Are Agile Innovation Networks the Answer to Africa’s Urban Challenges?

Mathare slum energy project, Nairobi, Kenya

LIAS seminar: Dr. Amollo Ambole

Wednesday, 30th January 2019, 2pm-3pm
128 Regent Road

What to expect from Dr. Amollo Ambole’s LIAS seminar:

1. Amollo will use lessons from her two-year study in Mathare slum to conceptualise how trans-local agile innovation networks come together to co-design and sustain development projects.
2. Drawing on a wider study in Nairobi, Kampala and Stellenbosch, Amollo will engage seminar participants in thought-provoking debates on how early-career researchers in Africa can change the urban Africa narrative through inter- and trans-disciplinary research.
**Context and research profile:**

**Context:** Mathare informal settlement (also known as Mathare slum) is located approximately 5.5 Km from Nairobi’s Central Business District. It is a compact settlement made up of 13 villages, housing a population of over 80,000 residents. The colonial planning of Nairobi was intended to protect the ruling class, contributing to the growth of settlements such as Mathare. Starting from 1920s, villages of native African communities near Nairobi were displaced from their ancestral land, forcing them to settle in Mathare. As the settlement grew in the 1940’s and 50s, it became a centre for activism against the colonial authority, prompting the colonial government to raze down the settlement several times. Each time, the locals rebuilt their dwellings. When Kenya gained independence in 1963, Mathare residents demanded for basic services. However, the new government did not recognize the legitimacy of the settlement and continued with demolitions. In response, the residents formed leadership structures, land buying companies, and even started providing for themselves basic infrastructure and social services. Currently, Mathare residents, like many other urban slum dwellers in Kenya, have found ingenious ways (legal or otherwise) to meet their household energy needs. Nevertheless, sustainable energy access remains a challenge in urban informal settlements. Since 2017, Dr. Amollo Ambole has worked with other researchers from the University of Nairobi to facilitate dialogue between Mathare residents, energy actors and practitioners in Nairobi.

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**Research profile:** Dr. Amollo Ambole is a design researcher and lecturer from the University of Nairobi, and is a Rutherford fellow at the Leicester Institute for Advanced Studies. Amollo is the principal investigator of the CoDEC project that is supported by Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 In Africa (LIRA 2030). LIRA 2030 is aimed at supporting collaborative research projects led by early-career researchers across Africa. The program is being implemented by International Science Council (ISC) in partnership with the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC), with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Additional support for policy work in Kenya was provided by the Africa Climate Change Leadership program (AfriCLP) funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC). CoDEC project participating universities: University of Nairobi, Kenya; Makerere University, Uganda; Stellenbosch University, South Africa.