

CLAS Open Seminars - Lent Term 2025

Mondays 5:15pm

SG1 Ground Floor, Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, CB3 9DT

Monday 03 February - 5:15pm

From Mestizo Urbanism to Relational Territories: Disentangling Power, Racism, and Spatial Agency in Bogotá

[Giulia Torino](#) (King's College London)

Chair: [Felipe Hernández](#) (University of Cambridge)

Abstract:

This talk examines the enduring influence of racial ideologies and power structures on the production of the urban space in Bogotá. While the Colombian capital city —much like others, across Latin America— is celebrated as a multicultural metropolis, this contribution argues that the racial ideology of mestizaje continues to shape society-space relations. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Bogotá (2016-2020), the talk introduces the concept of mestizo urbanism ([JLAS, 2024](#)) to describe the dominant mode of city-making in Bogotá that employs *discursive*, *operational*, and *normative* devices to conceal racialised spatial inequalities. To challenge the fixed and exclusionary spatial order of mestizo urbanism in urban planning, governance, and experts' knowledge, the talk then discusses the making of urban relational territories ([S&CG, 2024](#)), showing how marginalised Afro-Colombian communities create spaces of belonging, resistance to displacement, and re-imagination of urban life through translocal networks and everyday practices. Finally, by highlighting these spatial agencies, the talk calls for a decolonial un- and re-learning of the city in the context of Latin America's racial-colonial geographies, drawing from perspectives that have long been marginalised by the dominant narratives and politics of mestizo urbanism.

Giulia Torino is a Lecturer in Urban and Cultural Geography at King's College London, specialising in urban politics, spatial justice, racial displacements, and the geographies of power and inequality shaping cities. Previously, she was Junior Research Fellow in Urban Studies at the University of Cambridge (Peterhouse) and Visiting Researcher at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá. Her research has been published on the *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *Social and Cultural Geography*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Identities*, and *Dialogues in Human Geography*, among others. More info: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/giulia-torino>

