalil, 2015). It demands we always attend to the colonial power in shaping past and present urban forms and urban life (Bigon, 2005; Byerley, 2013; Njoh, 2008; Omolo-Okalebo et al., 2010; Usanlele & Oduntan, 2018).

To detail some examples here: Charisma Acey’s (2018) work on urban water management and resource access eschews normative arguments about state-citizen relationships in resource provision. In the hybridized public and private provision-settings of Lagos and Benin City, Nigeria, she uses grounded, ethnographic research to understand the strategies residents use to access water, and the challenges they face via the “structural silences” that hinder access for some. Work in this vein dismantles static divisions delineating formal and informal economic activity in African cities and binaries that reinforce the polarizing and simplifying “Africa Rising”/ “Dark Continent” narrative. Another instructive example is work by Johnston-Anumonwo and Doane (2011). They disrupt the deployment of this binary in debates around urban women’s entrepreneurialism in the face of rapid neoliberal globalization, complicating their the rendering of African women either as innovative entrepreneurs or victimized by

economic restructuring. Johnston-Anumonwo and Doane trace this narrative to the “benefits versus opportunities” framework developed in Euro-American urban economic thought and “tested” in Latin American and Asian contexts. Offering complexity at several scales, they argue that such theorizing cannot so easily be transferred to African settings where industrialization takes different and uneven form. In turn, and drawing on intersectional and postcolonial feminist critiques on the homogenizing category of “African woman”, they argue that there is in fact great diversity in terms of age, location, access to capital etc that determine women’s engagement with globalizing economies.

Last here, and for our particular focus on retail, feminist postcolonial work on African urban marketplaces is particularly insightful. In Ikioda’s (2013, 2014) examination of marketplaces in Lagos, Nigeria, she argues that,

“Marketplaces in Lagos may although appear disorganised and seemingly chaotic, but they still potentially reveal important interconnections that can inform and illuminate theories on retailing and consumption in new and exciting ways.” (2013, p. 524)

Her study, published here in *Geography Compass*, demonstrates that Nigeria marketplaces can be dynamic, lucrative, and highly popular spaces of consumption, where questions of urban belonging, densification, formalization, diverse economic opportunities are materialized and constantly negotiated. A feminist postcolonial lens starts with this assertion. It opposes Euro-centric and developmentalist models that position these spaces as backwards and chaotic sites to be regulated and controlled. Instead it recognizes and traces their importance to urban social and economic structures (authors, in review; Ellis & MacGaffey, 1996; Guyer & Hansen, 2001; Horton & Horton, 2004; Ikioda, 2013; Oberhauser, 2010; Oberhauser & Yeboah, 2011; Oberhauser & Johnston-Anumonwo, 2011), including those of global capital investment. In turn,

however, a feminist postcolonial approach insists we link economic materialities and their impacts on urban space, with processes of *consumption* and subject formation. It prompts us to not only consider the tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, neoliberal governmentalities and their disciplining of the body, but also how global retail investment and the consumption practices (Ramamurthy, 2004) they drive are negotiated, celebrated, refashioned, worried over and refused (Adeniyi Ogunyankin, 2016; Dosekun, 2016; Faria, 2014; Gökarıksel & Secor, 2009; Oza, 2012; Thomas, 2009, 2020).

This body of literature valuably complicates dominant and globalized urban planning and development narratives, which have made commonsense the argument that a rise in formal economies will gradually displace the informal economy (World Bank, 1991; see also KCCA, 2011). Instead, these scholars have shown that the rise of informality is, in fact, often driven by neoliberal development reforms designed to formalize the economy (McFarlane, 2012; Miraftab, 2004) and may also be a form of strategic resilience (Dezeuze, 2006; Roy, 2009). Work disrupting modernist formal/ informal binaries prompts more complex understanding of what constitutes informality, the boundaries and/or porosity between formal and informal, and the grey areas of taxation, employment, and hustling (Chant & Pedwell, 2008; Desai & Potter, 2014; Kamete, 2013; La Porta & Shleifer, 2014; Maloney, 2004; Oberhauser, 2010; Oberhauser & Johnston-Anumonwo, 2014; Oberhauser & Yeboah, 2011; Varley, 2013). Here, a feminist push, reminds us of *women's* centrality in the informal sector, and in these every day moves of resistance, negotiation and urban place-making (Kinyanjui, 2014).

5. Urban transformation, negotiation, resistance: Global Retail Capital incursions in Uganda

What if we prioritise radical imaginings of Africanity that value social justice over world-class aspirations and thus disengage from imperial continuities of cartographic hierarchies? (Adeniyi Ogunyankin, 2018, p. 1161)

While global retail capital has transformed cities in Latin America, South and East Asia, the newest and most instructive forms of global retail capital are manifest in African cities, (Bromley & Mackie, 2009; Bryceson, 2011; Muchadenyika & Waiswa, 2018; Shand, 2018; World Bank, 2017). The major cities of South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Kenya, and Uganda have seen substantial growth in retail capital investment in the last decade (Muchadenyika & Waiswa, 2018; World Bank, 2017), dramatically widening urban inequality and displacement (World Bank, 2016). This new wave of financial investment is reorganizing cities. Not simply a top-down process, this occurs in coordination, negotiation, and contestation with nation- and city-state officials, local businesses and city residents, positioned differently, and with varied capacities and strategies to respond.

Global retail capital has become central to the (re)development of Kampala in the near and long-term future. Kampala, Uganda, part of a rapidly urbanizing retail capital hub, is a remarkably insightful indicator of these shifts and their impacts. In the last decade Uganda has seen some of the highest rates of global retail capital targeting the African continent, primarily from Gulf-Arab, South and East Asian, European and North American sources (Brown, 2013, 2014; kmgp.com/Africa, 2016; Sotunde, 2014). Uganda has one of the world's highest rates of urban development (Brown, 2012), with urbanization rates projected to increase from 12 percent in 2012 to 30 percent in 2030 (Cities Alliance, 2010). The rise of retail development in these spaces of Kampala dovetails with greater Kampala-, nation-state- and multinational government initiatives to formalize and develop the city (KCCA, 2014). By 2016, 17 percent of international

investment flows were located in retail (East African Community, 2011). Gulf Arab, South Asian, and North American investors drive the development of a number of high-end malls in peri-urban and prime city center locations, displacing informal housing settlements and establishing informal market centers (authors et. al, in review).

Dramatic urban shifts have occurred here in the last decade from residential and small-scale trading sectors to expansive, indoor and high-end retail spaces. Two streets away is Kisenyi, one of the largest “slum” housing areas and informal economic spaces in Kampala. The Kisenyi sub-district is home to Owino, one of the largest open markets in Africa. Here, and in a cluster of neighboring sites, small-scale, informal but unionized and highly organized retail activity has traditionally dominated. With the rise of global retail capital, this area has seen increased pressures to be formalized and (re)developed, with the resultant displacement of large numbers of (primarily women) traders (Abesiga, 2014; Salo, 2009). Interviews at the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and with local traders and residents and analysis of multinational, national and city-level tax expansion and urban planning documents (KCCA, 2014; World Bank, 2017) strongly suggests that the rise of retail development in these spaces of Kampala dovetails with greater Kampala-, nation-state- and multinational government initiatives to formalize and develop the city (KCCA, 2014).

Lest we reproduce the narratives we seek to critique, this story of urban growth, “formalization” can and must be instructively complicated via a feminist and postcolonial lens. For example, unions such as Kampala City Traders Association, Association of Informal Sector Operators and Workers, and the Owino Women’s Association, have resisted these moves, asking for land titles to reclaim their right to central city spaces (authors et. al, in review; Bagala et al., 2011; Kasozi, 2011; N’guessan, 2011). At the same time, the formalization of retail is occurring

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2
3 alongside a dramatic growth in informal economic entrepreneurialism from around the East
4 African region and with the significant participation of women (authors et. al, in review; Larsson
5 & Svensson, 2018). In Uganda, such informal activity now forms 43 percent of the national
6 economy (Kibelebele, 2014; see also Kinyanjui, 2014).
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12 But the construction of mid- and high-end malls is already well underway in the city.
13 Most infrastructural development is located in the Nakasero area in Kampala’s Central Division.
14 Once home to colonial administrators, it now hosts international hotels, high-end malls like
15 Kampala Boulevard, and the upcoming luxurious Kampala Kingdom Shopping Centre. Colonial
16 planning schemes were explicitly concerned with (white) safety and the strict control of African
17 people (authors et. al, in review; Byerley, 2013; Omolo-Okalebo et al., 2010). As the opening
18 quote of this paper highlights, economic *modernization* directives, cloaked in the language of
19 safety, also drive contemporary urban transformation.
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31 The shifts underway in Kampala offer an instructive case of urban transformation,
32 development, displacement, and struggle. But examples of the drivers and management of urban
33 change in places like this are more than case studies for theoretical innovation, they are
34 instructive places to theorize *from*. If we are to foster safe, sustainable and humane urban life in
35 this century, we must understand the geographic, political-economic, ecological and socio-
36 cultural mechanisms of contemporary urban development and displacement. We must do so in
37 those cities of the global south that are experiencing and navigating its sharpest edges. And we
38 must understand its key contemporary driver: global retail capital. With this we assert that
39 feminist postcolonial interventions, engaging but other-than Marxists norms, and grounded in
40 African continental critical feminist work, offers more complex and historicized understandings
41 of those urban transformations, displacements and resistances driven by global retail capital.
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Feminist postcolonial geography helps us imagine other urban futures, with and beyond Africa, that are critical of colonial past-presents; free of the modernizing imperatives of normative urban planning; and that recognize the work and insights, intellectual and material, of African women.

For Peer Review

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