‘Actually-existing’ Neoliberalism in Nairobi, Kenya:
Examining Informal Traders’ Negotiations over Access to
the Entrepreneurial City

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the outcomes of entrepreneurial urban governance in Nairobi, Kenya, through the ethnographic purview of informal traders negotiating access to space. While I demonstrate that the urban renewal process in Nairobi reflects the ongoing shift to entrepreneurialism and subsequent securitization occurring in many cities around the globe, I examine how features of the local context – in particular, the presence of powerful informal authorities and informal political structures – have complicated the implementation of its national development plan, *Vision 2030*. I argue that the outcomes of neoliberal urban renewal are at odds with the stated aims of creating a more secure and democratic city. I proffer that these dynamics are both produced by and reproductive of differentiated forms of citizenship that have been enforced in Nairobi since the colonial era, and have long contributed to urban stratification and, by extension, urban insecurity.

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1 Chapter: Introduction

On a chilly afternoon in July, I helped Macharia¹ fold women's blouses near the Globe Cinema Roundabout on the northeastern edge of Nairobi's Central Business District (CBD). This strip of sidewalk heading from the Globe Cinema Roundabout towards River Road is a popular spot for hawkers, the local term for unlicensed informal traders. Each afternoon, hawkers like Macharia line up to display mounds of second-hand clothing, accessories, and various foodstuffs. *Jua kali*² mechanics and other types of informal labourers also regularly use nearby spaces to conduct their work. On that particular day, Macharia's business partner Kelvin was negotiating the price of a sweater with a young female customer, when we were startled by the loud "pop!" of an exploding teargas canister. The bills Kelvin's customer had been handing him dropped to the ground, as Macharia grabbed the tarp and took off running within seconds. Many others followed, sprinting toward alleyways or dodging cars as they crossed the busy street. They left a trail of clothing behind them: a men's sandal on the boulevard, a pair of jeans on the road, and a leopard-print tank top tangled in the gutter.

"Follow me!" Kelvin yelled, as he headed towards a nearby print shop. "They'll probably let us stay here until it passes, since you are a *mzungu*".³ The receptionist looked at us warily but did not ask us to leave as she crossed the room to shut the windows tightly, making sure none of the tear gas could get inside. The customer who

¹ All individuals with whom interactions are described or to whom quotes have been attributed in this thesis have been given pseudonyms in order to protect confidentiality.

² *Jua Kali* is a term for the informal sector in Kenya. Translated literally, it means "hot sun," referring to the harsh conditions endured by informal labourers.

³ Term for "white person" or person of European descent used throughout East Africa. Its definition is contested; it is sometimes used to describe those who are not necessarily "white" but are well travelled or from elsewhere, such as the many Chinese expats living in East Africa or even Africans who have returned from long stays abroad. Importantly, it denotes privilege and influence from outside of Africa.

had just purchased the blouse from Kelvin also followed us to safety, apologizing that her payment had been lost in the chaos. She lived in a nearby Eastlands estate and had stopped to buy goods from Kelvin and Macharia on her way to catch a *matatu*⁴ home from work. Kelvin told her not to worry about the lost shillings; she was a loyal customer. As they spoke, I gathered that this was not the first time she had been caught up in a confrontation on the way to the bus. It seems to happen often.

The three of us watched through the curtains as a steady stream of baton-wielding police officers jogged after the fleeing hawkers. I counted over thirty officers. Some were wearing City Inspectorate uniforms, the force created specifically for policing the downtown core, while others clearly belonged to the central Kenya Police Force. Most carried AK-47s and a number of them wore some form of riot gear for protection. A few traders stayed behind, brandishing the jagged ends of broken bottles in an attempt to hold the officers back. Most of these resistors were quickly taken down with rough beatings, handcuffed, and placed in City Inspectorate trucks.

Illustration 1 Watching police chase hawkers

After about fifteen minutes, the receptionist nodded to us, indicating it was time to go. We stepped back out onto the street, carefully avoiding chards of glass underfoot. Kelvin, a devout Muslim, was late for prayers. As I hurried with him towards a nearby mosque, I thanked him profusely for keeping me out

Source: Author

⁴ Popular mode of transport in Kenya, usually a minibus that seats between eleven to fourteen passengers.

of harm's way. "No, thank *you*," he replied, to my surprise. "At prayers today I will thank Allah that you were there with me. *Wazungu*⁵ are allowed in places that I'm not," he went on to explain, "It was nice not to fight today. Anyways, see you tomorrow – same time, same place!"

Informal trade, the kind of work Kelvin and Macharia engage in, is one of many well-established survival strategies of the urban poor in cities of the Global South. Though it has been practiced for many decades, the prevalence of informal trade has expanded as global patterns of poverty take on an increasingly "urban face," with rates of urbanization continuing to accelerate across the Global South (Kruijt and Koonings 2009: 1-10). In the wake of neoliberal structural adjustment, African cities have experienced extensive informalization, meaning that urban residents have increasingly drawn on their communities, kinship ties, neighbourhoods, and other social relations as the primary resources for their survival. While this study focuses primarily on the practice of informal trade in Nairobi, informality is not limited to economic practices and individual access to resources; importantly, it extends to the social and political realms of urban life.

The study of informality has been a key focus of urban studies literature, from studies that laud its potential as an economic force (Hart 1973), to those that emphasize resilience and resourcefulness in relation to urban change (Simone 2005), and its importance in the fashioning of urban identity and belonging (Kinyanjui 2012). Studies have also, however, understood informality in the context of precarious labour and structural marginalization (Bromley 1978; Meagher 1995), and, more recently, urban exclusion and criminalization (Kruijt and Koonings 2009). As the processes that produce

⁵ Plural form of *mzungu*

and organize urban space have shifted in the context of neoliberalization and globalization, those surviving through informal means – like Kelvin and Macharia – have found themselves increasingly pushed to the social and spatial margins of the city, sometimes violently.

This thesis contributes to a growing body of literature exploring how the adoption of “entrepreneurial urban governance” (Harvey 1989) strategies has fostered deeply inequitable socio-spatial outcomes, valuing urban inhabitants based on their ability to contribute to the overall competitiveness of the city and excluding those who have been deemed a global “surplus” population (Davis 2006). The expressions and consequences of enforcing a neoliberal urban order have extended from the privatization of public space (Kohn 2004), increased segregation (Caldeira 2000), and the securitization of urban space (Becker and Müller 2013), to the displacement and criminalization of the poor (Davis 2006; Samara 2011; Kamete 2008). These dynamics are especially pronounced in cities of the Global South, where socio-spatial inequality along lines of race and class are deeply entrenched in the landscape of the city; in Nairobi, it is evident in housing, service provision, and – importantly – security, among other things. Given the entrepreneurial imperative to keep important city-spaces “orderly” in a manner that will appeal to wealthy investors and tourists in the name of “competitiveness,” informal traders have become prime targets for criminalization and exclusion, as we can see from Kelvin and Macharia’s encounter.

Contestations between informal traders and urban authorities in Nairobi have indeed accelerated in recent years with the adoption of entrepreneurial development strategies, which aim to turn Nairobi into a “world-class city.” Despite their well-

established presence in Nairobi, hawkers have been “written out of the urban imaginary” presented in Kenya’s ambitious urban development strategy, *Vision 2030*, which lists economic growth, competitiveness, and the attraction of investors and tourists as its main priorities (Linehan 2007). Kelvin’s claim that I am “allowed in places” that he is not reveals the way in which the CBD has increasingly become a space of privilege reserved for certain individuals: my whiteness, also a symbol of presumed economic wealth, granted us access to a place of refuge that was otherwise unavailable to him as a young black Kenyan hawker. Conversely, hawkers are regularly chased from the downtown core in violent confrontations. In the instance I witnessed, over thirty security officers were deployed and willing to use brute force, indicating not only the securitization of Nairobi’s urban space in general but that hawkers themselves are treated as a *criminal* threat to the city’s search for world-class status.

Kelvin’s declaration that he will be back at the “same time, same place” the next day, however, elucidates something else about how entrepreneurial urban governance has functioned in Nairobi: that the implementation of neoliberal urban renewal has not been complete, nor has it gone uncontested. Rather, the imposition of *Vision 2030* is constantly challenged and negotiated. While plenty of literature has explored the trends of worsening socio-spatial inequality, the securitization of urban space, and the displacement and criminalization of the poor associated with entrepreneurial urban governance strategies, Crossa (2009: 45) notes that “questions about what happens to those who have been displaced, or about whether their struggles against city governments and their elite ‘partners’ might lead to novel arrangements” have been downplayed in

literature on entrepreneurial cities. The results of such negotiations often lead to outcomes that are contradictory to the expressed goals of neoliberal urban renewal.

This thesis aims to explore the outcomes of entrepreneurial urban governance in Nairobi through the purview of informal traders negotiating their claims to urban space in the face of increasing exclusion. While I demonstrate that the urban renewal process in Nairobi reflects the ongoing shift to entrepreneurialism and subsequent securitization occurring in many cities around the globe, I examine how features of the local context – in particular, the presence of powerful informal authorities and informal political structures – have complicated the implementation of *Vision 2030*. I contend that the outcomes of neoliberal urban renewal are in many ways at odds with the stated aims of creating a safer, more secure, and more democratic city. On the contrary, I argue that the methods used by informal traders to negotiate their claims to urban space have empowered informal authorities and informal political structures in ways that are potentially regenerative of ethnic cleavages, and by extension, the proliferation of urban violence. Of particular importance to this study is the involvement of vigilante groups and gangs who have benefited from the exclusion of urban traders by capitalizing on the methods they have used to negotiate their claims to space, as well as on the corruption and culture of informality that has permeated Kenyan security forces themselves. I proffer that these dynamics are both produced by and reproductive of differentiated forms of citizenship that have been enforced in Nairobi since the colonial era, and have long contributed to urban stratification and exclusion.

The organization of this thesis is as follows. In the second chapter, I outline a theoretical framework through which we can analyze the arrangements made by informal

traders in the face of increasing urban exclusion. I clarify how the ordering of space is implicated in always-contested processes of subjectification, paying particular attention to how these dynamics have been re-scaled with the adoption of neoliberalism.

Specifically, I explore how the extensive informalization of African cities – in particular, the presence of informal political structures and authorities – has shaped responses to neoliberal urban renewal, in ways that reinforce differentiated forms of citizenship that are contradictory to the democratic values purported by neoliberal ideology. I also outline the methodological considerations of this study, which draws on a historical political economy perspective as well as ten weeks of fieldwork conducted in Nairobi during which I embedded myself in an informal market to employ participant observation and conduct in-depth interviews with a number of willing participants.

In my third chapter, I attempt to demonstrate context and continuities by providing a historical perspective on urban planning, informal trade, and social control in Nairobi. I demonstrate that the technologies used in the regulation of informal trade have been key to social control and the production of particular “acceptable” forms of citizens. I demonstrate how the colonial formation of informal political structures in Kenya has complicated the ideal of citizenship, leading to a repressive state and a society divided heavily along ethnic lines even in its postcolonial reconfigurations. I also examine the emergence of competing authorities in Nairobi, particularly in the wake of neoliberal structural adjustment.

In the fourth chapter, I analyze the political economic origins of urban renewal efforts in Nairobi, related to the underlying vision of the neoliberal urban order and the corresponding shift to entrepreneurial urban governance. I argue that the securitization of

urban space and the criminalization of informal traders have been employed as technologies to enforce this “competitive” urban order. I demonstrate how this has narrowed and complicated the ideals of citizenship, contradicting the values extolled in *Vision 2030*. I then go on to explore the multiple ways in which neoliberal urban renewal has been contested, emphasizing how features of the local context such as informal political structures as well as the presence of powerful actors who operate on the fringes of legality have mediated this process, in ways that are potentially regenerative of urban stratification and violence that undermine the ultimate goals of *Vision 2030*.

In the fifth chapter, I offer some concluding thoughts and highlight the main research contributions of this thesis to the study of urban renewal in Nairobi specifically, as well as literature about informal trade and contestation over urban space more generally. Finally, I outline potential considerations for further research related to this project.

2 Chapter: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Certain heuristic approaches are required in order to analyze the tactics employed by informal traders in the face of increasing urban exclusion. In this chapter, I analyze how the ordering of space is premised upon the production of particular types of urban citizens, and how the axes of inclusion/exclusion have narrowed in the neoliberal era with the adoption of entrepreneurial urban governance. I explore how the devolution of governance networks has complicated conventional notions of citizenship, through both the expansion of neoliberal governance as well as the extensive informalization of African cities. Specifically, I outline how the emergence of informal authorities and informal political structures are likely to shape responses to urban renewal, potentially leading to contradictory outcomes. Finally, I lay out my methodological approach, emphasizing my positionality as a researcher and the potential limitations of this study.

2.1 Space, power, and planning

To begin, this analysis must be rooted in Henri Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualization of 'space' as something fundamentally social, rather than a physical site on which human activity simply takes place. Lefebvre posits that space is both *produced by* and *productive of* social relations. Lefebvre (1991) argues that capitalist social relations "produce" cities as industries cluster in agglomeration economies, creating sites of production and work that have grown exponentially over the last two centuries. Importantly, space is also where "social relations are reproduced, invented, identity constructed, and power exercised or opposed" (Lefebvre 1991 cited in Wigle 2010). Urbanization is thus as "an assemblage of increasingly heterogeneous elements" through the "accelerated, extended, and intensified intersections of bodies, landscapes,

objects, and technologies,” with interests expanding far beyond the realm of capital accumulation (Simone 2005: 8). Conceiving of space as social allows us to think beyond the expressed use of urban space in order to understand how its uses play a role in shaping not only the physical but also the social landscape of the city, including ideas of identity, community, and belonging.

Given that “power always works through the social organization of space” (Burr et al. 2007: 26), states have undertaken a number of official interventions to direct the socio-spatial activities of urban inhabitants since the trend of urbanization began during the industrial revolution in Europe. Such interventions are thus key in the administration, policing, and ordering of populations according to the vision of the state (Scott 1998: 55-61). Following the Foucauldian (1991) perspective that modern states target and regulate *populations* rather than territory, we can understand the state as “governmentalized” through the diffusion of power in a range of institutions, procedures, tactics, and technologies which acquire the material means to impose a particular ordering “rationality” or logic on populations (Foucault 1990 cited in Rose-Redwood 2006: 472). The most significant intervention has generally been through the urban planning regime, which has functioned as “the leading institution in the rationalization of urban space” and is intricately linked to a number of “technologies of power” (Foucault 1990) that work to impose spatial order such as property laws, licensing regulations, or security apparatuses (Kamete 2013: 640). Foucault (1990) also considered discourse an important technology of power. This means that planning discourses have material effects on the ordering of space by shaping “what is appropriate to think about, what to think (or believe) about the issues we should think about, and how to act in consistent ways with what we believe”

(Pieterse 2005: 158; Kamete 2013). According to Foucault's (1990) conception, technologies of power – and discourse, especially – can be (re)produced by non-state actors in addition to the governmentalized state.

Though planning is often discursively presented as a technical profession reserved for “experts,” planning must be conceived of as a political and power-laden mode of organization. Planning regimes are composed of technologies through which power is mobilized to enforce a particular ordering logic or rationality. Like Lefebvre (1991), Scott (1998) recognizes the importance of “exchange,” or capitalism, as fundamental to the rationality behind urban planning, but he also emphasizes the underlying vision of the “public good” from which planning regimes were born. Scott (1998: 88-93) argues that the field of urban planning arose from the notion of the “self-improvement of man” that originated during the Enlightenment, though it became particularly pervasive during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries when technologies were available to enable the “social engineering” of city life by the state in order to “improve the human condition,” often particularly related to public health concerns. The conception of a “public,” however, is not neutral. Citing Eley, Mamdani (1996: 15) says,

The “public sphere” is in fact “an arena of contested meanings,” both in that “different and opposing publics maneuvered for space” within it and in the sense that “certain ‘publics’ (women, subordinate nationalities, popular classes like the urban poor, the working class, and the peasantry) may have been excluded altogether” from it.

As a result, cities have often acquired classed, racialized, gendered, and other expressions of socio-spatial inequality as particular subpopulations are excluded from the valorized urban order. We can understand the production and organization of space, then, to be not only implicated in capitalist extraction but also in the production of sovereign power and

subjectification: “a set of practices aimed at improving ‘the people’...and turning them into good citizens worthy and capable of entering the community, the nation, or the state” (Burr et al. 2007: 15). Meanwhile, those who do not conform to the ordering logic and subjectivities are excluded.

Urban exclusion has had particular implications in Africa, where many new cities were created expressly *by* and *for* the colonial regime. Built for the very purpose of administrating colonized populations, many African urban centres involved “considerable town planning” to create “acceptable” environments for foreign settlers, while also securing the use of land for extractive purposes (Freund 2007: 77). The exclusion that defined the specificity of social and political membership under colonial rule was race (Mamdani 1996: 15). The homes of the colonized population were kept far from white settlers and were only available on a temporary and untenured basis. While the urban exclusion of the African population was presented as a measure to mitigate “public” health concerns about Whites being “infected” by other races, the effort to manage the population in this way was also an important mode of controlling the flow of African labour on a transitory basis, which prevented workers from organizing against their colonizers (Mabogunje 1990; Freund 2007). In other words, the political, economic, and social order was maintained through governing the socio-spatial activities of the urban population and mediating their access to space. As a result, cities became deeply fragmented along the lines of race and class. Hence, despite being presented as purely “technical” and “rational,” we must understand the ordering of urban space as highly politicized and reflective of power relations. In recognizing that “*the technical itself has*

a politics,” we open the possibility of “viewing the realm of the technical as a potential site of...contestation” (Rose-Redwood 2006: 482, emphasis in the original).

Scott identifies two key tensions within the field of planning. Quoting Marx, he (1998: 93) proffers that constant attempts to revolutionize production (the relations that drive urbanization) cause an “uninterrupted disturbance of social relations” often at odds with the imposed order (Scott 1998: 135). The growing economy in British East Africa, for example, came to depend increasingly on “urbanized” Africans, threatening the imposed racially segregated order of the “civilized” city (Mamdani 1996: 6). This tension required the expansion of inclusion, which in turn led to a reconfiguration of the parameters of exclusion. Mamdani (1996) argues that the main form of late colonial rule in much of sub-Saharan Africa was the “making of ethnicity,” which produced new axes of inclusion/exclusion that would uphold the dominant political-economic order. At the risk of reifying it as a fixed concept, ethnicity – a term that is often assumed in scholarly literature to be self-evident – can be best understood as “a set of descent-based cultural identifiers used to assign persons to groupings” (Cohen 1978: 387). Ethnicity has no singular construction; in fact, it “arises in the exercise of power” (Wilmsen 1996: 4). Understanding how the production of ethnicity as an axis of inclusion/exclusion has evolved in Nairobi is key to this study.

The second tension Scott identifies is located in the relational aspect of power. People engage with the systems imposed on them in diverse ways, making use of them, rejecting them, or hybridizing them (Watson 2009: 2269). In practice, urban planning regimes must negotiate with diverse uses of space, or what Scott (1998: 143) calls “the unexpected, small, informal, and even nonproductive human activities that constitute the

vitality of the ‘lived city.’” The social importance of space is often lost in abstractions utilized by planning regimes, such as maps, statistics, or record-keeping, what Scott calls “state projects of legibility and simplification.” The imposition of a particular order on these highly diverse and misunderstood contexts can lead to unexpected outcomes. It is the interplay of power between planning regimes and a highly differentiated and “situated” urban citizenry that accounts for the “sometimes contradictory” outcomes of planning regimes (Watson 2009: 2268). For example, Holston (2009) found that though planning regimes in Brazil tended to rely on the “misrule of law” to enforce an urban order in which land was held in the hands of the state and its wealthy allies, the urban poor were able to legitimize their own land claims by learning to manipulate this “misrule” for their own purposes. Understanding the implications of how street traders, who are excluded under the current urban planning regime in Nairobi, have negotiated their claims to urban space in ways that are potentially contradictory to the goals of the planning regime, is the focus of this study.

While this perspective is useful in understanding how the organization of space is a power-laden process implicated in subjectification, it lacks the analytical tools to understand the contradictory processes of capital accumulation and creative destruction that have shaped urban landscapes, particularly in the neoliberal era. The advent of neoliberalism has rearranged the forces that organize the city, as well as led to the introduction of new technologies of power. I turn now to explore how neoliberalism, the contemporary ordering logic predominantly at play in urban planning, has impacted the organization and management of cities across the globe, and how we can approach studies of inclusion/exclusion under the conditions of neoliberalism

2.2 Neoliberal (re)ordering

Building on Lefebvre's work, Marxist geographer David Harvey (1985; 1989; 2008) has been particularly influential in excavating the dynamics of the production of space, specifically in understanding the "intimate connection" between the expansion of capitalism and accelerated urbanization. Capitalism depends on urbanization as the geographical and social concentration of surplus product, which is necessary to produce surplus value. Yet, there are limits to capital accumulation. In this case, capitalism also depends on urbanization to curb the crisis of over-accumulation by absorbing the reinvestment of capital surplus through investment in the construction of the built environment, producing new spaces for capitalist production. Harvey calls this a "spatial fix" (Harvey 1985). Given that governance over this surplus is generally controlled by a small group of elites, Harvey argues that cities are inherently classed. According to Harvey, the spatial fix disempowers urban residents who do not control the urban surplus by encouraging the capture of valuable land from low-income populations to be put to more "productive" use. The spatial fix thus causes an unequal distribution of people, resources, and wealth, resulting in "uneven geographical development" at the urban level (Harvey 2006). In other words, class differentiation in the city takes a spatial form. These dynamics have been exacerbated with the advent of neoliberalism.

Emerging in the 1980s in the midst of stagnating economic growth, neoliberalization was a hegemonic ideological turn from faith in state-directed social policies to political-economic practices that promote economic growth as "the best approach to human well-being," advocating the "liberation of individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free

markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005: 2). The era of neoliberal adjustment saw a marked reduction in state social provisions across the globe in favor of privatization, as well as liberalization of markets, enhanced international capital mobility, and a new impetus for international institutions. Ferguson (2006) describes neoliberalism as a “scientific” approach to capitalism. “Scientific capitalism,” he says, “seeks to present itself as a non-moral order, in which neutral, technical principles of efficiency and pragmatism give ‘correct’ answers to questions of public policy,” and “economic correctness” prevails over all other considerations (Ferguson 2006: 78). Neoliberalism introduces “a new, or perhaps newly framed, set of values to the conduct of political, social, and economic life and to seek[s] actively to hegemonize them” (Watson 2009: 2266). Therefore we can understand neoliberalism as the contemporary ordering logic behind the organization and production of space.

The forces that organize the city have undergone profound shifts in order to assert the supremacy of market relations in the ordering of urban populations, through what Harvey (1989) calls “entrepreneurial urban governance.” Entrepreneurial strategies are generally focused on creating conditions that will attract global capital and investment, promoting the city as a product itself rather than a site of production and work (Crossa 2009). Such strategies usually rely on speculative investment in infrastructure. In keeping with neoliberal values, entrepreneurialism promotes a refashioning of the state’s role in organizing urban life through social policies or service provision, promoting devolved forms of governance with a heavy emphasis on privatization and the influence of real estate investment and development as drivers of urban economic growth (Harvey 1989). The benefits of urban renewal are increasingly limited to the private sector and a wealthy

global elite in the interest of accumulation and economic growth rather than on any pretense of acting in the “public” good. Entrepreneurial projects are usually pursued through public-private partnerships, in which the state provides a policy framework and regulatory environment suitable to foster private sector investment in urban renewal and delivery of urban services. In the entrepreneurial model, where speculative investment in infrastructure is the main form of production, the public-private partnership model causes the public sector to assume more risk while private actors take the benefits of profit (Harvey 1989; Graham and Marvin 2001). That is to say, it forecloses the possibility of redistribution, while increasingly privatizing the control over the urban surplus.

It is noteworthy that much of the seminal literature on entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989; Smith 1990) has been based on cities in North America and the United Kingdom. The “withdrawal” of the state (Harvey 1989) has been a less straightforward process in the post-colonial context, where state-led systems of urban management did not exist to the same extent. In the capacity that they did exist, they were largely undemocratic in form. In fact, neoliberal restructuring has been adopted in much of the Global South alongside ideals of greater democratic control over the processes that order space through the idea that devolved forms of “good governance” would open up more “political space” for citizens (Devas 2005). Yet, while some scholars have suggested the rescaling of forces organizing space has allowed urban social movements to organize transnationally against trends of privatization (Appadurai 2002; Mitullah 2010), other studies (Lyons et al. 2001; 2002) explore the “almost invisible and painstaking efforts of poor communities” to organize and assert their interests in devolved governance networks (Pieterse 2005). International institutions, consultants, and foreign donors tend to have

extraordinary influence in urban governance networks, reproducing neoliberal discourses that uphold market logic as the ideal means of organizing urban life (Pieterse 2005).

Entrepreneurialism has inspired development strategies for African cities based on impractical “urban fantasies” (Watson 2014) that bear little to no relationship to existing uses of space, reflecting a futuristic “globalized urban aesthetic” (MacLeod 2002, cited in Becker and Müller 2013) found in Asian centres such as Dubai or Singapore, in an attempt to appeal to international investors. Such “fantasies” are frequently expressed in elaborate “city visioning” plans that generally “encourage systems of financing, governance, and service delivery that are not very redistributive,” but rather aim to foster a “world-class environment” defined by “increased prosperity” and competitiveness than on any pretense of addressing inequality or a public good (Robinson 2006: 138).

Visioning plans are usually drafted in partnership with international consultants and financed with the help of international donors or institutions such as the World Bank, leading them to be increasingly technocized and marketized (Watson 2009). Peck (2002) describes the increasing involvement of the global consulting industry in the organization of urban space as the introduction of “fast policy”. Fast policies, he says, use neoliberal models of economic growth as “off-the-shelf” (or in Ferguson’s terms, “scientific”) policies ready for implementation in any context, leading to a “rescaling” of planning processes.

Entrepreneurialism has exacerbated socio-spatial inequality and given rise to new forms of socio-spatial exclusion. Entrepreneurial strategies increasingly rely on a place-based “neoliberal spatial fix” which involves the creative destruction of specific urban areas for renewal and regeneration (Smith 1990: 197). The neoliberal spatial fix

necessitates channeling resources into some places over others, usually entailing the restructuring of the downtown core of urban centres. As a result, neoliberal urban restructuring creates a “splintered” (Graham and Marvin 2001) urban landscape composed of highly differentiated city spaces, in which some become “hyperactive spaces of commercial dynamism, civic refinement, and technological progress,” while others are left underdeveloped, marred by “dysfunctional patterns of land use, senseless decay, and recurrent socio-spatial conflict” (Murray 2011: 17). Harvey (1989: 8) argues that the entrepreneurial emphasis on particular city-spaces diverts resources and attention from broader issues that may concern urban inhabitants. Furthermore, the (re)commodified and privatized spaces of urban renewal have become increasingly inaccessible to those who do not fit into the entrepreneurial order (Harvey 2008). In sub-Saharan Africa, where much of the urban population lives in circumstances of poverty and cities are deeply fragmented along lines of race and class, neoliberal urban restructuring has served to reproduce and exacerbate patterns of socio-spatial inequality that have marred it since the colonial era rather than work to overcome them. Martin Murray (2011) describes the consequences of neoliberal urban renewal in Johannesburg as creating an urban “double life,” in which wealthy areas close to the city centre are re-designed as destinations for investors, wealthy residents, and international travelers. Meanwhile, those who do not fit into the image of the entrepreneurial city are forced to “eke out a daily existence in the in-between, marginal spaces that have proliferated on the metropolitan fringe” (Murray 2011: 3).

The shift to entrepreneurial forms of governance and place-based urban renewal has come particularly into confrontation with the widespread practice of informal trading in

the downtown cores of African cities. Because the value of real estate in regenerated areas is generally related to its spatial coordinates and surroundings, informal trading – often characterized as an “affront to modernity” and an aesthetic flaw (Linehan 2007) – is seen as a threat to competitiveness. Furthermore, informal traders are accused of having unfair advantages that threaten to distort competition in the formal market, such as not paying rent or taxes (Linehan 2007). According to Jenkins (2009: 100), in response, African governments engage in “selective formalization as part of a (relatively protected) capitalist market system” related to fostering urban growth through real estate (re)development and the attraction of foreign capital, resulting in new and invigorated contestations over urban space. Recent urban plans in various African cities have dedicated significant attention to the select ‘formalization’ of the retail sector through means such as relocation of downtown traders to designated market spaces outside of the city centre, in an effort to remove informal traders from sites slotted for urban renewal.

In many cases, these socio-spatial boundaries – which are not necessarily new, but reflective of apartheid-era socio-spatial patterns – are augmented by what Murray (2011: 19) describes as a “bunkering, fortressing, and cloistering” of the urban landscape, creating “insulated, defended islands of affluence that are almost always enveloped within a variety of interdictory design strategies intended to exclude undesirables by intercepting and repelling them.” Samara (2011) argues that the process of neoliberalization can thus be understood as twofold: first, adhering to the ordering logic of entrepreneurialism and market-led growth; and second, “securing” that growth and defending it from disorder and disruption (see also Becker and Müller 2013). Neoliberal urban governance has thus entailed a “bundling” of “related security and development

agendas into a coherent governance ideology and related set of practices in which so-called free markets provide guiding principles and reference points for the ordering of urban life,” leading to the dramatic securitization of cities across the globe (Samara 2011: 5). As a result, neoliberal urban restructuring across the globe has involved the proliferation of new legal instruments and policing tactics that are inequitably deployed throughout the urban landscape to protect important city-spaces, leaving others neglected. This unequal allocation of resources exacerbates existing socio-spatial inequalities.

The securitization of urban space has also led to new forms of exclusion, namely through the criminalization of those who do not fit into the formal entrepreneurial order. Samara (2011: 7-9) argues that in post-colonial cities, especially, certain challenges – namely, rampant poverty and inequality – are “coded and responded to primarily as ‘threats’ to local, national, or transnational processes of wealth accumulation and economic growth.” This means that surplus populations who do not fit into the aesthetic of the “urban fantasy” are not only pushed to the margins of the city, but have become increasingly criminalized through new technologies of power. Davis (2006) calls this phenomenon the “militarization of urban space,” in which the (often violent) displacement of the poor is justified through the discursive construction of them as “criminal.” Security discourses and the technologies of power that accompany them – such as bylaws or surveillance practices – can thus be understood as social control strategies aimed at removing “undesirables” from renewed or upgraded areas in order to enforce neoliberal order (Becker and Müller 2013). Informal traders have been particularly visible victims of this form of exclusion. Those who do not conform to the entrepreneurial order by relocating to markets have regularly been criminalized and

subsequently driven from sites of urban renewal through violent means. For example, Zimbabwe's 2005 Operation *Murambatsvina*, which literally translates to "Refusing/Removing Trash," saw the violent destruction of street vending kiosks in Harare's downtown core to make way for urban renewal projects aimed at reclaiming the city's title as the "Sunshine City." This intervention resulted in physical injury, detentions, fines, lost merchandise and, ultimately, livelihoods, for an estimated 700 000 urban residents (Kamete 2008; 2013).

However, while the exacerbation of socio-spatial inequality and the production of new forms of urban exclusion in Nairobi may reflect global trends, neoliberalism is never implemented in a complete or uniform manner. Despite the claim by some scholars that cities have become "global" (Sassen 2000) – more affected by transnational networks of capital than local policy – Peck (2002: 332-334) suggests that the adoption of fast policy has made urban governance "more global and more local at the same time." Peck reminds us that neoliberal initiatives rely on the role of local social and institutional capital in the implementation of neoliberal urban renewal strategies. Thus, the institutional, political, and social contexts in which entrepreneurial strategies are introduced necessarily affect their outcome. As Harvey (2000: 180) himself suggests, processes of neoliberal urban renewal "have to negotiate with spatiality and the geography of place....producing results that are in many instances exactly the opposite of those intended." Thus, analysis of entrepreneurial strategies must be concerned with "the complex, contested ways in which neoliberal restructuring strategies interact with pre-existing uses of space, institutional configurations, and constellations of sociopolitical power," or what Brenner and Theodore (2002: 361) call "actually existing

neoliberalism.” Understanding the implications of entrepreneurialism in Nairobi thus requires an excavation of its particular history of urbanization, existing institutional and political frameworks, and, importantly, the “social attachments to place” that “persist as people struggle to defend the everyday practices and institutional compromises” in the face of neoliberal restructuring (Brenner and Theodore 2002: 355).

Following this line of inquiry, rather than assuming them to be passive recipients of neoliberalism, examining how informal traders have negotiated their exclusion from the entrepreneurial urban order is key to understanding the actual (re)production of urban space in Nairobi and the consequences of entrepreneurial urban governance. This requires greater clarification in how we understand informality and its relation to the urban order.

2.3 Informalization and urban order

A breadth of literature has explored the “informalization” of cities of the Global South. In this study, informality is best understood as the practice of urban residents engaging in activities that, to varying extents, operate outside the regulatory framework sanctioned by the state, drawing instead on social relations and community to “make city life viable” (Simone 2005: 1). It has been estimated that informality accounts for the facilitation of up to 75 percent of basic necessities in some African cities, including access to housing, the purchasing of food and goods, transportation, sources of income, and more (Simone 2005: 3). Though much of the earlier literature about informality was limited to exploring the economic implications of informal activities, more recent studies have taken into account the importance of informal actors and activities that extend beyond economic functions.

Though informal activities have been pursued since before the colonial era, Keith Hart's (1973) anthropological work on the "informal sector" in Ghana, a term which he used to describe the small-scale distribution of goods – street trade – was one of the first studies that positively recognized the self-help methods of the poor. Street trade accounts for the majority of informal work conducted outside of the home (Lyons and Snoxell 2005: 1078). Hart challenged the normative views of development economists at the time by recognizing economic activities outside the regulation of the state, such as street trade, as an essential means of providing services for the urban poor. Though such activities had previously been discouraged, the International Labour Organization's (ILO) employment mission to Kenya (ILO 1972) had also adopted and popularized the term, shifting the policy landscape to become more tolerant of informal economic activities over the next decades (Potts 2008). The recommendations of the ILO report, for example, prescribed a simplification of the licensing system that regulated street trade in Kenya, along with touting training programs and providing credit, to ease entry into the sector. The proliferation of informality intensified with the advent of neoliberal structural adjustment throughout the 1980s and 1990s. However, this was "driven more by necessity than new opportunity" (Potts 2008: 159) as agricultural deregulation exacerbated rural-urban migration, and deindustrialization and privatization reduced formal employment opportunities (Davis 2006). In general, trade liberalization has had very negative effects on informality as antagonism towards informal livelihoods has grown with competition from imported goods (see Hansen and Vaa 2004), which have been compounded by the aforementioned new forms of socio-spatial exclusion with the shift to entrepreneurialism.

Scholars have widely critiqued the conceptualization of the “informal sector” as something existing apart from the “formal,” as it is presented in most policy formations (see Potts 2008). Structuralist critiques caution against referring to informality in dualistic terms, recognizing instead its implication in larger processes of capitalist accumulation as well as its entanglements with the state (Moser 1978; Meagher 1995). Davis (2006), for example, understands the proliferation of informality in Marxist terms, considering those surviving through informal measures as a “global surplus” of labour. According to such critiques, policy prescriptions that opt for selective formalization represent “a compromise between pressures for the redistribution of income and wealth and the desire for stability on the part of the economic and political elite” (Bromley 1978: 1036, cited in Skinner 2010). This thesis adopts a structural approach that understands the treatment of informal traders in Nairobi as implicated in the efforts to enforce a neoliberal political-economic order in the city. The state aims to accommodate some in the existing system through technologies such as licensing, while excluding those who do not conform. Though informality is often construed as existing in opposition to or outside of the state and the “formal” economy, understanding it as part of larger structural processes allows us to critically examine not only how informal traders make efforts to regain their livelihoods, but are in fact engaged in struggles over the urban order.

A potential limitation of structural critique is the tendency to present those surviving through informal methods as “victims” of poverty or capitalism. As the idea of social capital gained traction, many scholars noted the strategic and, perhaps ironically, “entrepreneurial” nature of much informal labour, aiming to present informality as a dynamic and creative solution to poverty (see Lyons and Snoxell 2005; Devas 2005;

Kinyanjui 2012). I too wish to recognize the ingenuity of those living in the margins of informality. Yet, studies lauding “social capital” tend to romanticize associational life by obscuring unequal power dynamics within it. For example, informal work has traditionally been highly gendered, with women dominating areas of informal work that are less lucrative, such as home or caregiving work, and have tended to benefit least from formal political organization among informal workers (Skinner 2010). While an explicitly gendered lens is beyond the scope of this study, I strive to be attentive to gendered differences in how informal traders have experienced and negotiated urban exclusion.

Furthermore, while such perspectives nobly strive to emphasize the agency of the urban poor, they fail to take into account aforementioned structuralist critiques. I attempt to reconcile these critiques by aiming to understand how structural processes – like neoliberal urban renewal – have been negotiated or contested. Crossa (2009) and Kamete (2013) have undertaken similar studies to understand how informal traders have responded to increasing exclusion in the face of neoliberal urban restructuring in Mexico City and Harare, respectively. Kamete argues that street vendors engage in acts of oppositional “resistance” intended to bring short-term gains through “localized struggles that disrupt institutions and normalization,” by employing strategies such as fighting back with the local authorities, using mobile strategies that are more difficult to police, or planting decoys to subvert punishment (Kamete 2008: 58). Crossa (2009) similarly argues that a variety of arrangements made by street vendors in Mexico City’s Historic Centre have allowed them to maintain their access to trading space. However, Abu-Lughod (1990: 41) cautions that studies in this vein have been more concerned with

identifying “resisters” than fully understanding the implications of their resistance. She reminds us that even in the neoliberal context, forms of resistance are culturally shaped and historically specific, giving insight into how “intersecting and often conflicting structures of power work together in communities that are gradually becoming more tied to multiple and often nonlocal systems” (1990: 42). Lyon-Callo and Hyatt (2003: 177-179) take a similar approach, advocating that “ethnography from below” can help to understand how processes such as “neoliberalization” have produced or limited a group’s ability to affect structural change, making the workings of power more visible. As such, I subscribe to Abu-Lughod’s (1990) suggestion that signs of “resistance” – what I call negotiations or contestations – are better treated as a diagnostic that allows us to better understand the networks of power in which people are caught up. I have chosen to employ the term “negotiations” rather than “resistance” in order to emphasize the relational and diverse interactions between the planning regime and informal actors rather than consider all of their actions to be “oppositional” as Kamete (2008) does.

Recent studies have been attentive to the ways in which informality has permeated urban life in the Global South outside of the economic realm, extending to the informalization of the social and political order (Kruijt and Koonings 2009). In the neoliberal era, especially, intensified competition within the growing urban population for limited available resources has meant that governance has become highly dispersed through a number of actors (Watson 2009: 2263). In the neglected areas in the margins of the city, governance networks have become contested by default rather than formal devolution. Ties of religion, family relationships, neighbourhood relations, and other dynamics – particularly, ethnicity – can inform the allocation of and access to urban

resources, effectively leading to the rise of informal political structures and alternative informal authorities (Kruijt and Koonings 2009: 11). According to Burr et al. (2007),

Vigilante groups, political parties, hometown associations, traditional leaders, religious congregations, sports clubs, militias, and networks of organized crime may constitute a kind of public authority either because the state has ‘outsourced’ certain functions to them (see Buur 2005), by ‘default’ (Manor 1999) – that is, because of the absence or lack of interest of state institutions – or because they are directly challenging the state (see Buur and Kyed 2005, Jensen 2005).

Informal authorities often claim to represent particular identities or communities and advocate for their inclusion in the urban order; however, many of them have also often been increasingly connected to the proliferation of urban violence and insecurity (Kruits and Koonings 2009: 25-26). As competition for urban resources increases, the need to draw on social relations, community, and identity for survival in the city has led to various forms of stratification have across urban centres based on familial, religious, ethnic, or other ties (Watson 2009: 2263). In much of Africa, and in Kenya especially, where ethnicity has long been a marker of inclusion or exclusion, ethnic stratification has perhaps been the most salient of these divisions. According to Tambiah (1996:129), unemployed youth in urban sites have been the most visible and active participants in ethno-nationalist movements, as expectations of democratization and inclusion outgrow the pace of economic growth and substantive democracy. Informal authorities’ responses to the exclusion and criminalization associated with urban renewal are often violent, leading to what Wacquant (2008) calls the “militarization of urban cleavages.”

The presence of informal political structures and authorities can affect both the implementation of urban renewal and responses to it. In Mexico City, for example, Becker and Müller (2013) found that powerful criminal networks related to the drug and sex trades led to spatial selectivity of urban renewal projects, reflecting the “informal

power” of certain actors to “challenge the official vision of the future of the neighbourhood” (Becker and Müller 2013: 88). I argue that the presence of informal authorities and political structures similarly influence the implementation of urban renewal and negotiations over access to space in Nairobi.

I do not mean to suggest that the “formal” and “informal” exist as intrinsic categories; in fact, such conventional distinctions have little practical or analytical meaning in this study. What counts as “formal” or “legitimate” is discursively arbitrated by planning regimes, which, as mentioned, are likely to uphold and legitimize activities that work in the interest of the dominant neoliberal order. Meanwhile, activities considered a hindrance to economic competitiveness are labeled “informal” or “illegal,” despite the fact that their surplus labour is in fact a product of capital accumulation and urbanization. More useful than conventional binary distinctions, then, is Ananya Roy’s (2009) argument that urban informality is an alternative “mode” of urban organization, embedded in systems of power (Roy 2005: 149). Informality “is inscribed in the ever shifting relationship between what is legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorized and unauthorized” (Roy 2010: 80), and thus informality “must be understood not as the object of state regulation but rather as *produced by the state itself*” (Roy 2005: 149, emphasis added). For example, Hunt (2009) understands the relocation of vendors in Colombia to spatially marginalized and state-regulated markets that force traders to engage in state-prescribed political and economic transactions as a technology of governance that discursively codes the “problem” of traders as a question of the “culture of informality” rather than a result of structural inequalities. In effect, the state and

planning regimes discursively produce what is legitimated and “formal,” as well as what is considered “informal.”

The discursive arbitration of what counts as “informal” can also be unofficially mediated through what Roy (2009) calls the “misrule of law.” Through her exploration of the development of upscale housing divisions in India, Roy (2009) demonstrates how state and municipal bodies have interpreted the value and use of land in ways that sometimes upholds existing law but at others subverts it, negotiating deals outside the regulatory structure when it is beneficial to those in power. In fact, she argues that informality is the “dominant mode” of urban life, especially in many post-colonial contexts where democratic institutions have not been consolidated. Similarly, Kamete (2013: 643) argues that the “differential treatment of the informality practiced by the rich and that practiced by the poor” has been used to uphold Zimbabwe’s political-economic order. I take a similar approach by demonstrating that the informal authorities and political structures that have challenged neoliberal urban renewal in Nairobi have in fact been produced by the state and planning regimes, rather than arising in their absence.

To be clear, this thesis understands informality as a mode of urban life that draws on social relations, community, and identity as the main resources for survival.

Informalization does not always occur outside of the state; in fact, the state is implicated in the production of informality. I make use of this concept by arguing that informal traders have negotiated the entrepreneurial urban order imposed on them in ways that have in fact *empowered* informal authorities and deepened ethnic cleavages – ends that are ostensibly at odds with the stated goals of *Vision 2030*.

Given the extent to which this thesis is concerned with ideas about competing urban visions, identities, and belonging, a useful framework to consider is that of “citizenship” – a seminal but contested concept in the study of spatial politics. I turn now to briefly explain my use of “citizenship” in this thesis.

2.4 (Urban) citizenship

Studies of inclusion, exclusion, and subjectification are necessarily caught up in questions of citizenship. In using the term “citizen,” I do not refer to the liberal-democratic understanding of citizenship as a “formal” legal status, but rather to “informal” modes of citizenship (Isin 2002), which pertain to the “socio-cultural practices and processes through which individuals and social groups negotiate the terms of their membership within the urban public” (Tavares and Brosseau 2013: 14). In other words, citizenship denotes “membership in a political association or a community that articulates relation (not a dichotomy) between structures of power and practices of social lives” (Holston 2011: 336).

Traditionally, this political subjectivity has been conceived of at the level of the nation-state (Eckert 2011). However, despite narratives of national inclusion typically associated with liberal-democratic ideals of citizenship, in practice the relationship between the state and its population has always been differentiated through tiered forms of citizenship (Holston 2011). Scholars of race, nationalism, and post-colonialism (Arendt 1973; Mamdani 1996) have explored in depth how the construction of the nation-state as exclusive in fact *required* the exclusion of particular subpopulations. Citizenship can thus be understood as emerging simultaneously and dialectically with its alterity, mutually constituted by the exclusion of some subpopulations (Isin 2002). According to

Holston (2011: 336), cities have historically been the “locus of citizenship’s expansion,” where struggles to remake these categories to be incorporated into the political and social order have played out most intensely.

The shift toward entrepreneurialism and subsequent securitization seen to varying extents across the globe has prompted discussion about the rescaling of forces that produce and organize urban space, and how ideals of urban identity, citizenship, and belonging become harder to sustain under these conditions (Harvey 2008: 32). Ong (2000) argued that in the context of increasingly privatized and hybridized governance, citizenship has become “flexible.” Market-driven subjects such as consultants, professionals, wealthy investors, and tourists – who may not hold formal citizenship, but in fact often operate transnationally – are invested in as ideal members of the neoliberal global political-economic order, while citizens who do not fit into the order face increasing exclusion (Eckert 2011). Sassen (1996) calls this the emergence of “economic citizenship,” where citizenship is no longer located in individuals but in global economic actors who have acquired unprecedented mobility.

The paradox is that neoliberal restructuring in much of Africa was adopted alongside ideals of *greater* democratic control and the expansion of formal citizenship, with the promise of greater inclusion and better state accountability. The tension between empirical and normative images of what citizenship should entail shapes struggles over urban space (Eckert 2011). Many scholars have articulated these struggles in terms of Lefebvre’s notion of the “right to the city” (Harvey 2008), calling for “urban citizenship,” which implies uninhibited access to urban space and democratic control over the urban surplus, but also more generally refers to calls for inclusion in urban public life.

However, struggles in the name of citizenship are more difficult to mobilize, especially at the urban level, when political subjectivity has been rescaled through neoliberal governance strategies (Harvey 2008). Compounding this, Caldeira (2000) suggests that such segregation and securitization of urban space corrodes the link between citizenship and democracy even further by restricting the political and social lives of urban inhabitants. While Harvey (2008) sees the sole solution for this in a transnational uprising against global networks of capital, others see the possibility of making citizenship claims not only through collective action but through everyday “acts” of engagement with structures of power in order to assert their belonging or “right” to the city (Isin 2002; Das 2011). I make use of citizenship as an analytical concept to explain how urban citizens engage with the structures of power, both state and non-state, in order to access resources, space, and ultimately to assert their inclusion in urban public life – sometimes, I argue, in ways that are at odds with democratic values of “full” citizenship but rather draw on other forms of public belonging, including ethnic or other forms of stratification. In short, citizenship is a useful way of theorizing “struggles over competing visions of the ‘good order’” (Eckert 2011: 312).

2.5 Methodological considerations

This thesis draws on a number of mixed methods in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the political-economic origins of urban socio-spatial exclusion experienced by informal traders in contemporary Nairobi, and how is their exclusion mobilized through technologies of power?

2. Through what tactics have traders negotiated their access to urban space and what are the potential implications of the emerging arrangements?
3. What can we learn about citizenship and democratization in Nairobi from these findings?

I draw on a breadth of secondary literature on planning, informal trade, and the urban order in Nairobi to excavate the historical, political, and institutional contexts in which neoliberal urban renewal has been pursued. I explore the political-economic origins of urban renewal by examining primary urban planning documents and recent literature on planning in Nairobi; I also used those documents, along with government reports and media items, to critically analyze the discourse surrounding informal trade. Of particular importance to this thesis, however, is ethnographic field research conducted over ten weeks in July, August, and September of 2013. I explored how urban renewal has been negotiated and contested by engaging in participant observation in an informal Nairobi market, as well as conducting interviews with select informal traders. In employing ethnographic methods, I aimed to “locate everyday life in its extralocal and historical context” in order to avoid sacrificing neither recognition of my participants’ agency nor of the power structures in which they are caught up (Burawoy 1998: 4; see also Lyon-Callo and Hyatt 2003). This variety of methods allowed me to examine how contemporary urban renewal strategies have affected traders, how they have responded to such processes, and the implications of the resulting arrangements as they relate to the historical context of unequal forms of citizenship and urban exclusion in Nairobi.

Illustration 2 Map of Nairobi Central with key research field sites highlighted

Source: Author, created using Google Maps

My fieldwork focused primarily on informal traders working in the Globe Cinema Roundabout area (see Illustration 2), as this spot was identified to me as the locus of confrontations between traders and urban authorities at the time. After gaining the trust of a number of informal traders through a contact made on a previous trip to Kenya, I engaged in participant observation while they sold items near Globe Cinema Roundabout, by offering to help with tasks such as folding and organizing their wares (mostly second hand clothing). In addition to the informal conversations we engaged in while performing these tasks⁶, this form of participant observation allowed me to observe the dynamics between traders, the general public, and urban authorities. Through my daily

⁶ All conversations I refer to in this thesis were conducted in English, unless otherwise indicated.

presence I established relationships that gave me access to other private and social spaces in which hawkers tend to congregate, such as restaurants, private homes, and the “Tsunami” park⁷ that serves as a popular resting place, allowing me to engage in deeper conversations about informal trade, access to space, and security in Nairobi.

Additionally, I was invited to attend a number of meetings held by informal Savings and Credit Organizations (SACCOs) and other organized groups of hawkers working in the Globe Cinema Roundabout and Ngara Market areas, at which they discussed the challenges they faced individually and collectively as traders. After completing my fieldwork each day I noted my observations about events I had witnessed and conversations I had been engaged in or privy to. The descriptions of events included in this thesis are reconstructed from my field notes, while the longer quotes attributed to my research participants are taken from transcribed in-depth interviews.

In addition to the many informal conversations I engaged in with traders during participant observation, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with various traders working in Ngara Market, near Globe Cinema Roundabout, in the downtown core (Ronald Ngala Street, Tom Mboya Street, Moi Avenue), as well as select traders from Muthurwa Market. All interviews lasted between thirty to ninety minutes and were structured loosely around questions I had prepared in advance, mostly related to how contestations over space had escalated recently, how they understood their increasing exclusion from the CBD, and what strategies they employed to retain access to their worksites (see Appendix A). As I conducted subsequent interviews and the key theme of security became apparent, my questions came to focus more heavily on policing, crime,

⁷ I cannot find any indication that the riparian zone along Nairobi River is officially named Tsunami, but this is what most participants referred to the area as.

and insecurity. All interviews conducted were recorded (with the participants' knowledge) on an mp3 device, which were then transferred into encrypted files stored on my laptop and a protected external hard drive for later transcription. I obtained informed oral consent from all participants prior to engaging in the interviews. I transcribed the interviews upon my return from the field in late September, and highlighted the key issues of police harassment, informal security authorities/protection rackets/gangs, general insecurity/crime, ethnicity, and statements pertaining to expectations of inclusion/democracy/vision for the city. I then cross-referenced these themes with my field notes in order to identify and analyze the emerging patterns, agreements, and tensions within the data I collected.

In an effort to ensure confidentiality of my research participants, all persons who are not public figures referenced in this thesis have been given pseudonyms. I tried to ensure that research participants were representative of an equal number of males and females, as the traders in the area were generally comprised of an equal mix of genders. I also aimed to interview a significant age range from twenty-one years of age to fifty; however, most of the interviews at Globe Cinema Roundabout were with traders under the age of thirty-five as they seemed to be most heavily represented in that space. As English (and to an extent, Kiswahili) is not widely spoken by many elderly traders, most of my interactions with the older generation of traders were informal and conducted by myself in Kiswahili, in which I am able to converse at a beginner to intermediate level; this language barrier prohibited me from conducting in-depth interviews with participants over the age of approximately sixty-five years. Knowledge of the Kikuyu language would have also been an asset to this research, given that most traders I encountered in

these areas identified with the Kikuyu ethno-linguistic group. Many of the conversations amongst traders at their worksites and in informal settings were conducted primarily in Kikuyu and Sheng, a form of slang spoken widely by Nairobi youth.

Upon arriving in the field I had also hoped to meet with officials from Nairobi City County in order to gain an “official” perspective on *Vision 2030*, urban renewal, and the “problem” of dealing with hawkers in the CBD. However, my arrival came at a time when relations between the County government and its City Council workers were tumultuous, and I had difficulty reaching anyone willing to schedule an appointment with me to discuss the controversial issue of hawkers. About halfway through my fieldwork, the tensions culminated in an official strike by City Council office workers, which was not resolved until after I left the field (Mohamud 2013). Hence, my study regrettably did not include interviews with any representatives of the Nairobi City County or City Council workers. To supplement this missing perspective on informal trade, I made use of official planning documents, government reports, parliamentary Hansards, government websites, and official statements by important public officials related to informal trade, urban renewal, and security. In addition to ethnography and historical review, this thesis also engages in discourse analysis. By examining planning documents, government reports, official statements, and media reports – as well as public discourse I encountered during my fieldwork – I aim to uncover the use of discourse as a technology of power with material affects (Foucault 1990) for the reproduction of space, particularly in the discursive construction of informal traders as criminals. Discourse analysis “emphasizes analysis of the power inherent in social relations,” by examining how certain systems of knowledge, language, and meanings become dominant (Powers 2007: 18). As a method,

discourse analysis rests on the assumption that language is a social construct, mutually constitutive of society itself (Meyer and Wodak 2001: 10). For Foucault (1990), it followed that discourse “cannot be analyzed only in the present,” because meanings and definitions are not static; rather, they become a “tangled knot” over time (Power 2007: 26). Thus, it is important to take a historical perspective or genealogy of terms – such as “informal” – in order to question its application in planning discourses; hence, I also employ a historical review of official discourse surrounding informal trade in Nairobi.

Perhaps an even more regrettable omission of perspective in this thesis is that of the “security cartel” workers that feature heavily in my final substantive chapter. This omission is not for lack of trying. My several requests for interviews with those working as part of the informal security team were ignored or rejected. Their reluctance to meet with me likely stems at least partly from an aversion to allowing an outsider to question their rumoured involvement in extortion and other criminal practices. The fact that informal security teams were unwilling to meet with me lends credibility to the concerns voiced to me by my research participants that criminality and hostility in informal security networks is increasing.

Before my departure to the field, the ethical and safety considerations of this project were reviewed and approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board.⁸ My positionality as a white, female, Western, middle-class researcher put me in an obvious position of privilege in relation to my research participants, which I attempted to be cognizant of and sensitive to during all interactions. This privilege gave me particular insight into the dynamics of security in Nairobi. As an expatriate, I was regularly

⁸ Project protocol #14-0168.

confronted with the inequitable security landscape and exposed to various security discourses (re)produced both in high-income as well as low-income communities. Being white and middle-class, my presence was an anomaly in the low-income areas and markets in which I spent most of my time, prompting people to open up to me about the various security risks they felt we might face there. My status as a young female researcher seemed to encourage other women to open up to me about the particular security concerns they felt we both were vulnerable to as women.

Conversely, my ability to move freely throughout the CBD in comparison to my participants was striking; during one particularly telling interaction, a hawker who had been injured during a confrontation with police refused my offer to accompany him to seek follow-up medical attention for his bullet wound at a clinic in the city center, for fear that he would be recognized as an “undesirable” in CBD, even when not engaging in trading. Other interactions, such as the tendency for security guards to aggressively search my research participants upon entering restaurants or shops while letting me pass without inspection, also indicated to me the extent to which securitization is classed and racialized.

Finally, conducting ethnographic research invariably involved building relationships with my research participants. Subscribing to critiques of “objectivist” anthropology, I consider myself “politically committed” (Sheper-Hughes 1995, cited in Thieme 2010) to inclusive urban planning strategies. As such, I made efforts to express my opinion when invited, share my research insights with key participants, and, most crucially, facilitate connections between groups that shared common goals related to inclusive urban practices.

3 Chapter: From “Green City in the Sun” to “Nairobbery”

From where I stayed in Nairobi, a colonial-era townhouse tucked away on a hill just up the road from a main thoroughway, I walked twenty minutes through town to meet the informal traders I work with by the Globe Cinema Roundabout. This short walk is enough to demonstrate the segregated nature of Nairobi. As I left my walled compound, I waved goodbye to my *askari*, the private security guard who keeps watch at all hours of the day and night – a feature of every middle to upper class property in Nairobi. I traveled east from my quiet neighbourhood, past heavy traffic on its way into the city center. The main thoroughfare of the city center, Kenyatta Avenue, boasts wide, orderly sidewalks and a well-kept boulevard lined with palm trees. Private security guards idled outside the buildings, a mix of grand banking halls built by the British and more recently constructed glass towers reaching into the sky. Despite the recent installation of automated traffic lights, police directed the cars crawling down this street, passing underneath a sign that boasts “Nairobi City County: For a Greener and Cleaner City.”

Illustration 3

**Sign over Kenyatta Avenue,
reading “Nairobi City County:
For a Greener and Cleaner
City”**

Source: Author

However, the grandeur faded almost immediately as I crossed Tom Mboya Street, the eastern boundary of the CBD. Loud music seemed to emanate from every tiny shop window and every idle *matatu* bus on this side of town. It was clear that the buildings there did not house international financial institutions or multinational corporation headquarters like the ones I had just passed. The sidewalks became more narrow and crowded, and I moved down them carefully to avoid stepping on garbage. A stranger stopped to tell me “hold onto your bag,” while another inquired if I am lost. “No,” I told him, “I’m just meeting friends around here.” Most of the hawkers I know had become increasingly wary of crossing into the western side of CBD due to increasing violent confrontations with police, so I continued east past the exit to the new Thika Road ‘Superhighway’ to meet them where they feel safer. Ironically, it seemed, others are concerned that *I*, as a white, relatively wealthy foreign female, was not safe in that part of town.

This socio-spatial divide in Nairobi’s landscape is not a new feature of the city, but an enduring consequence of colonial city planning and governance, though its dynamics have changed over time. Understanding how contemporary forms of governance in Nairobi (re)produce exclusionary patterns of urban development requires a brief historical examination. In this chapter, I demonstrate how uneven urban development has been produced in Nairobi alongside repressive methods of social control and securitization, which have been particularly harmful for urban populations living within the margins of informality. With specific attention to the (in)tolerance of informal street vendors in the city center, I attempt to provide context for the experience of a diverse group who have long engaged in highly political and ethnicized contestations

over space in Nairobi's fragmented urban terrain, complicating ideals about community and belonging. In particular, I draw attention to how neoliberal structural adjustment and the accompanying shift to multiparty democracy intensified contestations over urban space in Nairobi, solidifying inequitable colonial socio-spatial patterns through the increased privatization of space and security in the interest of a small elite.

3.1 A colonial capital: Planning, social control, and trade

While coastal Kenya had spaces resembling towns prior to colonialism, the city of Nairobi was established explicitly by and for the colonial regime in 1899. A swampy marshland that had been visited primarily by the nomadic Maasai and their grazing livestock, the site was chosen more for its convenience as an administrative hub for the Uganda Railway than as a planned site for a capital city. According to Halliman and Morgan (1967: 118), "Nairobi has been characterized throughout its history by administrative confusion," as railway and government authorities wrestled over the control of its early development. In fact, for the first few decades of its existence, Nairobi experienced essentially a '*laissez-faire*' style of urban development as large tracts of land were leased or sold to individuals with little forethought for the future of the city as a whole. In fact, Hake (1977: 36) asserts that settlers, mostly hailing from Britain, initially purchased much of the land in and around Nairobi not for genuine development but to sell for profit. Land use zones thus appeared "not through imposed planning but at the hands of chance and the choice of the inhabitants," leading to scattered and haphazardly built residential settlements outside of the city center where the government and railway offices were located (Halliman and Morgan 1967: 104). This lack of government control over land allocation and use was accompanied by a "vehement

respect for the rights of land-owners,” which created urban development patterns that were “far-flung, sparse, and uneconomical as far as services were concerned” – a feature that would prove to plague the city far into the future in terms of service provision and other urban administration considerations (Halliman and Morgan 1967: 104).

As the British appropriated rural farmland, displaced Africans migrated to Nairobi out of necessity to find wage work. However, their presence was welcome only for the servitude of their colonizers: as Freund (2007: 79) describes, Nairobi was built as an “English Garden City in the tropics – for the [white] privileged.” As the population of the city grew, and an increasing reliance on African labour followed, urban population control – and control of African inhabitants, in particular – became a key priority of the colonial administration. Population control was undertaken primarily through planning regimes, with the introduction of the *Nairobi Area Town Planning Memorandum* in 1927. Racial segregation, of course, was integral to the ordering of the city. Racial segregation within the city became explicitly indicated in the 1927 plan, strengthening the land use divisions that had already been created by European landowners. The owning of property was limited to British and some Indian residents, while semi-permanent African migrant workers were offered government housing in the eastern sections of the town. Other Africans who chose to seek employment in the city were forced to set up shanties on any available land they could find. For many years, most Africans were allowed into Nairobi only with temporary work passes. Lonsdale (2010) argues that this oscillating scheme of work and housing provided comfort to the British that Africans would not be able to organize against them, as they retained ties to their rural communities.

Europeans generally occupied the peri-urban areas in the western parts of the city,

in which they could experience a semi-rural existence along with the advantages of proximity to an urban center. Most African workers, on the other hand, occupied the low-lying eastern sections of the city, considered uninhabitable by European living standards for its poor soil quality and drainage capacity (Halliman and Morgan 1967: 104). These settlements were largely excluded in terms of any service provision, but were sometimes demolished as land was appropriated by the British administration for more “significant” industrial use (Freund 2007: 80). As a result, African residents were forced further into the margins of town life, excluded from the urban public. As fragmentation was entrenched deeper into the town’s landscape, the divisions within the city began to resemble “separate regions each with different functions, distinguished by the type of people who live there, how they live and what they do, as well as the appearance of the area” (Halliman and Morgan 1967: 105).

Illustration 4

Segregation of residential areas in Nairobi, 1909

*Source: Mazingira Institute 1993
cited in Obudho 1997*

The ‘Central Area’ of Nairobi, which today endures as the CBD, has functioned as the heart of government and commercial activities since the town’s inception. As a space in which people from all parts of the city converged, it has long been the site of intersection between communities, and thus, contestation. Historical accounts of spatial divisions resemble the east-west divide of the city center still apparent today. Halliman and Morgan (1967: 109-110) describe two retail districts “distinct in clientele and therefore in their appearance and organization.” In one quarter of CBD, a ‘first class’ shopping district sold luxury and semi-luxury goods, appealing to employees of government branches, financial firms, and corporate headquarters in nearby stone office buildings on what is now Kenyatta Avenue. In another section, further east from Victoria Street (now Tom Mboya) to River Road, was a shopping district with cheaper goods aimed at those with lower standards of living, owned and operated mostly by Indians at that time. As the center of commerce, African traders also congregated here: some lining the streets with makeshift stalls to sell fresh produce from up-country, some convening on the north-eastern side of town to form the Ngara market. It was traders who most fiercely contested urban space and made claims to the city centre; according to Robertson (1997: 7), “markets were an emblematic site of conflict in Nairobi, where the contest over territory and profits converged.”

The wage work offered to Africans – notably, almost exclusively to men – rarely paid enough to purchase the expensive food and goods sold to upper-class Nairobians, let alone support their families at home. Women from rural areas within a commuting distance of the city capitalized on this opportunity, becoming the first ‘hawkers’ in

Nairobi. They traveled to the city for the day to sell produce from their rural *shamba*⁹ to African workers, at first setting up small stalls on streets and later grouping into open-air markets. Though the practice was technically illegal without the provision of a license to trade in a particular designated area, the British generally tolerated itinerant hawking as it became crucial to feeding and supplying African workers living in Nairobi. ‘Illegal’ traders outnumbered licensed ones, as licensing was an expensive and bureaucratically difficult process to pursue. Its enforcement was not initially considered a high priority for the British since most of the women returned to their rural homes in the evenings. However, as Robertson (1997: 78-79) explains, its increasing profitability for Africans, especially as many men joined in the practice, was eventually seen as a threat to “essentialist assumptions about local peoples who were supposed to be docile farmers and laborers, unsuited to urban life and unskilled in trade,” making settlers wary of traders’ growing economic independence and increasing desire to reside in the city full-time. Following these threats, new forms of social control were imposed on traders.

The perceived threat posed by traders to the British way of life in the city led to a gradually more aggressive enforcement of the licensing system. Traders who procured licenses were allowed to trade in designated markets and particular city pavements, provided they regularly paid a small fee. Hawkers who were caught selling goods without a proper license were fined, jailed, or removed from the city altogether (Robertson 1997). We can think of licensing, then, as a principle technology in maintaining the urban order in Nairobi. It also served as a project of “legibility and simplification” (Scott 1998) in that it located and assigned space based on the colonial

⁹ Kiswahili word for subsistence farms.

map of the city, with little regard for – or perhaps, contempt for – the importance of markets as social spaces for traders.

The strict enforcement of licensing came alongside other new forms of social control – namely, the discursive construction of traders as prostitutes. When famed anthropologist Louis Leakey wrote about how prostitution might arise out of trade, given its female presence, the British administration began raiding women's trading posts periodically to “cleanse” the city of this “social ill” (see White 1990). By the 1940s, hawking was becoming increasingly criminalized, with strict limitations to sell goods only in one's own “racial area,” ostensibly because of its ties to prostitution, as well as unsanitary methods of preparing cooked foods, dirtiness, traffic congestion, and unfair competition for shopkeepers. However, as Robertson (1997: 94-101) argues, this was more likely a result of the government's panicked attempts to control the burgeoning urban population. The ‘General Nuisance’ bylaw became invoked more frequently, which gave the city inspectors the power to arrest anyone deemed to be creating a nuisance in public space, often even overriding licensing provisions and justifying the continual harassment of hawkers in the city (Robertson 1997). In this way, even as planning documents technically permitted licensed hawking, the discursive linkage between social ills such as prostitution or unsanitary practices and trade brought about material affects that limited traders' access to space.

Hawking, however, had become important not only for the purpose of income generation but also as a social practice and symbol of empowerment for new urban migrants (Robertson 1997: 83). Most traders in Nairobi were of either the Kikuyu or Kamba ethno-linguistic groups, who generally resided in rural areas within close

proximity to the city such as Kiambu or Murang'a. Kikuyu identity, especially, became closely linked with trading: in 1927, various members of the British administration commented with disdain on the Kikuyus' "propensity for money making," and noted that the streets and markets had become "chief social centers" for the Kikuyu (Robertson 1997: 78-83). Hawkers developed strategies to fight to continue their work in the city, leading to the creation of hawkers associations that would negotiate on the behalf of traders' claims to urban space, as well as keep records of their compliance with the law, believing it would protect their right to continue trading. Robertson (1997) notes that these organizations were specifically classed and gendered; they most often consisted of men who could afford licensing fees or market stall provision, which came at a daily cost, leaving women or migrants with less social connections to the markets to fend for themselves against the increasingly repressive regime.

As Médard (2010) notes, the fragmented patterns of urban development in Nairobi were not initially created through planning; rather, they were produced through land transactions and restrictions on owning property – in other words, controlled by those who controlled capital. However, a more rigid undertaking of spatial domination was taken up when the growing urban population threatened the racialized order of the city, leading to the more aggressive implementation of urban planning systems. The licensing system imposed on traders, in particular, functioned as a technology of power that individualized traders and allowed for better population control. Interestingly, the organization of traders into associations welcomed compliance with these laws, and indeed even took up the work of keeping their own records, which may have allowed for the integration of some into the city. However, the criminalization of many who also

complied with licensing regulations through the use of bylaws or prostitution-related laws demonstrates that the maintenance of order was about limiting those allowed in the city to a specific number and specific “type” of trader, notably differentiating them on classed and gendered lines. Those who did not conform to the ideal of an “urbanized African” (Slaughter 2004) were presented as “threats” to public order due to issues such as health or the “social ill” of prostitution. This set the stage for the future integration of a specific “urbanized African” population during the shift to independent rule.

3.2 The “Emergency”: Subjects, citizens, and securitization

As the urban population as well as the economy grew, the British increasingly relied on more permanent forms of African labour in the city. With this in mind, the *Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial Capital* replaced the *Memorandum* in 1948. According to Slaughter (2004: 38), the plan was drafted with the “forward-looking goal” of “the preparation of the African subject for civic participation and civil responsibility.” The plan limited zoning restrictions to “technical considerations” rather than overt racial boundaries, insisting it was “neutral” on the subject of race but reinforcing existing racial patterns of segregation anyway, demonstrating the power of discourse employed to depoliticize planning (Médard 2010: 27; Slaughter 2004: 37). Still, the plan was “optimistic about its capacity to organize social relations and a modern subjectivity,” including granting rights to urban inhabitants who proved to be able to emulate the “type of urban African it hoped to produce through the organization of space” (Slaughter 2004: 39). This “type” of African, Slaughter argues, was a “tinged copy of the urban Englishman.” The plan aimed, in other words, to integrate – and in fact, “produce” – Africans seamlessly into the already existing social order through the “civilizing

influence” of the city. The attempt to “civilize” urban Africans reflects Mamdani’s (1996) citizen/subject dialectic, in which colonial order was maintained through “decentralized despotism.” Mamdani (1996) argued that urban centres were reserved for Africans who subscribed to ideals of the modern state by accepting or working alongside the British order. However, the urban African population was limited to the number needed to maintain the extractive functions of the city. While the city remained the locus of civic engagement, the British went to great lengths to uphold the importance of what they identified and legitimated as traditional rule in rural African communities. This “making of ethnicity,” they hoped, would maintain differentiation between communities and prevent the mobilizing of an “African” movement for inclusive civic engagement and full citizenship (Mamdani 1996).

The new *Master Plan* however, was not enough to quell the burgeoning anti-colonial resistance movement. The first major signs of anti-colonial resistance began around 1950, with the Mau Mau Rebellion. The Rebellion consisted of a series of loosely organized uprisings, mostly mobilized through attacks on the homes of white settlers in the largely Kikuyu-dominated Central and Rift Valley Provinces. Mau Mau fighters were known for drawing on Kikuyu traditions and forcing members to take an “oath” of dedication to the movement. A declaration of Emergency invoked in 1952 was accompanied by violent counter-insurgency military efforts in the Central Province, as well as tightened security measures in Nairobi, including rigid restrictions on movement of Kikuyus in and out of the city.

Robertson (1997: 135) notes that conflicts between hawkers and authorities were “at the heart” of the Emergency procedures within the city, as hawkers were framed as

“natural recruits” with a strong impetus to fight alongside Mau Mau Kikuyus and an excellent cover for their activities within the city. The restrictions on hawking that had previously been based around controlling “social ills” and general “nuisances” were re-articulated explicitly as measures to combat an inherent security risk associated with traders, with particular attention to the fact that most of them were Kikuyu (Robertson 1997: 137). Movement of Africans into and within the city became heavily regulated by colonial troops as well as the local police force. The most critical moment of the Emergency came with Operation Anvil in 1954, when Kikuyu residents of Nairobi were subjected to mass raids and expulsion from the city, resulting in the detentions, torture, and murder of tens of thousands of Kikuyu in internment camps (see Anderson 2005).

Anderson (2005: 196) describes this period of urban unrest and increased segregation as the moment in which Nairobi began its long struggle against urban crime and insecurity. While much of the violence was politically motivated, a number of urban residents – not necessarily Kikuyu or supporters of Mau Mau, but out of work and finding themselves increasingly oppressed – capitalized on the chaos, committing acts of violent thuggery. The diffusion of violence in the city complicated the ideas of law enforcement in Nairobi, casting the police, a largely African force by then, as incapable and untrustworthy. Ruteere and Pommerole (2003) note the problematic nature of the colonial police force, which was known to be recruited from ethnic communities perceived to be “less hostile” to the colonial project – in other words, it excluded Kikuyus. Colonial officers were forbidden to police in their own areas; police were considered “alien units” functioning as a “punitive citizen containment squad,” restricting the movement of the African population (2003: 591). Hawkers who chose to stay

through the Emergency often paid bribes to police officers who allowed them to move through the city undocumented. Anderson (2005: 211-212) cites this period as the beginning of Kenya's challenge of police corruption, as the poorly trained, poorly compensated 'Home Guard' often acted more in its own interest than in that of the colonial regime. Known more for their extortion and thievery than for their propensity to uphold law, the police force came to be seen as a powerful but easily corruptible entity. While their relationship with authorities had always been tumultuous, the chaos in the time of the rebellion allowed traders to establish a tenuous relationship with police beyond what anti-hawking laws had sanctioned.

The Mau Mau rebellion challenged not only the relationship between Africans and their colonizers, but was also divisive for African communities themselves. The British administration sought inside information from African communities through the use of individuals as informants or 'counter-terrorists,' compensating recruits for their cooperation by allowing them to purchase land in "restricted" neighbourhoods or allowed similar privileges not usually afforded to Africans (Robertson 1997: 39). This led Mau Mau fighters to target not only the British but also Africans who were considered traitors to the cause of independence, deepening distrust between ethno-regional communities. During this time, class divides also became salient as many traders became suspicious of the organized hawker's associations protesting the restrictions on licensing, as some interpreted the application for licenses or market stall allocation as a form of complicity with the British administration (Robertson 1997: 138). Hawking became increasingly politicized as it became linked to 'security' threats on both sides of the fight for independence. Many traders opted to leave Nairobi during this time rather than risk the

danger of being labeled either a loyalist or a rebel.

While Mau Mau is now considered an example of the many iconic anti-colonial struggles in Africa, at the time the British did not recognize the movement as a legitimate claim to ending colonial rule. Instead, Mau Mau fighters were cast as a movement of ‘deranged’ Kikuyus who had been driven mad by their “failure” to come to terms with the conditions of “modernity” brought by the British (Anderson 2005: 281).

Furthermore, the number of British victims of Mau Mau activities was embellished, especially when considered in relation to the harsh tactics the colonial regime employed to stamp out the rebellion. By exaggerating the scale of the attacks, as well as their “animalistic” and “savage” characteristics, we can understand the colonial discourse around the Mau Mau fighter – and, by association, many informal traders of the time – as implicated in the production of the “failed” African citizen, who could not transcend his (or her) “uncivilized” roots. In other words, the Mau Mau security discourses served to justify the exclusion of unwanted Africans in the city in order to maintain order. Only Africans seen as “loyal” to the British order of the city were allowed to stay. Robertson (1997: 102) argues that in practice, then, the Emergency was “aimed as much at controlling a burgeoning contumacious Nairobi trading population as it was at putting down guerrilla warfare in the forest.”

By 1960, the colonial government reluctantly conceded to the inevitability of independence and began allowing Africans more freedom of movement, precipitating a large increase in the number of hawkers returning to the city. The administration’s attention turned from stopping the practice of hawking back to regulating it, providing traders’ licenses more liberally than ever before. However, increased landlessness in the

wake of the rebellion had led to a massive influx of new urban migrants, many of whom looked to informal trade as a form of livelihood with easy entry. The number of traders in the city rose beyond what the government could accommodate through licenses, and illegal hawkers prevailed, but their position in the city had become deeply politicized; government documents described the situation “as if defeated Mau Mau had risen from the ashes, phoenix-like, in the form of militant hordes of petty traders” (Robertson 1997: 143). The last of the colonial administration appeared to bow its own head in defeat as it lamented the “inadequacy” of colonial hawker policy under the “onslaught” of postcolonial conditions, a “dangerous practice” they believed only “colonial methods of strict urban population control could contain.”

Contextualizing informal trading within the history of the shift toward independence reveals its importance as a potential threat to the colonial order of the city, as the British administration strived to limit civic engagement of Africans to prevent them from making claims to full citizenship. When the licensing of traders no longer became a sufficient political technology to maintain the order of the city, the administration employed violent and repressive measures of social control. The implications of divisive forms of late colonial rule, including a legacy of insecurity, a corruptible police force, and highly ethnicized, gendered, and classed divisions in the city have been difficult to transcend ever since.

3.3 A tale of two cities: Self-help in the post-colony

When Kenya gained independence in 1963, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) embraced a liberal constitutional framework. Nationalist narratives employed by the new government encouraged many Africans to move to Nairobi, finally claiming a

right to reside in the city that had been built on the backs of colonized peoples; the government's slogan became *harambee*, meaning “all pull together” in Kiswahili, lauding the full extension of citizenship and encouraging Kenyans to contribute to the development of their newly independent country. However, independent rule failed to transform the deeply fragmented urban landscape. Rather, new cleavages emerged along ethnic lines, complicating postcolonial notions of citizenship and belonging in the city.

The newly independent country faced a number of challenges to urban development. The most pressing of these was the alarming rate of urbanization (Hake 1977). As the wealth of the country had been concentrated in the hands of the British for many years, rural land redistribution was a large task – one that was marred by poor management and patrimonial politics, ultimately failing to redistribute land equally (Muwonge 1980). With the abolition of restrictions against African movement to and from urban areas, many of the landless moved to Nairobi in search of employment. Their needs, however, were difficult to accommodate in a city that had been planned as a reserved haven for a select elite. The country was not sufficiently industrialized to provide employment for the rapidly increasing number of urban migrants. Furthermore, since much of the economy in the central area of the city had been based heavily on a tertiary service industry catering to the British, it required an urban population with purchasing power to sustain it – something that the majority of the urban population did not have (Hake 1977). As urban residents turned to informal modes of securing access to necessities such as employment and housing, Nairobi's development diverged into what Hake (1977) describes as two different cities: the “planned” city and a “self-help” city.

According to Hake (1977: 93), by 1977 the “self-help” city was building more houses, creating more jobs, absorbing more people, and growing faster than the “modern” city.

Table 1 Population growth in Nairobi 1944 - 1994¹⁰

Year	Approx. No. Residents	Percent Growth p.a.
1944	108 900	6.5
1962	266 795	5.9
1969 (independence)	509 286	9.8
1979	827 775	5.1
1994	1 690 000	5

Source: Obudho 1997

The City Council of Nairobi (CCN) was mandated with the task of providing and managing basic social and physical infrastructure of the city. While its poor record of success has been attributed to the initial poor planning of the city and a lack of qualified staff in key technical areas to overcome the challenges of urban development (Mitullah 2010: 310-311), it must also be understood in light of its entanglement with highly corrupt and ethnicized politics at the national level. CCN counselors were directly affiliated with national political parties, often leading politics at the national level to be played out on the urban stage (Mitullah 2010).

Political parties in Kenya were led by urban African elites who had negotiated the terms of independence with the British. Thus, despite the nationalist narrative of *harambee* that lauded full citizenship for every Kenyan, “the maxims of ‘good planning’

¹⁰ Precise information on population growth is not available, as it is likely the censuses conducted by the Republic of Kenya failed to take into consideration residents of unrecognized settlements. Thus, some scholars have estimated that Nairobi’s population was over 3 000 000 by 1999 (Médard 2010: 25).

in the colonial years were simply taken over and continued by the new elites,” generally working in the interests of the urban upper and middle class (Freeman 1991: 41). The urban policies implemented by the CCN were essentially deracialized versions of colonial policies, which did little to rectify the uneven geographical development. Furthermore, in the absence of real ideological differences between the urban elites who dominated them, political parties in Kenya tended to be “little more than clubs of personally connected individuals.” (Ndegwa 1997: 604). Because KANU and other active parties had been born in the context of late colonial “decentralized despotism” (Mamdani 1996), those personal ties had generally been forged in the ethnic arena. Led by prominent Kikuyu and Luo figures, the largest ethno-regional communities in Kenya, KANU was in favour of a heavily centralized national government, as it could rely on majoritarian support from its rural communities (Ndegwa 1997). As a result, despite the extolling of newly gained “national citizenship” for Kenyans, “ethnicity replaced race as the primary political cleavage” (Ndegwa 1997: 604).

The ethnicization of Kenyan politics was reflected in the spatial form of the city. Both levels of government were marred by corruption; as the country shifted to become a one party state in 1982, politicians invoked the “misrule of law” (Roy 2009) by illegally allocating land and urban resources as political favours. When Daniel arap Moi, from the Kalenjin ethno-linguistic group, replaced Kenyatta upon his death in 1978, Kenya devolved into a “blatant kleptocracy” in which patronage politics ruled (Linehan 2007). When the CCN finally implemented a new urban planning strategy in 1973, the *Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy*, its only major contribution was the building of public housing units – which often ended up in the hands of corrupt officials who collected

exorbitant rents rather than catering to the low-income households they were meant for (Médard 2010; Mitullah 2010). In this context, though segregation was significantly deracialized, the severely inequitable landscape of the city became further entrenched along the lines of not only class, but also ethnicity. Access to the “planned city” was mediated primarily through forms of ethnic patronage. Conversely, as the poorer areas of the city grew, rural-urban migrants tended to settle in proximity to their own ethno-linguistic communities, drawing on social ties related to family and ethnicity as their main form of survival (Robertson 1997; see also Katumanga 2010). Politicians at both the national and urban levels would mobilize these communities on political issues by evoking ethnicity, further entrenching ethnicity as a primary mode of belonging, even in Nairobi.

Ndegwa (1997) argues that the promise of “national citizenship” that came with independence never materialized for most Kenyans, as access to resources – particularly to urban space – was increasingly mediated through affiliations with one’s ethnic community. However, this is not to suggest that all members of the communities in power (namely, Kikuyu and Kalenjin) benefited from political representation. On the contrary, ethnic mobilization was fluid, with mergers, alliances, realignments, decamping, and defections common among elites, demonstrating the use of ethnicity primarily as a tool of political power rather than as an actual measure of division of resources (Ndegwa 1997; Klopp 2002).

In this context, informal trade remained an important activity for many Nairobians. The practice expanded beyond the sale of foodstuffs to include household items, secondhand clothing, and other goods. Traders throughout the city established a number

of markets, most of which were attached to various informal settlements on the outskirts of city or in proximity to traditionally poorer neighbourhoods. They were regulated through licensing by the CCN, though due to its lack of capacity many hawkers worked without licenses (Mitullah 1990). Thus, though it is thought that there were more than 100 000 hawkers in Nairobi by 1990, no more than 10 000 licenses had ever been issued at any time (Mitullah 1990). Markets in these “self-help” areas of the city were generally tolerated in the post-independence period, though some were demolished as corruption and land grabbing escalated (Freeman 1991: 40). Notably, no market was established in CBD, the heart of the “planned city,” though some hawkers continued to sell goods illegally on public streets in the city center as markets on the outskirts of town became overcrowded and lacked customers with disposable income. Hawkers were never exactly welcome in the city centre – according to Mitullah (1990) most hawkers still faced some form of harassment by police on a weekly basis throughout these years. Informal trading was tolerated only so long as it did not disturb the order of the city in which the urban elite could continue to accrue its wealth.

The postcolonial promise of more equitable access to urban space in Nairobi was never realized; rather, class segregation continued and new deracialized parameters of exclusion were upheld through the ethnicization of Kenyan politics. While elites used the “misrule of law” (Roy 2009) to uphold the urban order in their favour, the entrenchment of ethnicity as a mode of differentiation became embedded in the spatial form of the city, especially in lower-income communities such as the trading community where ties to ethno-regional communities provided more access to space such as markets or informal settlements than the claim to “national citizenship” did. While the informal political

structures of ethnic patronage that emerged from these practices were in fact produced by the state and its elite affiliates through the misrule of law, the informal practices of the poor in the “self-help” city were labeled as unacceptable, and relegated to the margins of Nairobi. As in much of sub-Saharan Africa, these dynamics were exacerbated with the introduction of structural adjustment in the 1980s and the subsequent shift to democratization. In Kenya, the consequences were violent.

3.4 Nairobbery: Insecurity and informalization

Structural adjustment policies adopted throughout the 1980s and 1990s impacted Kenya deeply, with important socio-spatial consequences. Kenya’s economy was suffering badly by 1986 due to the global increase in oil prices, volatility of its major exports, high population growth and poverty rates, and the mismanagement of public funds. Under significant pressure from international institutions after decades of corruption in his single-party regime, President Moi reluctantly implemented SAPs that deregulated markets and privatized a number of services, causing a significant decline in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors and cutting public service jobs many urban residents relied upon (see Rono 2002). By 1990, employee wages in Nairobi dropped by a third and unemployment rates had risen sharply (Robertson 1997: 147). As a result, Nairobi went through a period of extensive informalization. Urban informality increased dramatically as a survival strategy for marginalized communities as well as many who lost their wage employment as a result of SAP policies evidenced by an increase in informal labour as well as the size of the many slums which grew to encroach even “planned” areas of the city (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011: 201). The CCN, further restrained by budget cuts, lost much of its capacity to provide what few services it had

previously been responsible for. As services such as water provision, garbage management, and importantly, security were privatized, residents in poorer areas experienced an acute decline in their ability to access amenities. Inequality in the city had reached new heights; according to Freeman (1991: 40), the “dividing line” between upper and lower income, formal and informal, and ethnically separated sectors of the city became stark as their proximity to one another grew.

A dramatic increase in the number of traders in CBD was evident as the CCN’s capacity to enforce its by-laws waned, and hawkers moved aggressively onto the sidewalks, back alleys, and street corners (Katumanga 2010: 336). Though a reduction in the licensing and policing capacities of the CCN initially allowed for increased access to urban space for hawkers, their ubiquitous presence in CBD became highly politicized during the movement toward multi-party democracy, when they were frequently targeted as dissenters by the Moi regime (Klopp 2008: 300). While an ostensible aim of structural adjustment was to promote ‘better governance’ and democratization, in reality it provided further opportunities for the privatization of resources to benefit Kenya’s small but powerful elite as politicians looked for political favours. According to Klopp (2007), the illegal allocation of land was in fact exacerbated in the years leading up to and after multi-party democracy was re-introduced in 1992.

Subduing the calls for democracy from the increasingly dissatisfied urban poor was a primary goal of KANU, who wished to maintain the ruling order of the elite. As Klopp (2008: 296) explains, the politics of Nairobi at this time “[reflected] the confrontation between a particularistic and fragmenting politics of patronage and attempts at expanding more universalistic citizenship rights, which are central to democratization.” Attacks on

the informal tactics of the poor through “withdrawing access to land, displacing communities, disrupting commerce and social ties”, played a key role in “disciplining dissent,” by reinforcing the poor’s dependence on informal patronage networks dominated by the powerful and preventing the national cohesion necessary for democratization (Klopp 2008: 296). In other words, as demands for more democratic citizenship gained traction, political elites made concerted efforts to enforce the salience of ethnicity as the main arbiter of survival and inclusion in public life.

Hawkers became targets in these disruptions, due to their highly visible place in the city and the public perception of hawking as a Kikuyu activity¹¹, an ethnicity associated with new oppositional political parties (Klopp 2008). In early 1990, despite promises to open five new open-air markets for the obviously increasing number of street vendors, the CCN engaged in the massive destruction of Gikomba market, a wholesale market in proximity to the city centre. Gikomba is a particularly important market, as it is where many hawkers purchase their goods in bulk to be resold elsewhere. The demolition was followed by the heavy patrolling of CBD in the following days, removing many of the traders to the outskirts of the city. Yet, even these new posts were not safe; later in 1990, a series of infamous demolitions took place in the Muoroto slum, a place to which many hawkers had relocated. The crackdowns on Muoroto were not only ruthless, featuring the brutal assaults of women and the destruction of homes and shops as entire families looked on – they were televised, provoking a national outcry (Klopp 2008).

¹¹ Lyons and Snoxell (2005) demonstrate that hawking is by no means exclusively a Kikuyu practice; rather, in their study of two markets in Nairobi, Kikuyus accounted for just over 40 per cent of traders. However, the public perception of traders, especially of those working in and around the CBD, tends to be that they are predominately Kikuyu. Traders at the Globe Cinema Roundabout, where most of my interviews took place, seemed to be mostly Kikuyu.

As many of the hawkers in Muoroto were known to be Kikuyus, the event prompted a Kikuyu Member of Parliament (MP) Maina Wajigi from the ruling KANU party to call the demolition a “second Operation Anvil,” referring to their removal from the city during the colonial Emergency (Klopp 2008). He suggested that the hawkers affected by the demolition had been instrumental in the fight for independence and should therefore be left alone. The comparison ultimately cost Wajigi his favor in KANU: Moi stifled his dissent by accusing him of “tribalism” – which had come to be associated with land grabbing – and suspended him from the party (Klopp 2008: 301). The high-profile Muoroto contestations served to re-politicize and re-ethnicize the position of hawkers in the city as it “drew on the Kikuyu suffering in the struggle for independence as an argument against state harassment of hawkers” (Klopp 2008: 301). Hawker communities became prime targets for political mobilization by prominent Kikuyu politicians, mediating their access to urban space through ethnic patronage. When Kikuyu members of KANU wanted to win favor with hawkers, they were generally accommodated in the city centre. When mobilized in favor of an opposition party, however, hawkers received intense backlash from KANU authorities; for example, violent crackdowns nearly matching the scale of Muoroto occurred again in 1997 (an election year) after Moi himself ordered all illegal traders to leave CBD (Robertson 1997: 39-40).

Hawkers were far from the only ones to experience increased levels of violence at this time. Crimes such as robberies, housebreaking, theft of money, car jacking, and other violent crimes increased dramatically between 1987 and 1993 (Rono 2002: 91), earning the city the nickname “Nairobbery.” The comprehensive implementation of

SAPs was followed by an immediate increase in crime in Nairobi, likely linked to the exacerbation of urban poverty and unemployment (Rono 2002: 90). However, this culture of violence can also be attributed to the political tensions of democratization (Anderson 2002; Branch 2011). “At the heart of Kenya’s and Nairobi’s security anguish,” say Abrahamsen and Williams (2011: 197), “is a political regime that over many years has privatized public violence (and appropriated much private violence) in order to secure its own survival at the expense of its citizens.” Law and order diminished in Nairobi throughout this period, as Moi relied upon his central police force to enact repressive means of staying in power. The police have been cited as perpetrating serious human rights violations on behalf of the government, known to act with impunity (Human Rights Watch 2013). Any public trust that existed in the poorly trained, poorly equipped, and poorly compensated police force eroded with its increasing politicization, as Kenyan police officers as “corrupt to the point of becoming indistinguishable from the criminals” (Branch 2011: 238). Rather than being an instrument against crime, policing has been seen “as a means of maintaining a certain order and representing the interests of some dominant groups or individuals” (Ruteere and Pommerole 2003: 592).

As public confidence in the police waned, urban residents turned to new forms of private security. The presence of urban vigilantes became a “fact of life” as they patrolled – or terrorized – poor neighbourhoods and informal settlements in Nairobi (Branch 2011: 237). Since marginalized neighbourhoods tended to consist of concentrated ethno-linguistic groupings, vigilante gangs often took on ethnicized identities – demonstrating the “militarization of cleavages” in the urban margins (Wacquant 2008). However, ethnic identity usually only weakly structured the actual

behavior of such organizations, who tended to act primarily for political or economic gain (LeBas 2013). Gangs often clashed with one another, and particularly with residents in their communities seen to be outsiders, but in general produced an indiscriminate diffusion of violence. Furthermore, politicians actively worked to encourage gang violence, hiring them to enact violence or intimidation for political means. According to Ruteere and Pommerolle, gangs have often been “drawn unavoidably into the labyrinthine and materialist politics” of Nairobi, where they “easily become a political instrument in the hands of those with money to pay” (2003: 442).

A particularly feared gang throughout the 1990s and 2000s was the Mungiki, a vigilante gang that styled itself as a pseudo-religious Kikuyu youth group with political aims. It mobilized its base of young Kikuyu men by drawing on the legacy of Mau Mau fighters, Kikuyu traditionalism and the rising influence of Pentecostalism, which had become salient in the wake of worsening inequality associated with structural adjustment (see Branch 2011: 233-242). Though Anderson (2005: 544) suggests that Mungiki’s vigilantism “replaced long-forgotten local policing” in informal settlements, LeBas (2013) argues that there is little evidence that Mungiki operated as an effective security guarantor for either Kikuyus or other residents of the areas that it occupied. Mungiki exercised significant violence, intimidation, and extortion throughout the city. Despite the insistence of Mungiki leaders that their actions were a political response to rising inequality and the perceived failure of ‘elite’ Kikuyus to help marginalized Kikuyus, powerful Kikuyu MPs both for and against the Moi regime appropriated Mungiki’s violence to secure their own interests (see Branch 2011; Anderson 2005). According to Branch (2011: 234), Mungiki was essentially “free to expand its operations without much

police interference” and, in fact, was suspected to have corrupt police officers working within its ranks.

Perhaps Mungiki’s most infamous gang activity centered on Nairobi’s *matatu* networks, the city’s chief transport system. The gang established protection rackets along at least fifteen transit routes in order to extort *matatu* conductors, especially in the neglected eastern sections of the city towards the slums of Dandora and Mathare (Katumanga 2010: 340). As Branch (2011: 238) describes, once minibuses had left the “relative safety of the city centre,” gangs would force conductors to hand over Ksh 5 (\$0.07) per passenger – a significant portion of their profits – or face violent consequences. The situation escalated around 2001, when the practice had become so lucrative that other gangs began warring furiously for control of *matatu* routes. Mungiki emerged as the victors of the turf war, and expanded their operations beyond transport in order to “exploit other key urban services that had been abandoned by the municipal authorities” (Branch 2011: 241). Violence was dispersed as they fought with other vigilante groups for control over the area. Hawkers and other informal business operators in the eastern peri-urban parts of the city often bore the brunt of this violence, becoming prime targets for extortion, burglary, bribery, and boycotts (Anderson 2005: 544).

Mungiki had a significant effect on the public image of disenfranchised Kikuyu youth in particular; other Kenyans imagined them as “yet another example of a presumed Kikuyu tendency to embark on violence in order to grab power” (Branch 2011: 241). The image of Mungiki as “snuff-using, dreadlocked Kikuyu traditionalists” entered public consciousness and no doubt had an effect on stereotypes about the security threat disenfranchised youth, specifically Kikuyus, posed to the country’s democratic transition

and peace at large (Branch 2011: 236). The survival practices of the marginalized, especially informal trading, have become caught up in ethnic anxieties; meanwhile, the actions of those at the top who had appropriated the violence for personal ends remained unpunished. In fact, in 2007, many of the very politicians who had previously hired Mungiki for political tasks were instrumental in a state campaign that banned the group and assassinated many of its high-profile members (LeBas 2013).

The diffusion of violence and insecurity in Nairobi has had an effect on the geography of the city. Given the high rates of crime and violence – in 2002, a UN-HABITAT report listed Nairobi as one of the most insecure cities in the world (cited in Abrahamsen and Williams 2011: 200) – it is unsurprising that the pre-existing socio-spatial divides in the city have become increasingly distinguished by a growing security aesthetic. While the absence of proper policing has led poor communities to become increasingly reliant on (or vulnerable to) vigilante groups like Mungiki, residents of wealthier areas have turned to private security companies to secure their protection. In turn, the traditionally wealthy suburbs in the western parts of the city have become punctuated by heavily fortified enclaves, featuring high security walls, advanced alarm systems, and guards standing watch at all hours of the day and night. As private security replaces reliance on public policing services in wealthy areas, the socio-spatial divides between poor and wealthy neighbourhoods are no longer defined by figurative boundaries but have become a part of the built environment.

The private security sector in Kenya has rapidly expanded since the 1990s. There are believed to be over 500 private security companies operating in Nairobi, though approximately ten of the largest companies dominate the sector (Abrahamsen and

Williams 2011: 198). Of course, the best security systems come at a high cost; upscale shopping malls, for example, are reported to spend up to \$10 000 per month on security-related costs, including guards, alarm systems, and closed-circuit television (CCTV) feeds (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011: 201). Importantly, the demand for private security comes not only from wealthy Kenyan residents and businesses but has been escalated by an influx of international players since democratization; international organizations, national embassies, and the regional headquarters of the UN provide a “substantial and particularly lucrative” market for private security companies in Nairobi (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011: 204). The growth in the private security industry has also reflected international concerns about the capability of Kenya’s security forces to counter terrorist efforts since the 1998 bombing of the United States (US) embassy in CBD. The new US embassy in the wealthy suburb of Gigiri employs over 750 private security guards in addition to its own American security staff (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011: 204).

According to Abrahamsen and Williams (2011: 212-213), increasing dependence on private security has “substantially transformed” public space in Nairobi, to the point that “the street had to a significant extent become a place of danger” in the minds of residents. This had implications for the long-contested city centre where high and low-income communities traditionally converged, leading many to perceive it as a particularly unsafe space. By the end of Moi’s tenure as president in 2002, the situation had deteriorated so badly that many of the businesses in the “crime-infested” CBD had retreated to highly securitized enclaves in the form of suburban shopping malls. Conversely, the opening up of those spaces allowed over 10 000 hawkers to move into

CBD around that time (Katumanga 2010: 336; see also Kinyanjui 2013). The increase exacerbated the perceived link between hawking and insecurity, with some suggesting that hawkers were holding the city centre “under their occupation.” KANU made last efforts to relocate hawkers to the Ngara Market on the north eastern edge of CBD during the lead up to the 2002 elections, which ultimately saw the party’s demise.

3.5 Conclusion

By historicizing the place of informal traders in the city, I have attempted to demonstrate the highly politicized and ethnicized position that informality holds in the urban social and political order. Informal activities in the city have long been at the center of anxieties over maintaining the urban order, with a number of technologies of power employed to control them: from the provision of licenses to control African movement into the city, to increased securitization during the Emergency, to the mobilization of violence along ethnic lines. At the heart of these struggles have been competing forms of citizenship, as postcolonial aspirations for full democratic engagement with the state were never realized. Rather, the urban poor have had to turn inward to ethnicized social networks in order to survive, a form of informal political structure that elites have capitalized on and in fact encouraged. As a result, the deeply inequitable urban landscape created with the initial establishment of the city remains deeply entrenched, to the point that my privileged presence on the eastern edges of town is considered an anomaly in what are increasingly thought of as “no-go” areas (Koonings and Kruijt 2009), as expressed to me through the security anxieties of concerned passersby.

It is within this context that the newly elected Kibaki administration in 2002, the

first time a non-KANU political party would control the national government, would draw up the new urban development plan for Nairobi in *Vision 2030*. Though the plan is articulated through the language of a new ‘vision’ for Nairobi, I demonstrate that the entrepreneurial strategies it embraces have reproduced urban socio-spatial inequality. I explore how security discourses and apparatuses have been employed as key technologies in enforcing the neoliberal urban order. I argue that the axes of urban exclusion have been narrowed along lines of class, particularly targeting informal traders, and that this has complicated ideals of achieving full citizenship and democratization in Kenya. I then examine the many contradictions of neoliberal urban renewal, particularly in light of how informal traders have negotiated their access to the entrepreneurial city.

4 Chapter: *Envisioning* Neoliberal Nairobi

In the early hours of one morning in July, my taxi driver Joseph picked me up from an overnight bus ride. Most buses from out of town drop passengers on the eastern edge of the city centre, a part of town often regarded as unsafe, especially at night. Headlights from passing cars lit up the faces of people curled up sleeping in the doorways of small businesses nearby, using sacks of rice as pillows. Only a few of the streetlights were in working condition. Even at that hour, male hawkers loitered outside, displaying tarps of goods fit for a bus trip – bottles of water, passport protectors, snacks for the road – while other men gathered around, looking to make extra money by offering taxi rides to disembarking passengers. I declined their offer, pointing to where Joseph was already waiting for me on the street.

Before starting his taxi business, Joseph worked for a private security company. He spoke fondly of working in the security industry, especially proud of an occasion during which he had participated in a training workshop with members of the Israeli Defense Force. However, his wife had hated the long hours of shift work it required. He quit his job to take a more flexible contract as a driver and ‘bodyguard’ for a wealthy expatriate family, including a teenage daughter. When the family left the country, Joseph continued to market himself as a taxi driver to the expatriate community with specific reference to his training as a security guard. A female friend had referred him to me a few years earlier, emphasizing his knowledge of security issues in Nairobi. Since then, I had employed him frequently and he had lived up to her praise; indeed, it was Joseph who insisted he pick me up from the bus station despite the inconvenient hour, lest I

should have to take a ride from a stranger. “If you ever need me, call and I will pick you up,” he assured me many times. “Even if you don’t have any money with you – just call.”

On this night, we encountered something unusual on our drive home: a red traffic light. Joseph slowed at the major roundabout of Kenyatta Avenue and Uhuru Highway, a border of the CBD, following the lead of the few cars around us. I had noticed the new traffic lights earlier in the week, but the traffic police had remained on duty that day. Ironically, they had been directing traffic in spite of what the lights displayed. At the time I had wondered how anyone would ever learn to obey the lights if the police did not enforce them, but here we were stopping at a red light with no police in sight, at four o’clock in the morning. They worked!

Joseph did not share my amusement. “What are we stopping for?” he asked, as he looked around anxiously. “Where do they think we are? London? New York? Traffic lights might work in those places, but if you stop at night in Nairobi you will be carjacked or thieved. This government, do they think we all have a motorcade to protect us like the politicians? We are not President Uhuru or Governor Kidero! “In this *world-class city*” he seethed, “we are not yet *uhuru*.”¹² He checked for oncoming traffic and drove through the red light.

¹² Joseph was using a pun invoked by dissatisfied Kenyans since the election of President Uhuru Kenyatta in March 2013. *Uhuru* means ‘free’ or ‘freedom’ in Kiswahili. In the first use, he was suggesting that most Kenyans do not have security details like the President and governor of Nairobi, Kidero Evans. In the second use, he was suggesting Kenyans are literally ‘not yet free’.

Illustration 5
A red light on
Kenyatta
Avenue, Nairobi
CBD
Source: Author

New traffic lights are just one of many additions to Nairobi's CBD touted as evidence of its coming "world-class" status, along with new pedestrian pathways, bus shelters, and, designated smoking areas. The government has been eager to present the city as poised to meet world-class aspirations by the year 2030. While traffic lights may be seen as a commendable addition for the city, this encounter with Joseph demonstrates an underlying tension between the priorities of the government and those of the people. In particular, it shines light on concerns that seem to plague urban residents who feel that only certain privileged spaces and people will reap the benefits of urban 'development.'

This chapter explores how *Vision 2030* and the *Metro 2030* strategy, the latest urban planning documents in Kenya, are shaping contemporary Nairobi. I argue that the adoption of entrepreneurial urban renewal in Nairobi has required the proliferation of new technologies of power (Foucault 1990) to achieve a particular ordering of space determined by (perceived) economic competitiveness, to which informality is perceived as an affront. I demonstrate that this has been pursued by the securitization of space and the criminalization of informal trade. I then go on to explore the contradictions of the

“actually-existing” (Brenner and Theodore 2002) neoliberal order, based on how the process of urban renewal has been negotiated and contested.

4.1 World-class aspirations

Joseph’s use of “world-class” to describe Nairobi may have been facetious, but the term has recently been invoked seriously by planners and politicians who insist the city is positioned to become one of the most attractive cities in Africa to live or do business in. Despite high rates of poverty, the hope for change in Kenya was palpable with the election of new president Mwai Kibaki and the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in 2002.¹³ Eager to set himself apart from Moi, who had alienated not only Kenyans but also the international community with his repressive rule, Kibaki aggressively adopted a neoliberal agenda preaching good governance and economic growth as the most pressing imperatives for Kenya. The new government’s promises were focused heavily on attracting investors and tourists, fighting corruption, and reclaiming “Nairobbery’s” reputation as the “Green City in the Sun.” NARC positioned itself as ushering in “a new beginning for a working nation” (Linehan 2007: 28).

Though corruption remained a core problem in NARC¹⁴, the administration succeeded in improving bureaucratic functions and stabilizing the economy. With the help of a rise in commodity prices and renewed interest from foreign donors, the country achieved significant increases in economic growth within NARC’s first few years, with most of the economic activity centred in Nairobi (Hendriks 2010: 63). The city has

¹³ While NARC was hailed as a ‘new’ party in power, it is noteworthy that many of its members – President Kibaki included – had previously been members or associates of the KANU government.

¹⁴ The infamous ‘Anglo Leasing’ scandal saw the embezzlement of up to \$270 million through the illegal awarding of, importantly, a security tender. It came to light in 2005 and involved (directly and indirectly) a number of high-profile politicians, with accusations made against even the president himself (see Wrong 2009).

continued to develop as a transport hub and a tourist destination, scoring well on corporate service indicators such as accounting, advertising, and banking (Hendriks 2010). It has expanded as the home to the headquarters of several international companies and has gained particular recognition for the presence of several international organizations; in 2004 Nairobi ranked first in a study of non-governmental organization global connectivity (Taylor 2004: 99). Nairobi has also poised itself as the ‘tech’ industry’s hub of Africa after the success of local mobile technology giant Safaricom, drawing a number of startup companies and influx of investment to the city (Gatehouse 2012). Indeed, many of Nairobi’s high-end hotels, restaurants, and retail chains now offer atmospheres worthy of the title ‘world-class.’

As the city has enjoyed higher concentrations of wealth, however, Nairobi’s inequality has been ranked some of the worst on the continent: in 2008, a World Bank report noted that the top ten per cent of the city consumed over twenty times what the bottom ten per cent consume – about eight times more unequal than the recorded consumption gap in rural areas and by the far the most unequal area in the region (Klugmann et al. 2008). The economic success concentrated in the city has kept urbanization rates high, as Kenyans are drawn to perceived opportunities in the city. Yet, urban poverty remains rampant, with over sixty per cent of Nairobi’s population occupying urban slums (Nairobi City County 2014). The percent share of formal jobs held by the working age population has continued to decline, especially for the rapidly expanding youth population: nearly two thirds of the population under the age of thirty-five years lacks formal employment (Kenya 2013: 11).¹⁵ Thus, urban informality

¹⁵ In Kenya, ‘youth’ as a category refers to those between 15 and 35 years of age.

remains pervasive, and informal trade remains an important source of livelihood for many Kenyans.

The rapid economic growth has inspired the Kenyan government, with the help of international consulting firm McKinsey and Co., to set out an ambitious development agenda articulated in a national program launched in 2006 called *Kenya Vision 2030*. Supported by the Cities Alliance of the World Bank, the *Vision* rests on three pillars in keeping with neoliberal values of development: economic aspirations based on achieving ten per cent economic growth per annum; social development aspirations characterized by creating a “clean and secure environment;” and political aspirations aiming to create an “issue-based,” “results-oriented,” and “accountable” democratic political system (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis 2008). Given the extent of continued urbanization across the globe and in Kenya in particular, the city of Nairobi plays a pivotal role in *Vision 2030*. Government projections forecast that the city will be home to over eight million people by 2030, more than double the 3.1 million it registered at in 2013 (Nairobi City County 2014). Responding to this, the *Nairobi Metro 2030: A World Class African Metropolis (Metro 2030)* strategy was developed in 2008 to outline the specific vision of how Nairobi would fit into the national development program. It is the first urban planning document produced since the 1973 *Metropolitan Strategy for Growth* that, as mentioned, had been poorly implemented from its beginning and expired in 2000.

Vision 2030 is articulated in what Linehan (2007: 25) refers to as “classic neoliberal language” espousing competition, performance, and accountability, reaffirming ‘economic growth’ as the ‘correct’ – and indeed, only – solution to the

challenge of urban development. While a more equitable standard of living in Nairobi is listed as an objective of the strategy, the plan disregards redistributive measures. It states that building an “internationally competitive” economy “*should not be seen as a choice amongst competing priorities;*” rather, it insists that market-driven growth is the number one priority from which all other social, environmental, and cultural objectives will naturally follow (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis: viii, emphasis added). The proposed measure of “world-class” is to become a global and regional hub for tourism, hospitality, conferencing, transport, entertainment, financial, and medical services. The strategy’s main goals are focused on creating a “business operating environment second to none”, building “competitively priced working spaces,” providing “world-class infrastructure and utilities,” and ultimately fostering a “world-class living environment” (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis: viii).

Furthermore, as it is envisioned, world-class Nairobi will be built in the globalized aesthetic that often accompanies ideas of “urban fantasies” (Watson 2014) including elaborate building designs and infrastructure, as well as an emphasis on green public spaces. Public-private partnerships are proposed as the preferred method of pursuing urban development initiatives. The strategy thus reflects a strong entrepreneurial emphasis, focused on market-led development strategies that aim to maximize economic growth through strengthening Nairobi’s ties to global markets and investment. *Vision 2030* mirrors the mainstream policy ideals that tend to stress “somewhat uncritically...the importance of being ‘world-class,’ ‘competitive’ and globally integrated at any cost” (Pieterse 2005: 139). The “costs” of pursuing competitiveness above all other modes of organization involve reinvigorated tensions between the demands of the “free market”

and those of urban populations, as place-based urban renewal projects threaten to push the urban poor to the margins of the city. Those who do not fit into the “competitive” order have been “written out of the urban imaginary” (Linehan 2007: 36).

Informal traders have been highly visible targets of this exclusion. *Vision 2030* is explicit in its goal of ridding the CBD of informal traders based on the threat they pose to the competitiveness of the city. In its first few years in power prior to *Vision 2030*, NARC had been relatively lenient with the many traders who had occupied the downtown core, allowing them to work from back lanes in the CBD (Linehan 2007). This was perhaps, as a number of hawkers told me, a way of atoning for the ways in which the aforementioned political violence leading up to their election had been played out in the hawker community. Notably, this is a compromise that many hawkers I spoke to were happy with, at least in hindsight. The official stance introduced in *Vision 2030*, however, is less sympathetic: the plan states that “the high level of informality in Kenya’s wholesale and retail sector has the potential to result in several kinds of market distortions,” including lower tax revenues, environmental degradation, non-enforcement of health standards, and infringement of copyright laws. “All these costs,” official *Vision 2030* documents read, “are bound to have a negative impact on Kenya’s international competitiveness” (Kenya et al. 2011: 64). This discourse supports the neoliberal rationality that competitiveness must be protected at all costs, while failing to acknowledge structural inequalities that may explain why “high levels of informality” exist in Kenya in the first place (Linehan 2007).

As a solution, *Vision 2030* proposes selective formalization through relocating hawkers to newly built markets where they can be more heavily regulated with

technologies such as licensing and registration. We can understand selective formalization in Nairobi in a similar manner as Hunt (2009) understands the relocation of vendors in Colombia: as a technology of governance implicated in regulating the political and economic transactions in state-sanctioned ways that uphold the neoliberal order – and, indeed, in mediating the production of citizenship. Yet, while at least twelve new markets were proposed in the plan (Linehan 2007), as of 2014 only one has been built; Muthurwa Market opened in 2008 on the southeastern edge of CBD, towards the neglected estates in Eastlands. Meanwhile, those who have not been relocated face new forms of exclusion through securitization and criminalization. Linehan (2007) suggests that hawkers have been excluded from the CBD in a manner that enforces a “colonial spatial logic.” Like my cab driver Joseph, he asks, “Ultimately, in whose image is the future of the city and of Kenya being imagined?”

4.2 Whose vision? Participation and privatization

To understand in ‘whose vision’ contemporary Nairobi is being ordered, we must first turn to the neoliberalization of Nairobi’s urban governance. Given the extent to which corruption, inefficiency, and repressive politics have plagued the city’s development in past years, “good governance” is hailed as a key element of *Vision 2030*. Good governance involves a widening network of actors involved in the planning and implementation of urban development strategies, in the name of state accountability and democratization. The process of democratization is an ongoing point of concern in Kenya: the adoption of “good governance” strategies has become even more urgent since the post-election violence that occurred in the wake of the 2007 national election, which was perpetrated largely down ethno-political lines (Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan

Region 2008: 25). However, while in theory “good governance” implies improved democratic inclusion, critics suggest that the tendency for good governance strategies to embrace formal institutions can undermine the democratic participation of those living in the margins of informality (Kruijt and Koonings 2009). Meanwhile, international institutions and private sector stakeholders can hold an inordinate amount of power to assert their interests in devolved governance networks, especially as public-private partnerships become the preferred method of engaging in urban renewal (Pieterse 2005).

A number of measures have been taken to change the state’s role in urban planning and management in the name of good governance. An Anti-Corruption Commission established under the Kibaki administration produced a scathing report on the financial and administrative structure of CCN, setting the stage for reform in order to ensure better efficiency and tackle the corruption that has exacerbated uneven urban development (Linehan 2007: 27). Hence, both urban and national authorities in Kenya are currently undergoing major changes. The new constitution adopted in 2010 answered calls to decentralize power from where it had been concentrated in the corrupt and repressive central government, which the *Vision 2030* website lists as a key social pillar of the strategy (Government of Kenya 2011). Effective only since March 2013, devolution looks to eventually dismantle local authorities such as the CCN, opting instead for a more clear distinction of powers at two separate levels of administration: the national government, which since a national election held on March 4, 2013, is headed by President Uhuru Kenyatta in a coalition of parties called the Jubilee Coalition, and forty-seven county governments throughout the country.

Under devolution, the uncoordinated and excessive separate national ministries of Lands, Housing, Urban Development, and Nairobi Metropolitan Development have merged to form the new Ministry of Land, Housing, and Urban Development (MLHUD) in the hopes that they will deliver a leaner and more holistic approach to the central government's involvement in planning (Ministry of Land, Housing, and Urban Development 2013). Unlike much of the country, the area that had been known as "Nairobi Metropolitan Region" retained its boundaries to form Nairobi City County (NCC), which is also the name of the new administrative body overseeing it at the metropolitan level. The integration of the CCN into the newly established NCC is ongoing, but the leadership has officially been changed since Governor Evans Kidero was elected in March 2013. As governor, he is the representative of an appointed executive committee, whose actions are approved by an elected assembly. Kidero is a member of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), a rival party of the current central government, though so far he has been adamant about working together with the central government to achieve the goals of *Vision 2030* (Nairobi City County 2014).

The new governments at both levels have fully embraced *Vision 2030* and the goals it has set out. The NCC is currently in the process of drafting the *New Integrated Urban Development Master Plan for the City of Nairobi 2014-2030* (NIUPLAN) to create a plan that takes into account the new governance structure following the guiding values of *Vision 2030*. Though it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these recent changes, it is evident that important measures have been taken to address the corruption, patronage politics, and inefficiencies that have plagued urban authorities in the past. However, the goal to rid NCC of these ills is often framed less as a means of being held

accountable to Nairobi residents and more as being linked to the overall goal of ensuring economic competitiveness and attracting investment. Indeed, the Ministry of Devolution and Planning's official mission statement is "to provide leadership and coordination in planning, public service delivery and devolution for a *globally competitive nation*" (Government of Kenya 2013: 3, emphasis added). International donors have expressed their support for devolution in a similar vein; the World Bank cites devolved governance as a "key aspect" of their Country Partnership Strategy with Kenya, aimed at creating "opportunities for new regional growth centers" (World Bank 2014).

Administrative reform has been accompanied by a heavy focus on "participatory approaches" to policy development and implementation that have resituated and rescaled the actors in negotiations over the ordering of urban space. A wide range of activities such as 'stakeholder meetings' have been implemented to gather input on urban renewal projects from diverse actors across the city in terms of international donors and consultants, as well as grassroots organizations and even individual citizens (Nairobi City County 2014). However, these efforts towards participatory approaches are often rewarded with significant funding and technical assistance for projects from the World Bank and other international donors, who aim to incentivize neoliberal policies and market-led development strategies (Linehan 2007: 25). Just as the international consulting firm McKinsey and Co. and the Cities Alliance of the World Bank supported the drafting of *Vision 2030*, the drafting of NIUPLAN is happening with significant help from the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Japanese state agency for overseas development assistance (ODA), which lauds economic growth through public-private partnerships as a main objective of its donor strategy (Nairobi City County 2014).

Though participatory approaches are often hailed as championing local concerns, we must keep in mind Peck's (2002) critique of "fast policy." According to him, the rise of the global consulting market has encouraged the widespread adoption of "off-the-shelf" policy solutions that, in addition to being in line with hegemonic neoliberal values, are often implemented with little regard for local context. McKinsey and Co., for example, has created similar visioning plans in Mumbai (Linehan 2007). Regarding this trend, Peck says (2002: 349),

Policy advocates, consultants, and evaluators foster and circulate essentialized readings of effective local programs in which a small number of supposedly decisive design features are privileged and promoted. In the process, complex and locally embedded interventions are rendered as simplified, disembedded, and reproducible administrative routines....a mode of policy formation that aggressively disembeds, essentializes, and, in key respects, delocalizes the process of policy formation.

Peck is concerned that technocratic policy solutions "travel over space not as harbingers of objectively proven truth, but as political-economic technologies of power" (Peet 2001 cited in Peck 2002: 349). In contexts where representation of marginalized groups or even popular initiatives at the local level have had weak institutional capacity, it is unlikely that power in negotiations over urban space will be distributed equally. Additionally, dynamics *within* groups at the local level may adversely affect the possibility for democratic representation (Lindell 2010). Finally, the presence of informal political structures complicates the implementation of inclusive efforts.

These concerns are evident even as participatory approaches have allowed for some "political space" in which marginalized groups can voice their interests (Devas 2005 cited in Brown et al. 2010: 669). For example, Mitullah (2010) lauds the establishment of the Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders

(KENASVIT) in 2005. KENASVIT acts as an umbrella organization for over 140 hawkers' associations in seven regions across the country to advocate for business improvement through training, access to credit, and advocacy for allocation of urban space (Mitullah 2010). With the support of the Institute for Development Studies at University of Nairobi and a transnational organization working on behalf of street vendors, StreetNet International, which contribute funds and organizational support, they have managed to secure a place in participatory approaches to contribute to the policy dialogue in the formulation of bylaws related to trading (Mitullah 2010). KENASVIT's involvement in lobbying for the 6.6 acres of space allocated to build the new Muthurwa Market has been hailed as one of the organization's largest successes (Muiruri 2010).

However, while these developments are important, it is also noteworthy that hawkers' associations in Nairobi have historically excluded the most marginalized. In general, they have tended to represent traders who could afford to pay daily fees or had a connection to someone in the government who could assist in the complicated licensing process, which often led to male-dominated and elitist forms of organization (Robertson 1997). Much of KENASVIT's work has been directed, for example, towards the passing of a Small and Medium Enterprise bill that aims to facilitate registration of microbusinesses to incorporate vendors into the formal regulatory structures of the state (Mitullah 2010). Despite being a grassroots organization, KENASVIT's advocacy may therefore primarily benefit already-advantaged traders, while failing to provide better alternatives or accommodation for the most marginalized, such as women or the

disabled.¹⁶ Kinyanjui's (2013) work expands upon the prevalence and benefit of informal channels of organization between female hawkers, in particular, as opposed to acquiring formal association status such as those working with KENASVIT. While KENASVIT claims to have diverse representation, due to these organizational challenges the Nairobi affiliate of KENASVIT likely only represents about three per cent of the total trading population in the city (Mitullah 2010).

Mitullah (2010), a researcher at the University of Nairobi who has dedicated much of her career to working with hawkers – and was in fact instrumental in the establishment of KENASVIT – notes that while inclusion in policy dialogue is encouraging, a significant challenge remains in making sure KENASVIT's demands are met in final outputs. This difficulty lies not only in the weak organizational capacity of KENASVIT, but also in acute issues of funding and resource leverage. Given that entrepreneurial strategies promote place-based urban renewal involving the channeling of resources into “world-class business environments,” even when space is allocated for informal activity, it often falls into neglect.

Muthurwa Market, for example, was proposed to be one of the largest and most vibrant markets in East Africa; less than two years later, however, national newspaper headlines proclaimed that the “Muthurwa Market dream has failed” (Kiarie and Kiberenge 2009). Despite being promoted as “one of the boldest moves to control hawking” ever introduced in Nairobi and a key step towards formalization of the practice (Kiarie and Kiberenge 2009), the market itself is not large enough to accommodate the number of hawkers in the city. It was built to hold 8000, but is now estimated to host

¹⁶ A large portion of the hawker community in Nairobi identifies as disabled, given their lack of representation in the “formal” job sector due to systemic discrimination (African Union of the Blind 2007).

around 15 000 traders (David 2012: 31). No further resources have been allocated for the building of new markets to supplement Muthurwa (Linehan 2007). In addition to being inadequate to hold the growing number of hawkers in the city, it is well documented that many of the hawkers who have been allocated a stall at Muthurwa continue to return to the streets of the CBD anyway, where they make a higher profit (Hendriks 2010; Muiruri 2010). Some of them work in Muthurwa only on a part-time basis, bringing their wares to the streets of the CBD to make an extra profit during peak hours for pedestrian traffic. Many others have chosen to rent out their stall for profit or forfeit it altogether (Hendriks 2010: 152). This trend is usually attributed to a number of factors, such as the increased competition associated with markets or reluctance to pay daily fees to the CCN at the allocated market stalls (Hendriks 2010: 152). Others point to the poor state of the facilities at Muthurwa, noting that vendors are dissatisfied with the lack of sanitation or sewage facilities, traffic congestion outside the markets, and the poor workmanship of the stalls themselves (Muiruri 2010; Kiarie and Kiberenge 2009). The failure to provide resources for neither the maintenance of Muthurwa Market nor the building of new markets points to the reproduction of socio-spatial inequality that occurs through place-based urban renewal projects, when resources are channeled to certain areas; in turn, other city spaces fall into neglect (Smith 1990; Murray 2011).

The failure of Muthurwa is also demonstrative of the limitations of “good governance” approaches that claim to value the input of grassroots organizations, but where in practice formal institutions with similar market-driven goals have greater influence (Pieterse 2005; Koonings and Kruit 2009). As Harvey (1989) suggests, unelected representatives of private sector interests tend to have an unequal amount of

influence in stakeholder interactions and stand to gain the most from the agendas produced in entrepreneurial strategies. For example, the Nairobi Central Business District Association (NBCDA), a private sector association comprised of over one hundred businesses in the city centre, has been a key partner in a number of projects related to urban regeneration. In fact, the NCBDA has been specifically involved with aiding in the formalization of hawking, providing funding for business training initiatives, and even briefly working under the auspice of a partnership with KENASVIT (Linehan 2007: 32). The association also initiated a census that registered over 14 000 traders, claiming that proper record keeping would be the first step in proper accommodation of relocated hawkers. However, when asked about the NCBDA in an interview, Alex, a representative of KENASVIT working as a trader in Muthurwa himself raised concerns about their involvement. As he explained,

We have had a lot of conflict with the NCBDA....In 2006 we did a very good census with them. It was very comprehensive. But when they took it to the Ministry, they used it to target traders who worked closest to their businesses. Those are the guys who got stalls in Muthurwa. The NCBDA saw us as competition to them. So the census was not used to help those who need it, but to remove traders according to politics and business. That's how it is: politics and business, they [the government] would rather work with formal business than us.

Though Alex noted the NCBDA has been less actively involved with KENASVIT recently, his comments suggest that the NCBDA has indeed “hijacked” progressive aspirations to suit their own interests (Linehan 2007: 28). When viewed in this context, we can understand licensing and registration as political technologies that are still being used to regulate a select number of hawkers within the city in a manner that does not threaten the political-economic order – only now, these initiatives are not only undertaken by the state, but with the involvement of the private sector. Despite the guise

of democratic participation, increasingly technocratic and privatized planning regimes have continued to shape Nairobi in favour of elite interests.

Conversely, while the emphasis on “formal” institutions and the private sector in participatory initiatives demonstrates Harvey’s (1989) concerns about entrepreneurialism, the long-standing existence of informal political structures has complicated the implementation of entrepreneurial urban governance in certain ways. The ongoing legacy of patronage politics in Kenya is at odds with the goal of removing traders from the street, leaving the process incomplete. For instance, Alex and many other hawkers suggested that the allocation of stalls at Muthurwa Market was highly corrupt. While the NCBDA may have used their involvement with the census to target hawkers that it saw as threats, many hawkers described how the CCN had given the “best spaces” in Muthurwa to politically connected individuals rather than hawkers in need of space to continue their work. Evidence of this corruption has been documented from early on in Muthurwa’s existence: in 2008, shortly after Muthurwa’s opening, a Kenyan MP suggested that many of the market stalls had in fact been allocated to traders from rural areas who had connections to powerful Kikuyu politicians rather than those working in CBD, noting:

If we go to Muthurwa Market, we will not find the hawkers who we were finding on the streets, who were women and young people from Kariobangi or Korogocho slums. We will find people who have come from Nyeri or Murang’a¹⁷...I think the establishment of Muthurwa Market was political (Government of Kenya 2008).

In the “actually-existing” neoliberal Nairobi, the informal political structures that have mediated the allocation of stalls at Muthurwa Market undermine the participatory

¹⁷ Nyeri and Murang’a are traditionally Kikuyu towns in which many politicians would have connections.

processes that have been deemed so important to *Vision 2030*, as well as the goal of overcoming patronage politics that reinforce ethnicized citizenship practices in Kenya. Furthermore, when the “best spaces” in Muthurwa are allocated to rural political allies rather than hawkers working in CBD, patronage politics undermine the process of selective formalization. When fewer traders are provided viable space for relocation from CBD, other technologies are required in order to remove them from sites slated for urban renewal.

As in other cities across the world, the primary technologies introduced into the urban landscape to reinforce the neoliberal order in Nairobi have been framed as security projects. Linehan argues that although many urban renewal initiatives in Nairobi’s CBD have been presented as “benign proposals to address urban quality of life,” the resulting partnerships between the public sector and private companies often encourage policies and practices that “privatize services, space, and exclude the poor to keep the city attractive to investors and tourists” (2007: 28). I turn now to the development of new urban security apparatuses aimed at policing important city spaces, and the development of criminalizing discourses that justify the often-violent exclusion of hawkers and other “undesirables.”

4.3 Social control and securitization of CBD

One of the earliest public-private partnerships facilitated by CCN was the pedestrianization of Mama Ngina Street, which was done with support from the Aga Khan Foundation and a number of banks whose headquarters are housed in office buildings adjacent to Mama Ngina Street (Linehan 2007: 28). Mama Ngina Street offers a welcome relief from the noise and fumes of the traffic jams that have come to

characterize the city's streets as the population grows. Workers from the nearby government office buildings and patrons of the upscale Hilton Hotel around the corner often relax in the shade of the street's urban greenery, or eat on the recently provided benches during their lunch breaks. Mama Ngina Street is also proximate to a small park created to memorialize the al Qaeda bombing of the American Embassy in 1998, which used to stand near this spot. Finally, it is home to a franchise of the popular Nairobi Java House, an upscale specialty coffeehouse catering to middle to upper class Nairobians. Unlike in many of the other areas of the city, the entrance to Java House and other nearby businesses are unobstructed by hawkers, people begging for change, or motorcycle taxis.

It is these last few observations that, according to Linehan (2007: 29), elucidate the more "complicated story" of Nairobi's "clean up." The pleasant atmosphere provided through this urban renewal initiative is accompanied by the introduction of new security assemblages. The grassy boulevards of Mama Ngina Street are cordoned off by barbed wire, while the area is under constant surveillance from CCN's (now under the auspice of the NCC) special downtown *askari* city inspectorate police force. A private security guard at the door of each business inspects potential customers as they enter. They are unarmed, as per the law in Kenya, though an official wearing government-issued army fatigues and wielding an AK-47 accompanies the guard at Barclay's International Bank.

This scenario is certainly not limited to Mama Ngina Street. 'Beautification' initiatives in the city center have often coincided with the introduction of barbed wire, fortified walls, and other security technologies into the urban landscape. According to Linehan (2007), both the Kenya Police and the *Askari* target regenerated areas for patrol in addition to the proliferating private security guards present at these sites. The

application of urban by-laws has subsequently intensified. Surveillance has increased to include not only the ubiquitous presence of security officers, but NCC is also experimenting with the introduction of CCTV surveillance in a number of key spaces downtown (Mbote 2014).

In a city known – indeed, nicknamed – for its high rates of crime, security concerns are at the forefront of Nairobi’s urban renewal process. As entrepreneurial strategies of development require the presentation of the city as a safe place for international investment and the maintenance of the globalized urban aesthetic associated with such investments, projects of security have become fundamental to the process of urban renewal, especially in the Global South (Samara 2011; Becker and Müller 2013). According to Samara (2011), similar trends in cities across the globe have facilitated two fundamental shifts in projects of security. First, entrepreneurial urban governance has required the intensification of policing in particular ‘important’ city spaces rather than the policing of crime itself. Second, the process of securitization has become increasingly privatized, often through public-private partnerships. Samara (2011: 52) argues that this “leads to [the] uneven distribution [of security resources], favoring a particular type of law enforcement, one that is driven by market forces rather than the dictums of social development.” The policing of space rather than crime reproduces the inequitable dynamics that have long plagued Nairobi’s urban terrain, as security resources are channeled into particular urban spaces. Furthermore, rather than policing crime, the entrepreneurial focus on securing investment, attracting tourists, and appealing to the global elite has facilitated a shift towards the policing of subpopulations that do not conform to the “competitive” order of the city.

Nairobi's reputation as an unsafe city is indeed one of the main concerns of *Metro 2030*; in fact, the phrase "Building a Safe, Secure, and Prosperous Metropolitan" adorns the bottom of its every page. *Metro 2030* acknowledges Kenya's struggle with diffused violence in the city, and even recognizes the ethnic and political dimensions of this violence – specifically, the post-election violence that occurred in the wake of the 2007 election (Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Region 2008: 25). The strategy states explicitly that "safety and security is a major issue *because rising urban violence and crime rates drive away investors* and affect urban livelihoods" (Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Region 2008: 81, emphasis added). It is instructive that the priorities of investors come before concerns about the livelihoods of the regular urban population. Entrepreneurial approaches to urban renewal in fact "re-define" development as "making tourist and commercial areas clean and safe so that they will attract investment, middle-class consumers, and tourists" (Samara 2011: 52; Abrahamsen and Williams 2011). Thus, as my cab driver Joseph laments, what are often hailed as signs of urban development have little bearing on improving the lives of regular Nairobi citizens; rather, urban renewal projects serve the main purpose of attracting and protecting investment. The revitalization of the long-contested CBD is integral to projecting the image of an ideal business environment and iconic destination for tourists. As a result, in conjunction with private partners, the CCN has launched a number of beautification initiatives in the downtown core similar to the Mama Ngina project, purporting to offer a "cleaner and greener Nairobi" as the sign over Kenyatta Avenue boasts. However, Linehan argues that while "beautification" may appear to embrace progressive values in terms of urban design and planning such as the promotion of public space, urban forestation and

landscaping – key features of the globalized aesthetic of “livable” and “workable” urban spaces – their implementation has come at “a discrete cost to liberty” for certain segments of the population, in particular informal traders (2007: 28).

In this context, informal traders are construed as a security ‘threat’ to investment and subsequently become targets of security projects. As Huchzermeyer (2011: 53, emphasis in original) explains, implicit in competitive strategies in cities is the imperative not only to attract elites, investors, and tourists, but also to “compete *not* to attract a population that is superfluous to growth in the formal economy, or embarrassing to those aspiring to world-class city status.” In other words, informality is considered a threat to the entrepreneurial urban order. This has culminated in the criminalization of informality in order to remove “undesirables” (Becker and Müller 2013) from the neoliberal imaginary of the “cleaner, greener, and more secure” CBD. In Nairobi, where informality had “taken over most of the CBD” (Kinyanjui 2013: 148), security assemblages have worked specifically to target those surviving through informal measures.

According to Linehan (2007), in addition to increased surveillance and the introduction of barbed wire and other security barriers, city by-laws are increasingly relied upon as a method of regulating who may enter Nairobi’s city centre and who may not. Hawkers, as well as street children and pan handlers have been aggressively targeted by the introduction of new by-laws and the intensified application of old ones since NARC took office in 2002, often resulting in their violent displacement from the city center. Tellingly, many of these by-laws date back to the colonial era; they are, in fact, the same ‘general nuisance’ by-laws that were employed by the British administration

during the Emergency to restrict the movement of Africans, racialized ‘undesirables’ at that time, in the city (Linehan 2007). In addition to the increased application of colonial-era obstruction and nuisance by-laws, the list of punishable offences has been expanded to include a number of new activities that carry heavy fines, such as smoking in public or driving a motorbike within the CBD.

The intensification of application of by-laws and the criminalization of mundane activities mirrors the implementation of similar laws in South Africa known as “quality of life” offenses. According to Samara (2011: 81-83), this strategy “empowers law enforcement to confront both crime and grime,” meaning that they are aimed not only at monitoring genuine security risks but also those who threaten the world-class image of the city. While in theory these by-laws apply to everyone, he suggests it is “questionable how strict and evenly they will be applied across the many different populations in the city.” For example, he notes that laws prohibiting public drunkenness in Cape Town are rarely, if ever, applied to the affluent customers of downtown bars but are frequently used to pick up street children suspected to be under the influence of alcohol. It is noteworthy that many of the activities recently prohibited in Nairobi are often associated with the lifestyles of poor Kenyans, particularly those of disenfranchised young men: smoking is usually associated with disenfranchised youth, while offering motorcycle taxi rides is a popular method used to ‘hustle’ for extra cash. Such by-laws appear to target poor Kenyans specifically. Furthermore, if a tourist was, for example, to receive a ticket for smoking in an undesignated area, it is likely that he or she could afford to pay the hefty fine – the equivalent of over 500 CAD – and be allowed to continue on their way through the CBD. Conversely, it is nearly inconceivable that a street child or an informal trader

issued with the same offense would be able to pay their dues; more likely, they would be made to leave the area completely, with a good chance of being taken to the police station (Smeaton 2011).

As in the confrontation discussed in the opening section of this thesis, the exclusion of hawkers from Nairobi's CBD has also been characterized by violent chases involving the use of tear gas, police batons, and even live ammunition. Tellingly, the Globe Cinema Roundabout where Kelvin and Macharia work has been identified as a prime spot for speculative investment for the "greening" and beautification of the city centre (Meso 2013). The roundabout also serves to connect the CBD to important infrastructural developments such as the recently completed state-of-the-art Thika Road "Super Highway," which is proudly invoked by politicians as a symbol of the "world-class" Nairobi to come, while proposed plans are looking to attract investment into the further "greening" of the space (see Figure 3). Such reliance on speculative investment leads to increasingly "splintered" urban landscapes (Graham and Marvin 2001); as Globe Cinema Roundabout area becomes a prime target for infrastructural development and beautification, the area must be "cleaned up" and "secured" – translating into the displacement of "undesirables" from the premises (Becker and Müller 2013). Consequently, the Globe Cinema Roundabout has been identified as one of the most contested areas of the city (Meso 2013), heavily policed and regularly the site of violent confrontations between hawkers and urban authorities.

Present: View of Globe Roundabout towards Museum Hill

Proposed: View of Globe Roundabout towards Museum Hill

Illustration 6 Present and proposed views of Globe Cinema Roundabout

Source: Meso (2013)

The situation appeared to reach a head in September of 2013, when Inspector General of Kenya Police, David Kimaiyo, announced that an anti-hawking team of 450 officers would be formed to “deal with” hawkers who “encroach” into Nairobi streets, granting these officers the freedom to shoot to kill or injure any hawker “armed” with “any weapon” (Ombati 2013b) – a dangerous precedent considering that hawkers often use sticks, glass bottles, and stones to defend themselves and their livelihoods during this violent displacement. Fortunately, the anti-hawking unit does not appear to have been actualized, likely because its announcement came only one day before the terrorist attack by al Shabaab at the upscale Westgate Mall, which left over sixty people dead and has preoccupied Kenyan security forces in the months following. Still, the police and city inspectorate guarding CBD are sanctioned to use violent and even deadly force to keep hawkers out.

The violent displacement of hawkers from CBD has been justified by “deeply exclusionary security discourses” that (re)construct them as criminals, responsible for

high rates of crime and disorder in the city (Linehan 2007: 28). Given its reputation for crime and violence, discourses of security in Nairobi carry significant weight in the lives of urban residents. People from every walk of life trade stories of car-jackings, warn each other profusely about the dangers of walking at night, complain about their stolen cell phones, and, more recently, speculate about the threat of terrorist attacks. Even as crime and violence in the city have fallen in the last ten years, perceptions of insecurity remain high; it is a deeply emotive issue (LeBas 2013). According to Caldeira (2000: 2), the “talk of crime” works to symbolically reorder the world by elaborating prejudices and creating categories in a way that divides the world into “good” and “evil,” criminalizing certain social categories of people. While criminalization of the poor is certainly not a new phenomenon, neoliberal urban development strategies have exacerbated it by promoting the conviction that crime reduction must precede development (Samara 2011: 89). The linking of poverty, terrorism, and global processes of wealth accumulation and security has exacerbated this criminalization (Samara 2011: 9). Terrorism, in particular, has been a potent issue in Kenya since the 1998 US embassy bombing and increasingly so in the wake of the Westgate attack. Thus, the threat to competitiveness proposed by hawkers is easily (mis)construed as a criminal threat.

The “hawker menace”, as the perceived danger they pose is colloquially known, was emphasized frequently to me during my fieldwork in Nairobi. Whether from concerned friends warning me to “be careful who I trust,” chatty strangers on the *matatu* – “They’re all thugs!” one man told me after inquiring about my field site – and even from members of the hawker community themselves, the salience of the association of hawking with criminality is clear. The particular ways in which these exclusionary

discourses operate can be excavated through closer examination of the context in which they are produced and circulated.

Popular media plays a significant role in constructing the discourse around security and informal trade in the city. While mainstream local media houses, the most popular being the *Daily Nation*, have covered some of the more significant confrontations between hawkers and authorities over recent years, they are rarely sympathetic and in fact often frame vendors as having provoked the violence. Meanwhile, as Linehan (2007) notes, the media seldom dedicates itself to exploring hawkers' grievances or the structural issues that have worsened their situation, such as *Vision 2030*'s unfulfilled promises to build more markets. Even if newspaper articles do acknowledge police brutality against traders, the headlines are often incendiary: one headline in September 2013 proclaimed that "Hawkers cause anarchy in the city" (Atieno 2013) while another read "Curb the menace!" (Ombati 2013).

Upon reading these articles more closely, however, it is revealed that the "anarchy" to which they refer occurred during a battle that was initiated while hawkers were protesting the "apparent shooting" of a twenty-three year old man who was killed while hawking near the Globe Cinema Roundabout the week prior. It is worth mentioning that while I did not witness the shooting in question, I was in fact present at Globe Cinema Roundabout the day it allegedly occurred and can confirm that a number of my research participants expressed their sadness and anger to me over a young colleague who had been shot dead by police. One man, mistaking me for a journalist, even approached me with a photo of a body on his mobile phone, asking that I make it

public. “Nairobians need to know that hawkers are human beings,” he told me. “They bleed the same blood.”

Illustration 7
Hawkers seeking
refuge from police in
Tsunami park

Source: Author

Regardless, the media referred to the shooting only in speculative terms and did not investigate it any further; they also did not feature any quotes from any of the hawkers who protested the killing that day. Conversely, they quoted a number of police officials who denied the shooting, described traders as “criminals,” “armed,” and “menaces,” and insisted that any violence perpetrated by police was “aimed at protecting city residents.” Reports also focused heavily on one police officer that sustained injuries during the event, while failing to address the question of whether any hawkers had been injured.

Linehan (2007) argues that, as an industry that draws its base from the formal economy, the media has an interest in reproducing negative discourses about informal

traders. Furthermore, while the press in Kenya enjoys a relative amount of freedom, there have been instances in which journalists have been criticized for being the mouthpieces of elites in the city. It is also noteworthy that since the election of Jubilee in March 2013, such concerns about freedom of the press in Kenya have increased with the passing of a “draconian” bill related to media and communications in the country (Logan 2013).

Other actors contribute to the ‘hawker menace’ discourse in less obvious ways. The private sector has an interest in producing and reproducing criminalizing discourse that frames the ‘hawker menace’ as a threat not only to their business but also to the security of the city itself. According to Linehan (2008: 32-33), this reproduction is not always explicit but is often insidious. The NCBDA, for example, has been careful to create a “non-confrontational” relationship with the hawker community by engaging with grassroots hawkers associations, carefully avoiding using terms such as “menace” when discussing alternatives to hawking. However, the NCBDA has also engaged in a number of urban renewal projects that serve to criminalize informal traders. For example, in the early 2000s they engaged in a community policing project with the Kenya Police and the CCN to install a number of police information centers around CBD, to keep police presence visible at all times. Despite the façade of forming an “urban alliance” with hawkers, the security project deliberately excluded hawkers from participating. According to Ruteere and Pommerolle (2003), the community policing project re-affirmed traders’ position as actors to be policed rather than having an interest in security themselves.

The discourses that criminalize poverty have had a profound impact on how cities around the world are policed and, subsequently, on the ability of subpopulations who have been criminalized to sustain their livelihoods. However, this discursive shift has also had implications for the processes of democratic inclusion and exclusion, and by extension “citizenship” (Burr et al. 2007: 25). In South Africa, Samara (2011) says, criminalization of the poor reproduces space in a way that preserves apartheid-era patterns of segregation. Similarly, Linehan (2007) argues that the criminalization of the poor in Nairobi reproduces exclusionary colonial socio-spatial relations that maintain the city center as a space for privileged elites. The neoliberal reordering of Nairobi with *Vision 2030* has resituated actors in the ordering of space, complicating the ideal of citizenship. Linehan (2007: 33) points to the NCBDA as a prime example of how neoliberal governance in Nairobi is still “fraught with colonial politics,” noting that a large majority of the association members were of Asian descent, redrawing the racial boundaries of the CBD that excluded Africans from the city centre under British rule out of concern for the “public.” By calling on the power of fear through evoking the issue of crime – a very real and emotive problem in Nairobi – harsh methods of social control can be implemented to impose neoliberal order on the city that serves only an elite section of the population. This bears similarities to similar alarmist tactics invoked during the Emergency to maintain racial order. Yet, while colonial continuities are evident, the neoliberal context presents new challenges and contradictions within its ordering. It is not simply, as a Linehan (2007: 33) suggests, “the exclusion of one set of entrepreneurs by another,” rehashing colonial race relations. In fact, insecurity itself has driven many of the Asian business owners away from CBD over the last decade, replacing them with

African business owners (Kinyanjui 2013). Whereas colonial exclusion was based on an explicit and formal denial of the right to citizenship for Africans based on race – a basis on which they could mobilize and call for inclusion – new forms of exclusion are more insidious, based on conformity to the neoliberal order and not necessarily delineated by the formal extension of citizenship.

Paradoxically, the adoption of neoliberalism has coincided with the expansion of formal citizenship. The encouragement of nationalist narratives at independence was an attempt to overcome racialized versions of citizenship; however, ethnic citizenship took its place (Ndegwa 1997). The ideal of citizenship expanded once again during democratic transition through which political rights were mobilized on the basis of citizens' right to universal suffrage and an end to ethno-political domination in Kenya. The introduction of a new constitution in 2010 further consolidated the ideal of entitlement to the "rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship" provided under the law to all Kenyans (Government of Kenya 2010: 16). Yet, as we have seen, Kenya has never transcended these tiered forms of citizenship. The advent of entrepreneurialism has narrowed it once again. Samara (2012: 4) suggests the infusion of market values in all relations has destabilized the link between citizenship and democracy as it is conceived in the liberal paradigm, amounting to a form of "disenfranchisement through inclusion." The "near universality of citizenship" means little when political subjectivities have been rescaled through neoliberal urban governance networks, in which even those who hold formal citizenship have little recourse to assert their right to remain in the city without relevant capital. Hence, access to the CBD in Nairobi has become limited in a way that emulates colonial forms of urban population regulation, albeit based on different criteria;

mobility is no longer restricted to a racial order, but similarly on an acceptable order based on neoliberal values of global competitiveness. In practice, citizenship in Nairobi amounts to “economic citizenship” (Sassen 1996 cited in Stepputat and Hansen 2005), in which privileged spaces in Kenya have become not only accessible to but *produced and reserved for* global elites such as international investors, firms, and organizations that have “acquired unprecedented mobility and flexibility of access” despite their formal non-citizen status (Stepputat and Hansen 2005: 33). Meanwhile, political elites in Kenya are lauded for having embraced “good governance” narratives, and are free to maintain their positions of privilege. Conversely, the benefits of full citizenship are denied to poor and marginalized groups, especially those who survive through informal means, based on the association of poverty and informality with chaos, disorder, and insecurity – the “threat” they pose to the order.

The implementation of neoliberal order, however, is neither complete nor uncontested. Closer examination of the outcomes of criminalization as a technology of urban renewal, including how hawkers’ negotiate their position of exclusion, reveals the contradictions inherent in entrepreneurial urban governance, especially in contexts where informality is a key feature of the urban terrain. Furthermore, many of the tactics employed to negotiate neoliberal urban restructuring and the resulting arrangements point to the further entrenchment of urban stratification and ethnicized forms of citizenship that are ostensibly at odds with the goals of *Vision 2030*.

4.4 Contradictions of criminalization

Mwangi, at twenty-eight years of age, has been working as a trader for over ten years. He has sold second-hand clothes at Muthurwa Market since it opened in 2008, but

often brings excess product to the sidewalks of the CBD when business is slow. He says that despite police harassment, Globe Cinema Roundabout is “the place to be these days” in terms of making a profit, though he would much prefer to do all of his business in the market. Despite the criticisms of Muthurwa’s poor infrastructure and sanitary conditions, Mwangi enjoys selling in the market where he has more room to organize and display his wares, and can spend more time with his customers helping them pick out exactly what they would like. Complimenting him, I mused that many customers must be attracted to his shop. He laughed, and said to me, “Only when they are not too fearful to come find me here!” I asked him to elaborate on this statement during an interview. He said,

My stall is nice, maybe, but it is deep in the market. I know they say the reason for no customers is competition, inconvenience, all those things, but I think it has more to do with fear. The security is very bad. I worry. For about one year it was okay. A nice new market people were excited to see. But people became fearful of Muthurwa and they stopped coming. I used to think that it would be nice to work in a market. No police, no harassment, right? Fine. But no police means no security, no customers. Will you go shopping for a new dress just to have your mobile phone stolen? I don’t think so. Now people are talking and sharing, they know to stay away from Muthurwa.

As he talked about fear and insecurity in Muthurwa, I reflected on our walk from the noisy market to the hotel in town at which I conducted the interview, and realized that the walk had illustrated his point. Rather than using the nearby pedestrian overpass above Haile Selassie Road, Mwangi had led me across the street through heavy traffic.

Pedestrian overpasses are referenced in the *Metro 2030* strategy as important features of new urban infrastructure, designed to enhance pedestrian and traffic flows to reduce congestion in the city (Government of Kenya 2008: 62). When I asked Mwangi why we took our chances in traffic rather than use the overpass, he gestured toward a group of young men standing on the stairs. “Street boys!” he said, “They are bad. They will mug

you. They will steal from you or hurt you. They are huffing.¹⁸ It is safer to risk getting hit by traffic than to use the overpasses and be a victim of crime.”

Although popular perceptions of insecurity have often focused on CBD, the incidence of crime is far more dramatic in the traditionally low-income, high-density areas of the city in Eastlands and shantytowns, where small business owners such as hawkers are often the prime targets (Anderson 2005: 543); the allocation of land in Muthurwa was indeed from an Eastern estate. Despite higher prevalence of crime in such areas, however, they traditionally receive little attention from the police, leading critics to argue that crime has simply been displaced rather than eradicated (Linehan 2007; LeBas 2013). Rather than addressing the actual issue of crime in Nairobi, then, security projects serve as a method of social control, limiting who can access privileged city spaces in order to achieve world-class status. The growth of the private security industry has exacerbated this dynamic, as crime moves to areas where residents cannot afford elaborate private security technologies and, as Abrahamsen and Williams (2005: 430) describe, “the ‘pickings’ may be less enriching, but more accessible.” They (2011: 213) explain,

To a significant extent, crime and insecurity follow the lines of wealth, and surveys show that the feeling of insecurity varies greatly according to income. In short, the poorer Kenyans are, the more they suffer from both the fear and the real experience of crime. Money buys (some) security in contemporary Kenya, whereas the expanding shantytowns and slums suffer from pervasive insecurity. The operation of a security market means that economic inequality is compounded by inequitable access to security.

¹⁸ It is common for street children to inhale glue or paint to avoid feeling hunger (see Smeaton 2011).

Not only has security in Nairobi shifted from the policing of crime to the policing of space, but it has also been marred by privatization that reproduces socio-spatial inequality through unequal access.

Mwangi's insights are demonstrative of a dynamic that has largely been ignored in the existing literature on street trade and markets in Nairobi. While Linehan (2007) laments the lack of market space dedicated for hawkers in Nairobi that has contributed to their displacement, even when space *has* been allocated for vendors in order to remove them from the CBD, the inequitable dedication of resources to these spaces – in particular, security-related resources – makes them unviable, and forces many to return to the streets. Moreover, while businesses in CBD like the banks and restaurants on Mama Ngina Street have hired private *askari* to guard their doors, traders in Muthurwa are unlikely able to access the formal security market due to high costs. Mwangi's avoidance of pedestrian overpasses mirrors my cab driver Joseph's refusal to stop at the newly installed red light, highlighting the ways in which the unequal allocation of security resources forces people to contest the implementation of urban renewal. Samara (2011: 88) calls this contradiction an "inherent feature" of neoliberal urban renewal: maintaining order in the CBD has coincided with the increased volatility in other parts of the city, designating them "no-go" spaces (Samara 2011; Kruijt and Koonings 2009). The discourses of criminality that have been used to justify the implementation of neoliberal order have, paradoxically, further facilitated the unviability of these spaces by exacerbating fears about insecurity. This is evident even in the case of Mwangi himself, who pointed to the street boys in the pedestrian overpass as evidence of criminality in Muthurwa Market, reproducing discourses that equate poverty and insecurity. The

relocation of traders to spaces that are notoriously insecure has been under-interrogated as an indication of why selective formalization schemes have been unsuccessful.

The implementation of security projects is also compromised by the institutional legacy of corruption and informal practices within the Kenya Police. When hawkers are arrested they are often let go through the negotiation of a bribe (Linehan 2007). While this is not a long-term solution for hawkers' access to space, it was preferable for most of my participants to offer bribes than to be arrested, fined, or have their goods confiscated. In any case, the illegitimate negotiation of bribes between the police and hawkers undermines the goals of *Vision 2030*, demonstrating the "difficult expansion of urban renewal" (Becker and Müller 2013).

It is worth noting that this process has gendered implications. Men are certainly vulnerable to crime, but conversations with female traders about Muthurwa highlight the fact that crime in Nairobi affects women in particular ways (see Meternowska et al. 2009). The fear of sexual violence is particularly salient; one young woman listed to me at least seven friends who she said had been victims of sexual assault while trading. While many male vendors lamented the lack of customers in Muthurwa due to the perception of insecurity, Purity, a young woman who chose to give up her stall at Muthurwa and return to the Globe Cinema Roundabout, explains to me how her resistance to relocation has been partly predicated on fears about her own vulnerability to crime in the market:

In Muthurwa, there were less customers and I worked shorter hours, so my profits were doubly lost. By six o'clock I would be packing up for the day so I could leave by dark. In town I can work later than that and get people on their way home from work. Muthurwa is not safe after dark. I hope you know it is not safe for us women to stay there after dark. In town the streets are busy until late. The police might harass us, but I prefer to run from them rather than risk what might

happen in Muthurwa after dark. These are the choices we must make as women: which violence is worse? We risk a lot.

Meanwhile, three of the female traders I interviewed at Globe Cinema illuminated the difficulties of this choice by speaking directly to the threat of sexual assault from the *askari* themselves. According to them, rather than simply asking for a monetary bribe, police are known to coerce women into performing sexual acts upon arrest by suggesting that they will be fined or jailed if they refuse, making women particularly vulnerable targets of criminalization. For many of my female participants, the threat of violence – whether from police or from criminals in insecure areas – carried a special weight in the consideration of when, where, and how they conducted their work.

In addition to reinforcing inequalities, another evident paradox in using security discourses to justify neoliberal urban renewal strategies is that narratives of crime are productive of violence itself (Caldeira 2000: 38). If ‘security,’ as Weaver (cited in Burr et al. 2007) suggests, is about real questions of safety and violence but also their representation as a matter of survival, it gives the state special rights to use “any means necessary” to guarantee it. It also gives the opportunity for the state to “reaffirm its capacity for action” (Wacquant 2008: 66). Given Kenya’s repressive history, one in which state police forces have been criticized for incompetence, severe abuses, and impunity (Anderson 2002; Abrahamsen and Williams 2011), the production of security discourses surrounding hawkers risks reproducing the anti-democratic institutions that neoliberal adjustment apparently seeks to democratize. It has legitimized police violence and impunity that Kenya has apparently been working to cull, as evidenced by the introduction of “shoot to kill” orders and the brutal attacks on hawkers like Kelvin,

Macharia, and Purity. According to a recent report, Kenyans are five times more likely to be shot dead by police than to be killed in actual criminal violence (IMLU 2014).

Security discourses also can have consequences beyond the state. In contexts like Nairobi, where the state lacks monopoly over violence, enjoys little confidence in its institutions, and is in competition with other forms of authority, security discourses can reproduce other forms of violence as well (Burr et al. 2007). Caldeira (2000) found “talk of crime” in Brazil similarly threatening to the values of democracy and productive of abuses by the institutions of order, but also suggests that because it undermines the legitimacy of those institutions it also further legitimates the use of private, violent, or illegal forms of securitization. This leads, as we have seen in Nairobi, to the further privatization of security and encouraging the fortressing of urban spaces for the privileged, exacerbating segregation and criminalization of marginalized groups. Conversely, it can also encourage the privatization of security through the proliferation of informal authorities such as vigilante groups. I turn now to explore how the implementation of urban renewal has been challenged, contested, and mediated by a number of factors, particularly the existence of informal structures and practices of negotiation, along with the existence of competing informal authorities, underlining the “difficult” and often contradictory expansion of neoliberal urban renewal as a result of these arrangements (Becker and Müller 2013).

4.5 Cartels: Urban contestation and competing authorities

On a warm afternoon in August, I once again helped Macharia and Kelvin fold their stock of women’s clothing. This time, we were stacking them neatly in bags at a nearby shop that charges them a small nightly fee for storage. They had made good

money that week – it seems the pleasant weather had brought extra customers to the streets – so they were packing their things up early to go enjoy a soda in the sunshine. Having accepted their offer to join them, I followed them towards town, stopping along the way to chat with various others who were hawking on the pavements in this popular area.

Seemingly out of nowhere, Kelvin grabbed my hand and quickly pulled me into a nearby alley. Macharia followed us as we ran away from the worksite. “Those guys!” one of them yelled, nervously. Thinking it was the start of another confrontation with urban authorities, I listened for the sound of a teargas canister behind us. It did not come. I looked over my shoulder to see if other traders were following as they usually did, but they seemed to be staying in place; there was no chaos like during other confrontations I had witnessed. All was quiet, but we kept jogging down this small road until we emerged onto another street.

When we had cleared a safe distance and returned to a walking pace, I asked Macharia why no one else had run from the *askari* this time. He laughed, and said with a hint of incredulity, “Do you think the *askari* are the only ones who run this place? They try, but they’re not the only ones!” He elaborated further:

The arrangements we’ve made with security cartels, they have gotten us into a mess. Everyone is taking advantage: the police, security guys, they all take advantage. They are all trying to take control. Meanwhile, we are the only ones left doing our job! We didn’t want to pay them what they will ask for today. Now we can use it to buy a soda. I think we’ve earned it, don’t you?

Macharia’s allusion to “arrangements” made with a “security cartel” that “runs” the Globe Cinema area points to the presence of competing informal authorities in Nairobi’s urban landscape, which have both challenged and capitalized on the processes

of securitization and urban renewal. Kelvin and Macharia were trying to get away from an informal security network collecting fees for its services; feeling that the security team did not adequately do its job, these young men felt they were being taken advantage of. While my initial conversations and interviews with informal traders regarding security, challenges, and contestations over space were heavily centered on their experiences of manipulation and violence from official urban authorities, it became apparent over time that the hawkers at Globe Cinema were negotiating access to space with alternative informal authorities as well.

It was difficult at first to get traders to speak candidly about their negotiations with competing informal authorities. Well aware of their reputation of being responsible for crime and disorder in the city, most of my research participants were eager to talk about the increasing exclusion they felt from the CBD and were quick to assure me that they were not involved in criminal activity; they simply traded in order to “get daily bread.” When I asked about the ways they persevered in the face of their exclusion, most traders mentioned evasion as their primary method. Women, especially, told me they had begun to carry lighter loads of their wares into the CBD so they could run more easily when authorities approached. Men mentioned similar strategies, though spoke more openly about engaging in battles with stones, sticks, and glass bottles. During these conversations, most of the traders made reference to being “warned” about the approaching authorities, allowing them time to get away. However, when I inquired about who was warning them, many were shy or reluctant to answer. No one had spoken to me candidly about the “security cartels,” as most hawkers refer to the informal security teams running protection rackets, until Macharia mentioned them to me the afternoon.

Shortly after that day, however, I attended a meeting near Ngara Market that made apparent their apprehension of the warning system being conflated with criminal activity, and thus their reluctance to speak candidly about the “security cartels.”

In a dingy rented room not far from the Ngara Market, barely big enough to hold the nineteen of us in attendance, I met with a group of hawkers who were aiming to start a new savings and credit cooperative (SACCO). SACCOs are popular in Kenya, acting as an informal social security network through practices such as merry-go-round loaning systems and keeping collective savings for insurance funds (see Kinyanjui 2012). This group was just in the process of establishment, and the meeting was there to plan its future operations. Abraham indicated that the goal was for each member to save around one hundred shillings per week.¹⁹ With the money saved between the eighteen of them, money could be loaned to members to enhance their businesses. Some of the money would also be set aside to deal with any unexpected costs, such as medical emergencies.

Most of the eighteen members of the SACCO, five of whom were women, were around the age of thirty-five. They had a list with them of over two hundred names of people who had expressed interest in the meeting, but had not attended. While some of them had stalls at the nearby Ngara market, all of them worked unlicensed on at least a part-time basis, usually hawking near Globe Cinema. A younger man of twenty-five years, Abraham, sat at the front of the room with a small sign printed in ink and pen marking his place, neatly labeled “Chairman.” He pounded the desk in front of him with a small gavel and declared the meeting in session. A woman, presumably the secretary of the group, handed out copies of the meeting’s agenda. The list included a number of

¹⁹ Approximately 1.12 CAD.

items I expected: finalizing their savings and loan scheme; the task of setting up an office space; managing contact information for members; and setting up an “insurance” fund that could be accessed in the case of injury or death. It was the last item on the list that drew my attention; it read, “Security: police, cartels, and thieves who pretend that they are hawkers.”

This particular SACCO was formed not only to engage in informal banking practices, but also wished to build a forum for discussing the everyday issues they encountered while engaging in their work, and to devise strategies to deal with them.²⁰ While most of the meeting had taken place in English or Kiswahili, many people seemed to switch to a Kiswahili-Kikuyu mix when they arrived to the last item on the agenda. The debate over the subject was clearly lively – at times heated – but I couldn’t follow it very well, given the language barrier.

After the closing prayer, Abraham approached me to apologize and explain. “They’re afraid to talk about the security cartels with you here,” he told me, “They don’t want you to think that they are responsible for or condone their actions.” He invited me to sit down and talk more in depth about the “security cartels” – perhaps best understood as protection rackets – that so concerned the attendees of the meeting, as well as my friends Macharia and Kelvin. He began:

What happens is there is an arrangement whereby these people collect money from us, from the hawkers. I don’t know who hired them, exactly, who formed the team. Some big-men²¹ hawker leaders. But the system, it works – or at least, it did – like after they collected our money, they offer protection. They go around

²⁰ Like many of the traders I met near Globe Cinema, no one at the meeting was aware of KENASVIT’s existence. This is the sort of instance in which I would connect groups of participants with common goals to one another; I later put this SACCO in conversation with KENASVIT.

²¹ “Big men” is a term used to refer to elites in informal political structures, usually associated with ethnic patronage systems (see Daloz 2003).

with mobile phones so that when the City Council are coming down, they alert the hawkers and we can move off. That's the arrangement. That's how you see us go so quickly when the *askari* come. These security guys are also supposed to do things like look out for thieves and warn us when they are in the area, because when there are criminals who take advantage of us we look bad and the *askari* have more reason to arrest us or attack. You know, thieves also like when the *askari* chase us. Chaos is the perfect time to pick a pocket. If you see the teargas, I hope you hold onto your bag because someone is waiting to take advantage.

Abraham's insight is demonstrative of how the priorities of the official urban authorities – namely, “quality of life” policing of space (Samara 2011) as opposed to the policing of actual crime – has left informal traders, who also have an important interest in security given that they need to attract customers, as Abraham made clear, to make alternative arrangements by hiring informal vigilante security teams. In addition to informally policing the area for crime, they also function as a warning system allowing traders to evade the official urban authorities in order to access prime spaces like Globe Cinema Roundabout to conduct their work. In this case, informal authorities in the form of vigilante groups have arisen both because state institutions' lack of interest in the kind of policing work that traders rely on (thieves looking to take their wares or mug them), and also as a direct challenge to the state (Burr et. al 2007). Informal community policing practices have been well documented in Nairobi (see Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003), and while I understood that these particular community police were partly looking to evade the *actual* Kenyan police, I did not quite understand why, knowing my sympathetic position towards informal traders, the members of the SACCO and other hawkers were so wary of speaking about them in front of me. When Abraham continued, however, he explained:

Taking advantage, this is what happens. Those guys, the [informal] security, they make *a lot* of money. Imagine, every day down at Globe [Cinema Roundabout], you collect 50 or 100 [Kenyan shillings] from every hawker. There are hundreds,

maybe thousands of us. It's a lot of money. When you make that money, others start to notice. I don't know who hired the first team, but they used to do their job. But then [informal] security guys from other areas came. And now, they aren't doing their jobs. Instead, they are fighting with each other over who will offer protection and gets to keep our money. It's like a cartel war, like in the movies. A turf war! They all want to be the ones to guarantee our security. Fine, okay, but now there is no security guaranteed – in fact, there is more insecurity [....] So, the situation is bad and that's why they didn't want you to know, to think that we are responsible. We are just looking for ways to practice our own warning systems without interference. The police might beat me, fine me...but if those security cartels think I am responsible for some other team, they might cut my head off!! Even Mungiki is involved. Why do you think they elected me as chairman, at my age? I am ten years younger than most of them.²² But they think [the security cartels] will deal with me better, as a youth. Anyways, we can stay working, but it is getting so expensive.

The “turf wars” that Abraham describes echo Macharia's earlier comment about who “runs” Globe Cinema; in other words, they point to the presence of competing authorities in the area. Though informal traders may not have unfettered access to their worksites – prices continue to soar as the “turf wars” continue – they generally have been able to maintain their access to space through the security offered through these informal authorities. However, while informal authorities may be known to provide security in some cases, they are more often predatory, extortionary, and sometimes even create the demand for security that they can then supply; to be sure, we know this is how Mungiki operates (LeBas 2013: 244). Abraham and many others I spoke to were suspicious that criminals associated with the protection rackets may be stirring up petty crime near the hawkers' site at Globe in order to assert their authority over the area, as drawing the *askari* to Globe heightens the necessity of protection for the hawkers. In any case, turning to informal authorities like the security vigilante groups can be understood as one

²² It is unusual to have a younger person in a position of authority over older people in Kenya, where generational politics tend to be hierarchical. Mungiki and other gangs in Nairobi have been known to be specifically understood as “youth groups” however, which may explain why his SACCO feels Abraham would be in a good position to deal with the security cartels (see Rasmussen 2010).

of the traders' methods of negotiating the harsh tactics employed by the *askari* and Kenya Police to exclude them from the CBD under *Vision 2030*. However, the outcome of these arrangements is not only at odds with the aims of *Vision 2030* related to removing hawkers from the CBD, but also has the clear potential for the reproduction of violence and insecurity that *Vision 2030* aims to fight. Given the militarization of urban space in Nairobi (Davis 2006; Wacquant 2008), rather than build a "safer, more secure" city as *Vision 2030* suggests, the securitized technologies employed to enforce neoliberal urban renewal have in fact *empowered* competing informal authorities in ways that risk reproducing violence.

Interestingly, when I brought the presence of informal authorities up in an interview with Alex, the trader working as a representative of KENASVIT, he confirmed not only his knowledge of the existence of protection rackets but also the Kenyan government's knowledge of them. Alex spoke extensively to the problematic relationship between the government and the "cartel" leaders, who he said have positioned themselves as hawker rights "activists" but are actually connected to powerful elites. He describes their presence at one stakeholder's meeting between KENASVIT and the central government:

Let me tell you, during the last government [the Kibaki-Raila coalition created out of the peace agreement brokered in the wake of 2007/2008 election violence] we went to the cabinet secretary. A team of *askari* were there, I thought for some dialogue about keeping peace. But then, there were these "vendor leaders" there also. But do you know who those leaders were? Not vendors – protection! The government knows everything. They know that we pay 50/50 to protect ourselves as traders. So they engage those guys instead because they know they have control, they can be bought off. The deals they make aren't with traders, they are with the guys who control and extort traders [...] They are hired guys who control the place. Unfortunately, they came to my space in Muthurwa. I told them that I went there to get away from being harassed by the *askari*, so I wasn't going to be harassed by them now! They impose rules and fees on you, they threaten

you. If you don't follow, they take from you; or, even worse, they have known to be violent.

In short, in the pretense of removing informality in the form of hawking, the government has not only tolerated but worked *with* other informal actors, hiring them to work as informants for the *askari* and to enforce the removal of hawkers from the streets to Muthurwa Market. This practice mirrors Ananya Roy's (2009) conception of informality as a *mode* of urban life that is engaged by multiple actors, including the state. It also demonstrates the parameters of what planning regimes and the state discursively label as "informal" or illegitimate, while others are considered legitimate partners if they are willing to conform to the neoliberal order of the city – undermining supposedly inclusive participatory initiatives by choosing who to work with and who to exclude (Lindell 2008). The government of Kenya is willing to engage informal authorities so long as they agree to help enforce the removal of hawkers from CBD. This demonstrates continuity with past instances of hiring gangs such as Mungiki in order to fulfill political goals, despite the government of Kenya's strong condemnation of such practices in the aftermath of the post-election violence (LeBas 2013). In this way, we can see how the state is implicated in the production of informality, and how it remains an important arbiter of inclusion and exclusion in the public order.

This has particular consequences in the context of Nairobi where ethnic stratification has been potent; the apparent involvement of Mungiki is telling here. Alex continued, elaborating on how informal authorities have capitalized on this opportunity to extort traders in the "turf wars" Abraham described.

There were two opposing cartels extorting vendors under the guise of protecting them. Yes, initially, they did their work. But now that the government became so

harsh they saw a better opportunity to extort for more money by also working for the *askari*. They are happy with how things are. So another team developed and competed for this money. The clash in the name of controlling who is going to take money from vendors. Lately, I hear Mungiki guys are involved – it's a Kikuyu thing now. And what then? Some have already died trying to get involved.

Though I could not secure an interview with the security cartels to probe deeper into Mungiki's involvement withhawker protection rackets, recent reports of a resurgence of Mungiki activity in the Ngara area point to the strong possibility of their involvement. In particular, there has been speculation about the gang's involvement in a land dispute that was of personal importance to many of the hawkers near Globe Cinema I spoke with who sympathized with *jua kali* mechanics that had been recently been displaced – a dispute that has been linked to at least eleven alleged Mungiki killings so far (Muraya 2014). That Mungiki has taken an interest in (or, more accurately, taken advantage of) the protection of hawkers near Globe Cinema and Ngara may be perceived by some, as Alex referred to it, as a “Kikuyu thing.” Despite the widespread practice of informal trade by Kenyans from various regions across the countries as well as migrants (Lyons and Snoxell 2005b), the perception of hawking as a “Kikuyu thing” lingers in the public imagination. This may explain why Abraham's SACCO members were so hesitant to mention the turf wars or Mungiki in front of me, given the desire to disassociate their status as disenfranchised Kikuyu youth working as informal traders from the public discourse of violence, disorder, and Kikuyu tradition connected to Mungiki. The criminalization of traders associated with neoliberal urban renewal has intensified competition for urban space and resources in ways that have reproduced ethnic stratification, and perhaps by extension, the “militarization of ethnic cleavages” (Wacquant 2008).

The reminder that hawking is still often perceived as a “Kikuyu thing” was of particular importance in the context of one conversation I was privy to between two hawkers working at Globe Cinema. It was apparent they were feeling exhausted by trying to navigate the web of informal authorities and state authorities that continue to narrow their possibilities for inclusion in urban public life. Both traders in this instance were Kikuyu, but highly critical of the Jubilee government headed by Uhuru Kenyatta; they talked extensively of the patronage networks that had been mobilized against the Kenyan people to keep a small elite in charge in the past, and lamented that they felt little had changed in recent years.

These men were deeply interested in the possibility of a long-lasting political solution for traders. However, their political solution looked much different than the grassroots and inclusive one endorsed in KENASVIT’s mission statement. Rather, they saw their only option as drawing on ethnic divisions in Kenya. After a back-and-forth in the Kikuyu language, one of them turned to me:

You know, these small traders, many of us belong to one tribe. We are talking about Kikuyu. When people hear “hawkers,” they hear Kikuyu. So I was telling Kamau, why don’t you say Kidero [the governor of Nairobi, a Luo] is anti-Kikuyu? There is a Kikuyu song, an anthem. The title means “People who work hard,” and the spirit is that those who struggle to work hard will succeed. Every tribe has a spirit, their beliefs, attitudes, and value systems. The belief and attitude of the Kikuyus is to work hard and succeed. So I was telling Kamau that the hawkers’ movement could be pragmatic by saying Kidero is anti-small business, and the small business people are Kikuyus! Frame it as “The Luo Kidero is endorsing policies that are anti-Kikuyu!” You won’t need much convincing; in fact, it is self-propelling! It will catch fire. So when we might say “hawkers movement,” we can instead call it a “Kikuyu movement.” Throw in the tribal card! I know you *wazungu* don’t want to hear tribe, but it is pragmatic! You say democracy and all that, but what has that done for us small guys?

While it is unclear whether or not these men actually had the intention of becoming politically active in the hawker community to act on their suggestion, this man’s idea is

illustrative of an important paradox of entrepreneurial urban governance. The existence of informal authorities and political structures – produced by the differentiated ethnic citizenship enforced in Kenya for so long – both complicate the implementation of neoliberal renewal as well as shape the responses to it. These two men are talking about drawing on ethnic acts of citizenship as a way of contesting the neoliberal order from which they are excluded, in a way drawing on decades of the “misrule of law” by political elites that have created informal structures of ethnic patronage (Roy 2009; Holston 2009). The lack of substantive inclusivity in spatial governance strategies and the inequitable access to urban space in Nairobi has reified the importance of informal political structures such as ethnic patronage networks, demonstrating the social nature of space and its role in shaping urban identity (Lefebvre 1991). That these informal traders have turned towards their ethnic identification as a means of political action – or informal acts of citizenship – indicates that *Vision 2030*, despite its claim to be working toward overcoming urban stratification and the coinciding militarization of those cleavages, has in fact reproduced those dynamics by failing to fulfill its promise of full citizenship and democratization.

4.6 Conclusion

The shift towards entrepreneurial urban governance in Nairobi is apparent with the neoliberal goals of *Vision 2030*, focused on fostering competitiveness and place-based urban renewal as its main priorities. In order to enforce the “competitive” order of the city, the selective formalization of hawking has been implemented to regulate the economic transactions of traders in state-sanctioned ways. Those who do not conform – or who are considered an undesirable “surplus” population – are excluded from important

sites of urban renewal through technologies such as a variety of security apparatuses, as well as criminalizing discourses. In many ways, these patterns of socio-spatial exclusion mirror colonial patterns of segregation, but are predicated not on official denial of citizenship, but on the axes of class differentiation. However, the implementation of entrepreneurial urban governance has not been complete nor without contradictions; the channeling of resources, especially security resources, into certain places over others has led to the unviability of relocation schemes. Furthermore, while “participatory” methods are encouraged in *Vision 2030* to ostensibly allow for input from marginalized groups, the presence of informal political structures hinders their effectiveness and undermines the goals of participatory strategies. The presence of these informal political structures, as well as informal alternative authorities such as vigilante gangs, in Nairobi have complicated and contested the implementation of urban renewal, as well as shaped responses to it. The increased competition associated with the neoliberal urban order has in fact (re)produced urban stratification and empowered informal authorities, leading to potentially even more violent consequences and undermining the goals of democratic inclusion lauded in *Vision 2030*.

5 Chapter: Concluding thoughts and further considerations

Nairobi's recent development patterns mirror in many ways the global shift to entrepreneurial urban governance. This shift has seen an increase in uneven geographical development (Harvey 1989; Smith 1990), with the introduction of new security-related technologies aimed at protecting investment in urban renewal. In cities across the world, informal traders have become prime targets of urban exclusion, as they represent an "undesirable" surplus population and an affront to the globalized aesthetic that has come to characterize the elaborate visions of increasingly technocized and marketized planning regimes such as those expressed by *Vision 2030*. Paradoxically, in countries like Kenya, the neoliberal order has been implemented alongside the adoption of – or, perhaps more accurately, the imposition of – values of democratization and the full extension of citizenship. As privatization, increased segregation, and securitization continue to defy urban residents' expectations of greater inclusivity, "Nairobi's city centre," Linehan (2007: 35) says, "has emerged as a key site where debates over the global and local versions of the city and the contest between different developmental futures are acted out."

While place-based urban renewal strategies have recently provided new impetus for the removal of "undesirables" from particular city spaces, I have attempted to demonstrate that Nairobi's CBD has *long* been the site of such contestation; struggles over urban space have been ongoing since the economic growth of British East Africa and its subsequent reliance on African labour threatened the racially segregated colonial order that had been imposed. In fact, even 'local' versions of the city's future have been contested from within, particularly as "ethnic citizenship" (Ndegwa 1997) practices

became key in mediating access to urban space and resources in the post-colonial era. Informal traders have been at the forefront of urban contestation; with access to urban space representing the locus of citizenship in colonial Kenya (Slaughter 2004), we can understand the technologies used to control informal trade, such as licensing and relocation schemes, as methods of social control and the imposition of a certain (racial) ordering logic. When those technologies were no longer sufficient to uphold the hegemonic order, the axes of inclusion shifted and new technologies were introduced; during the Emergency in Kenya, the construction of the “Kikuyu” threat associated with Mau Mau and the subsequent securitization of Nairobi constructed ethnicity as the main axes of citizenship (and was used to regulate informal trade accordingly) in a manner that the post-colonial state has failed to transcend, and in fact has capitalized on through informal political structures and the “misrule of law” (Roy 2009), upholding an order in which only a small elite prospered. The distribution of urban resources as well as access to space have been key to the imposition of that order, and have long been implicated in the struggle for a more democratic and inclusive Kenya.

As I have demonstrated, the neoliberal rescaling of governance networks and the inequitable distribution of resources encouraged by place-based urban renewal strategies has compounded the socio-spatial inequality that has long been engrained in Nairobi’s landscape, with the corresponding securitization fixing segregation into the built environment. This “colonial spatial logic” (Linehan 2007) has indeed built a city that aimed primarily at attracting investors and tourists rather than at accommodating the average urban resident. However, whereas colonial exclusion was based on the explicit denial of citizenship rights, the axis of exclusion is more insidious in the neoliberal era,

with those perceived as impeding the “competitiveness” of the city being excluded, even when their formal status as citizens is enshrined in a new constitution. Neoliberal discourses preach inclusion and the wider extension of citizenship, but access to space is no longer mediated by this formal status; rather, it is a form of “economic citizenship” based on the possession of relevant forms of economic and social capital. Foreign investors, tourists, and other non-citizens are in fact granted greater access to important city spaces than the average urban resident – a point which I have tried to emphasize by highlighting my own experiences as a white Western woman navigating Nairobi’s uneven urban landscape in relation to those of the black Kenyan hawkers who participated in this study.

However, while Nairobi’s recent development reflects global trends, I have also demonstrated that the “actually-existing” adoption of neoliberalism has sometimes been contradictory, as various people draw on social, political, and institutional features of the local context to constantly negotiate and contest the implementation of entrepreneurial urban governance. In particular, the presence of informal authorities competing for spatial governance in the form of protection rackets, or “security cartels,” has mediated the process of neoliberalization by helping to enforce it at times when it is gainful for them to do so, while undermining it at others. The paradox in this is that empowering competing informal authorities risks reproducing the very violence and insecurity that *Vision 2030* lists as a key challenge in enforcing a competitive order and attracting investment or tourists. Indeed, the resurgence of urban violence perpetrated by gangs in Nairobi has been noted even by mainstream publications such as *The Economist* (The Economist 2014). Moreover, the longstanding existence of informal political structures –

and the analogous appropriation of violence for political purposes as well as the unruliness of the Kenya security forces themselves – is cited as a major cause of urban violence, and a major threat to investors and tourists, as well as the average Kenyan (IMLU 2014). These dynamics have reified the importance of informal citizenship practices based on ethnic affiliation, as evidenced by both the ethnic identity taken on by urban gangs, as well as the suggestion by hawkers that the only possible way to maintain access to trading space in the downtown core is through mobilizing their (perceived) “Kikuyuness.” The reproduction of urban stratification and its potential militarization is directly in contradiction to the goals of *Vision 2030*, which ostensibly looks to overcome urban cleavages in order to consolidate the process of democratization in Kenya.

These insights contribute to a body of work concerning informality, security, and the urban order in Nairobi specifically (Anderson 2005; Linehan 2007; LeBas 2013), as well as to literature exploring neoliberal urban development and the accommodation of street trade more generally (see Skinner 2010). Understanding displacement as a form of social exclusion (that goes beyond economic processes to include historical, political, and institutional dynamics) is a useful and underexplored framework for the study of informal trade (see Skinner 2010). By exploring the contours of exclusion – and, implicitly, the ways in which some populations are *included* in the urban order – we can also make visible the parameters of “citizenship” in a manner that underscores the social importance of space and the power-laden nature of its (re)production. Employing this conceptual framework allows us to examine the “actually-existing” (Brenner and Theodore 2002) ways in which neoliberalism has affected urban development patterns, including the contradictory ways it may be negotiated or contested, that classical political-economy

critiques of neoliberal urban policies may fail to recognize; for example, in Nairobi, the (re)production of ethnic cleavages that have long been used as the chief axis of citizenship mediates the implementation of neoliberal urban governance (Ndegwa 1997). Furthermore, by employing an ethnographic perspective that inquires into how traders maintain access to space in light of these historical, political, and institutional contexts, we can recognize their agency without overemphasizing their ability to affect structural change.

Another contribution of this study is its emphasis on considering informal trade in the context of urban security. Many studies of informal trade highlight its economic and social importance as a livelihood strategy (Lyons and Snoxell 2005), emphasizing the need for access to public space (Brown and Rakodi 2006), as well as the contributions of traders associations and organizations (Lindell 2010; Mitullah 2010). While these studies recognize the failure of most planning regimes to adequately accommodate informal traders, rarely do they explore the challenge that my research participants identified as their chief concern: operating in the context of an uneven urban security terrain. While scholars have discussed security in the context of criminalization of traders (see Kamete 2008; Linehan 2007), they rarely discuss traders as having an interest in urban security themselves. This may be an avenue for further research on informal trade, as well as a primary policy consideration. Though insecurity, or the inequitable access to security, may have been a particularly salient concern of my participants in light of Nairobi's reputation for high rates of crime, given the global trend toward securitization it is an aspect of urban development that is worth exploring in relation to informal trade in cities

beyond Kenya. To be sure, the failure to enforce equitable security standards even in spaces allocated for trading is a major reason that relocation schemes have failed.

During the course of this research project, a number of other potential directions for further study became apparent. Firstly, while most of the traders who participated in this study identified as Kikuyu, an important recurring theme in their responses to questions about how they negotiate their claims to space, informal trade is widely practiced by Kenyans of all ethnicities, as well as migrants from other countries (Lyons and Snoxell 2005b). Furthermore, there are a number of other distinguishing features such as age and gender, as well as the large presence of disabled traders, that could perhaps influence the ways in which access to space is negotiated. A more in-depth study of these dynamics may present an excellent opportunity for understanding how ethnic identity has shaped citizenship practices in Nairobi, or how they are perceived in the context of generational differences. Women, especially, face particular challenges associated with informal trade, inclusion, and security that are worth closer examination.

Finally, as briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, recent events in Kenya have dramatically reoriented the urban security landscape since the fieldwork for this project was conducted. The attack on the upscale Westgate shopping mall by the Somalia-based terror organization al Shabaab in September of 2013 shifted the urban security focus away from petty crime and even gang violence, towards the threat of terrorism. Given that Westgate was located in a wealthy western suburb of Nairobi and frequented by international visitors, the ambush – which killed over sixty people – raised many high-profile conversations about the effectiveness of security in Nairobi, both private and public (see Howden 2013). The mall, which was fortified by high iron fences and

guarded by private security guards checking each car that entered the parking lot as well as the bags of those who entered the building, was reportedly seized by gunmen for nearly four full days before Kenyan armed forces could regain control. Accounts of “incompetence,” “infighting” between various authorities, and, worst of all, excessive looting by the Kenyan Defense Forces suggest that despite the rhetoric of building a “safer, more secure” Nairobi, the country’s security capabilities are lacking, even for those who possess the relevant form of capital to access it (Human Rights Watch 2013).

Given the international attention drawn by the Westgate attack, as well as a series of more recent ambushes along the Kenyan coast (see Okari 2014), the greatest “threat” now referenced as the country’s main security priority is that of terrorism. Future researchers should be attentive to shifts in discourse that reframe security threats to justify urban exclusion of certain populations in Kenya, including traders; in April of 2014, a representative of Nairobi City Council suggested that “overcrowding caused by hawkers is a major concern due to terrorist threats,” and issued a renewed order that they must relocate to markets “to avoid congesting the CBD” (Ndonga 2014).

As suggested in this thesis, the need to project the image of a “secure” place has prompted the state to “reaffirm its capacity for action” (Wacquant 2008) in an undemocratic and unconstitutional fashion. Indeed, it provides a new discursive justification for the harassment, abuse, and displacement of informal traders. It also risks shifting the axes of exclusion in other ways: based on the Somali origination of the al Shabaab terror organization, hundreds of refugees, permanent residents, and even Kenyan citizens of Somali descent – who have traditionally been marginalized in Kenyan society – have been unlawfully detained, deported, or extorted by Kenya Police in the name of

fighting terror, in an Operation named *Usalama* [Security] Watch (Amnesty International 2014). Though this may be unrelated to informal trade, the theoretical perspective employed in this thesis that connects the shift to entrepreneurial urban governance with literature about urban exclusion could be useful in research examining the ongoing police crackdowns in Eastleigh, an area of Nairobi often referred to as “Little Mogadishu” due to its large ethnic Somali population, and a prime space for future urban renewal initiatives.

To be sure, the security situation in Kenya has worsened in recent months, with noticeable detriment to its “tanking” tourism industry (Kiser 2014). As Kenya and its international partners surely look to tackle these issues, the insights provided in this thesis concerning the damaging effects of inequitable security practices, the militarization of urban space, and the use of security discourse as a technology of power could be of crucial importance in preventing the reproduction of urban stratification and addressing urban violence. Having had its lack of security capacities exposed, the common goal of a more “secure” Nairobi for both urban authorities as well as hawkers themselves could provide an impetus for better cooperation. Moreover, the country’s continuing journey towards the putative goal of institutional democratization can only be made possible through more substantively inclusive strategies. As an urban population that has long been at the forefront of struggles over access to space – and, indeed, citizenship – in Nairobi, the inclusion of informal traders in urban development strategies would be a positive step towards a more equitable and just restructuring of the urban order.

Appendices

Appendix A Sample Questions for Semi-structured Interviews (Traders)

- 1) Tell me a bit about yourself. (Age, birthplace, family situation, level of education, etc.)
- 2) Tell me about working as a hawker. What do you sell? How and why did you get started? Do you enjoy it? What are the biggest challenges you face as a trader? Are you satisfied with the amount of money you make?
- 3) Why do you work at (Globe Cinema/Muthurwa/Ngara/etc)? Have you traded in other parts of the city? Were they similar or different? What is the key determinant in where you choose to trade?
- 4) Do you pay the city council/have a license for where you trade? Do you pay another authority? How much do you pay, to whom, and how is it collected?
- 5) How has the growth of Nairobi and urban development in the city center affected your business? Has it changed your ability to access key trading spaces?
- 6) Do you know about *Vision 2030*? What do you think about the idea of relocating traders to markets like Muthurwa?
- 7) Have you experienced threats of displacement or other barriers to accessing space to trade? Tell me more about your experiences with harassment from police, urban authorities, etc.
- 8) How have you and others responded to threats of displacement, harassment, etc? Can you describe to me your relationship with the police/*askari*?
- 9) How do you feel about the assertion made by police and the media that hawkers are responsible for crime in the city center? What do you think about security in markets like Muthurwa?
- 10) What is your outlook on security in general in Nairobi? Do you think the city center is significantly different from other parts of the city in terms of security? What new security measures have you seen being taken, and have they worked?
- 11) Have you ever had any interaction with hawkers' associations or other civil society organizations that represent informal workers? Do you engage in SACCOs or other forms of self-help or association?
- 12) Do you feel represented by the Kenyan government? By your MP? By your city council member? What do you think about the state of democracy/politics in Nairobi?
- 13) Do you have anything else to add? Have I missed something significant about your work, access to trading sites, or security in Nairobi that you wish to discuss?

Appendix B List of Kiswahili terms

Askari – Security guard; can refer to private security employees, also serves as the colloquial name for the special City Inspectorate police force

Harambee – Post-independence slogan of Kenya that remains on its coat of arms today; represents nationalist narrative of full citizenship and duty to one's country, literally meaning “all pull together” in Kiswahili

Jua kali – Colloquial term for informal labour; literally translates to “hot sun,” referring to the harsh working conditions

Matatu – Minibus or Nissan van, serves as chief transport system in Kenya

Mzungu [pl. *Wazungu*] – Term for “white person” or person of European descent used throughout East Africa. Its definition is contested; it is sometimes used to describe those who are not necessarily “white” but are well travelled or from elsewhere, such as the many Chinese expats living in East Africa or even Africans who have returned from long stays abroad. Importantly, it denotes privilege and influence from outside of Africa.

Shamba – Farm, rural homestead

Uhuru – Freedom, independence; also the first name of current president Uhuru Kenyatta

Usalama - Security

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