

# Nairobi's Politics of Housing

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## INTRODUCTION

Of all the problems facing the Nairobi City Council in dealing with rapid population growth during the 1960s, housing was perhaps the most intractable. Though the City Council made available about 20 per cent of its budget for housing during this period, an estimated 15,000 people still needed housing in 1966. And during the next three years, another 15,000 names were added to the waiting-list.<sup>1</sup>

The lack of housing was partly responsible for the existence in 1965 of between 5,000 and 10,000 illegal squatters. These people often combined 'illegal hawking' with their 'illegal squatting', setting up what one newspaper described as "cardboard and packing case shacks" on centrally placed vacant land. In one such area, "whole families, including young babies, were found to be living inside the warren of shacks which made up the illegal market."<sup>2</sup> The Nairobi City Council periodically attempted to clear up some of the worst squatting-hawking places, but these 'shanty towns' rose up as quickly as they were torn down.

The inadequate availability of housing also drove up the rents charged for private housing, even, it was claimed, in disregard of existing rent control legislation.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the majority of the standard single-roomed dwellings provided for Africans by the Government had to be shared by three or more.<sup>4</sup> In addition, an estimated 7,000 Africans had to commute each day into Nairobi from outlying areas, often travelling as much as seven miles by bicycle.

What was considered imperative was a much faster rate of building. "It will be necessary to build a minimum of 6,000 new units of housing every year for the next five years to cope with the needs of new Nairobi," insisted Nairobi's Deputy Director of Social Services and Housing in 1964.<sup>5</sup> Recognition of the problem, however, did not forestall the widening of the gap between housing needs and accomplishments. Frederick Temple noted in 1972 that the rate of housing construction in relationship to population growth was more

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1 *East African Standard* (E.A.S.), 13 March 1969.

2 *E.A.S.*, 22 May 1964.

3 *E.A.S.*, Editorial, 18 August 1966.

4 Cf. Lawrence N. Bloomberg and Charles Abrams, *United Nations Mission to Kenya on Housing* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1964), pp. 5, 15, 27.

5 E. P. Wilkinson, "Nairobi's Population Growth and the Problem of Housing," Nairobi City Council, 1964, p. 3.

than three times slower after independence than previously.<sup>6</sup> Between 1964 and 1970, 4,647 units of housing were added to the Council's housing stock. Considering that the population of the city had nearly doubled during this period (rising from 275,800 in 1963 to 545,100), this was only one unit per 58.0 people. Before independence, 13,187 units had been constructed within the boundaries of the old city, representing one unit of Council housing for every 20.9 people. This meant an increasing shortage of houses within Nairobi. While some 33,000 housing units were estimated to have been required between 1962 and 1970, only 7,355 were actually built (1,390 by the National Housing Corporation, 4,859 by the Nairobi City Council, and 1,106 by the private sector).<sup>7</sup> The supply of approved housing, in other words, was increasing at only about one-sixth the pace of population increase. By 1972, the shortfall between the requirements for housing in Nairobi and the availability of housing was over 60,000 units.<sup>8</sup>

Lack of housing, however, was only one aspect of the problem. Because of the unemployment situation, many could not pay the rent, even when housing was available. An economic rent in 1964 for an adequate, though modest, dwelling unit (two rooms, separate kitchen, toilet and shower) came to 85 shillings (\$12) a month, which was more than most Africans claimed that they could pay.<sup>9</sup> Even at 30 shillings (\$4.20) a month, according to a 1965 report by Lawrence N. Bloomberg and Charles Abrams, the rent could not be afforded by over one-half of the households in Nairobi and Mombasa.<sup>10</sup>

Because of the increasing seriousness of Nairobi's housing crisis, it was, according to Tony Hurrell (an architect employed by the Council), "surveyed, analysed, discussed and pontificated upon 'ad nauseum'. . . . No subject is more likely to generate stronger social and political opinions."<sup>11</sup> The leading Councillors and officers were unable to develop consistent policies in regard to housing, preventing them from properly guiding their subordinates. At the same time, the Central Government tended to impose impossible goals upon the Council, while denying it the finances and leadership necessary to fulfil these goals. David Cook, a City Planner with the Nairobi City Council, observed in 1970 that "in government there would appear to be above 50 people with powers of delay and approximately half this number with powers of veto. Forget anyone and you get into trouble."<sup>12</sup> But these people could

6 "Memorandum on Nairobi City Council Housing Stock," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, 28 February 1972.

7 City Engineer's Department (in association with the University of Nairobi, M.I.T., the Nairobi Urban Studies Group, and the National Christian Council of Kenya), "Interim Urbanization Projects: Preliminary Proposal," Nairobi City Council, 1972, p. 14.

8 Alek A. Rozental, "Nairobi Urban Study and the Housing Problem," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, 3 August 1972, p. 2.

9 Cf. E. T. Farnworth, "A Survey of the Problems of Re-developing Pumwani Estate," Nairobi City Council, 1964; Desmond Healey, "Housing: Nairobi's Biggest Problem," *Daily Nation*, 14 April 1964.

10 *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

11 "Low-Income Housing," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, May 1972, p. 1.

12 "Nairobi: Some Solutions to Problems of Urban Growth," in Michael Safier, ed., *The Role of Urban and Regional Planning in National Development for East Africa* (Kampala: Milton Obote Foundation, 1970), p. 219.

more effectively frustrate than facilitate the formulation and implementation of policies. In any case, few seemed able to help the Council significantly in the performance of its activities.

#### THE HOUSING WAITING LIST

The waiting-list for the existing 106,000 Nairobi City Council housing units exceeded 50,000 by 1972. Such a long waiting-list had by then become meaningless because it contained names compiled over a twenty year period, some of whom were no longer living or in need of public housing. For this reason, the list was abandoned in October 1972 by the City Council—an action considered unfair by the editor of the *Daily Nation* "to the thousands of people who have been in seasonal correspondence with the council for so many years, nourishing the hope that they will some day be housed or 'bed-spaced'."<sup>13</sup>

The new waiting list, however, like the old, would undoubtedly consist of people who were not homeless but anxious for cheaper, better housing, because rent levels in the private sector had increased by more than 200 per cent since 1965, while remaining stationary for Council housing.<sup>14</sup> Because Council housing was considered so desirable, it tended to go to those with influence over the allocation process. As always, the least influential were also the least affluent. Since persons in middle and upper income brackets benefited most from this housing, the system failed to assist the socially deserving and to maximize revenue from those who were subsidized by the scheme. It also discouraged the private sector from increasing its housing output, which only amounted to 250 units a year during the 1960s.

Many politicians and administrators, it was claimed, were able to rent or purchase under their own names or those of relatives a number of Council houses which they could then sublet for several times the monthly rent or instalments they were paying, regardless of the limits set by the Rent Restriction Department. In the spring of 1972, a spokesman for the City Council disclosed that between 80 and 90 per cent of the houses on one of the city's estates were being sublet illegally.<sup>15</sup> The effectiveness of the periodic inspections, it was pointed out, was hampered by the inability of the staff to determine the relationship of the resident women and children to the lawfully authorized tenants or purchasers.

The fact that administrators and politicians possessed Council housing made it politically difficult for the Council to increase housing rents even to cover maintenance costs. So adamant were the Ministers according to C. N. W. Siganga, the Director of Social Services and Housing, in his 1970 Annual Report, that one of them revealed his determination to veto any rent increases

13 6 October 1972.

14 J. R. Harris, "A Housing Policy for Nairobi," in John Hutton, ed., *Urban Challenge in East Africa* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972), pp. 39-56; C. N. W. Siganga, *Annual Report for the Department of Social Services and Housing, 1970* (Nairobi: County Hall, July 1971), p. 3.

15 *E.A.S.*, 18 and 20 May 1972

agreed to by the Minister for Local Government.<sup>16</sup> Because housing allocation became such a politically sensitive issue, the appointment of a new Housing Manager (who happened to be Kikuyu) was seen by the Luo, Abaluyhia, and Kamba Councillors (numbering 11 as against 28 Kikuyu/Embu/Meru Councillors) as being tribally motivated, undermining the position of the Council's only non-Kikuyu chief officer. This controversy dragged on for several years. When Mr. B. N. Gituiku was finally appointed Housing Manager in March 1972, he declared his intention of ending the practice whereby privileged individuals obtained council houses in order to sublet them at exorbitant rates. "One man, one house," he claimed, irrespective of one's position, was to be the rule.<sup>17</sup> But it remains to be seen how successful he will be in this regard.

#### THE HIGH COST OF COUNCIL HOUSING

The housing shortage was greatest for the lowest income categories (those earning under £600 a year).<sup>18</sup> These individuals generally lacked the political influence to obtain the older Council houses, and they found most of the newer Council houses too expensive. Whereas prior to 1964, 70.8 per cent of the Council's houses rented below Shs. 20/- (\$2.80) a month, only 29.2 per cent of those built between 1967 and 1971 did so. Almost all (96.4 per cent) of the expensive housing (the units renting for over Shs. 500/- per month) was built after 1967. On the other hand, 99.2 per cent of the cheap housing (the units renting for under Shs. 85/- per month) was built before 1964. Whereas 92 per cent of the pre-independence housing was suitable for the 51.5 per cent of the African households earning less than £302 per annum, only 44 per cent of the post-independence housing was appropriate for this income group. With the destruction of 1,200 one-room rental units (the cheapest form of housing) to make way for the Kariokor Development Project, there were fewer Council-owned one-room rental units available in 1971 than in 1961.

After independence, the Nairobi City Council became increasingly interested in building units for tenant-purchase rather than rental. While all Council housing before independence was intended to be rented, only 55.1 per cent of the units after independence (as of 1972) were so designated. After 1967 the Council ceased entirely, apart from a few small schemes, to construct any rental housing. This was seen as "a step in the right direction in that it encourages and promotes the ownership of property in the city among the low and middle income wage earners who form the bulk of the population."<sup>19</sup>

It was estimated, however, that at least 70 per cent of the families inhabiting Nairobi in 1971 could not afford the cheapest conventional two-room

16 Siganga, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

17 *Daily Nation* (D.N.), 8 March 1972.

18 Rozental, "Nairobi Urban Study and the Housing Problem," *op. cit.*, pp. 2-10; Temple, *Housing Memorandum*, *op. cit.*

19 J. Kabiru, *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1969* (Nairobi: City Hall, 1970), p. 54; K. Njuguna, Chairman, "Annual Report of the Social Services and Housing Committee," (Nairobi City Council, 31 July 1970).

structure that could then be built, costing about £850.<sup>20</sup> This meant, in the case of the New Pumwani Urban Renewal Project, that only a small number of the original Old Pumwani home-owners could afford the new units that were intended for them. In 1969 it was reported that there were 224 "unsaleable" units here.<sup>21</sup> These were put forward for rent; but, since few of the Old Pumwani residents could afford the rents being charged under the Development Plan for Pumwani Location (being from three to six times the amount originally designated as maximum), most of these units had eventually to be turned over to wealthier people from outside Pumwani. "No amount of lamentations or gnashing of their collective teeth," wrote Dana Haldane, an employee of the National Christian Council of Kenya, "could alter the economic fact that either a subsidy was required to lower rents to a level Pumwani people could afford, or Council would have to back out of its promise to provide alternative housing to the victims of the renewal."<sup>22</sup>

The high cost of Council housing was due to a variety of factors: the lack of skilled craftsmen, the inadequate supervision of unreliable labour, the high cost of imported items (amounting to between 15 and 35 per cent of the total cost of a house), the rigidity of the housing code, etc.<sup>23</sup> Neither the City Council nor the Central Government made good use of the available professional experts to set proper guidelines for costing. Although a variety of experiments were undertaken to keep down housing costs (using precast concrete forms, timber, paint, sprayguns, glass panels, blackcotton bricks, papyrus grass, sisal, etc.), construction generally was 50 per cent more costly in 1968 than in 1964. Consequently, the cost per unit in one of the Council's housing estates rose from the £600 initially anticipated to more than £1,000.

Despite the obvious need to keep down the cost of housing, the Councillors often insisted upon expensive housing: detached or multistoried, with car-ports and even servants' quarters. "What the engineers considered to be good designs based on sensitive planning and reasonable financial disciplines," Siganga complained, "was often questioned, deferred in committees, and otherwise delayed."<sup>24</sup> "As representatives of the people," he rationalized, "they must be satisfied that what they were offering to the public is what is wanted." The Councillors, it was argued, despite all their weaknesses, did speak the language of the *wananchi* (the common people) in desiring high housing standards. However, as the Minister for Housing (P. J. Ngei) pointed out in 1967: "The ideal house, in which we would all like to live or to build for

20 C. Gupta, "Summary of Findings and Recommendations," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, 31 July 1971; City Engineer's Department (in association with the University of Nairobi, M.I.T., the Nairobi Urban Studies Group, and the National Christian Council of Kenya), "Interim Urbanization Projects: Preliminary Proposal," *op. cit.*, p. 10.

21 C. N. W. Siganga, *Annual Report of the Department of Social Services and Housing, 1969* (Nairobi: County Hall, July 1970), pp. 11-12.

22 *Those Without. The Story of Three Years Work in Mathare Valley and Other Settlements of Nairobi, Kenya* (Nairobi: National Christian Council of Kenya, 1971), p. 22.

23 Cf. Emil Rado and Judith Wells, "The Building Industry in Kenya," in Hutton, *Urban Challenge in East Africa*, pp. 200-24.

24 *Annual Report, 1970*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

the people of this country, will tend usually to be much more expensive than we or they can actually afford."<sup>25</sup> Yet, the Councillors' naïveté regarding economics was apparently shared by certain top officials who insisted that the big cities of Kenya were wealthy enough to afford the skyscraper residential buildings being constructed in Singapore. Thus, it was necessary for a high-level team of Kenyan officials to travel to Singapore in the summer of 1971 to reach the conclusion that the experience of Singapore, with its lack of land and extreme density of population, was completely irrelevant to a city such as Nairobi, in which an estimated one-fourth of the land was then vacant.

Because fifty per cent of Nairobi's families could not afford to pay more than Shs. 50/- per month for their housing (based on an average annual income of around £150), the City Engineer's Department concluded that, given available resources and technology, the most that could be provided was a single-room tenement with provisions for shared services.<sup>26</sup> If given two rooms, the householders would ordinarily sublet one of them. After all, more than one-third of the city's population lived in single-room tenements, with some developments containing households of ten persons or more in one room.<sup>27</sup> But the Grade II bye-law permitting this sort of development was seen as a carryover from the colonial days and, as such, "not in accordance with African dignity."<sup>28</sup> Instead, the politicians and administrators were determined that Nairobi would be, in the words of Hunter Morrison (a Peace Corps volunteer working with the City Council), "the proud administrative center with tall buildings, clean industries, and wealthy citizens. . . ."

Expatriates coming to the city with a vision based upon other places run smack into this powerful notion of the beautiful city. Predictions of fast-approaching urban chaos and admonitions to act with dispatch fall upon deaf ears. Our advice is not what most people want to hear. In giving it, we often appear less as neutral experts than as latter-day manifestations of the colonial administrator who built cheap and ugly urban housing claiming that this alone was what the African wanted and could afford. In advocating the continued construction of cheap housing, we appear to be backward-looking and not at all progressive.<sup>29</sup>

Morrison might have cited in this regard the 1971 admonition of Mr. Ngei, the Minister of Housing, against the planting of maize, onions, or vegetables in urban housing estates instead of "beautiful flowers, grass and trees."<sup>30</sup> Yet, as one letter to the editor of the *Daily Nation* pointed out, for whom was Nairobi to look beautiful?<sup>31</sup> What could be a haven for tourists could be a hell for many inhabitants. Too often it was forgotten, according to Alek Rozental (an economist working for the City Council), that "Nairobi cannot expect to continue to function as a colonial enclave designed for the comfort of a narrow and privileged class."<sup>32</sup>

25 Quoted, Hurrell, "Low Income Housing," op. cit., p. 1.

26 Op. cit., p. 10.

27 Rozental, op. cit., p. 1.

28 Cf. statement by the Minister for Housing, *E.A.S.*, 5 February 1971.

29 Hunter Morrison, "The Site and Service Scheme: Problems General and Specific," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, 30 July 1971.

30 *E.A.S.*, 5 February 1971.

31 *D.N.*, 24 March 1972.

32 "Long Term Framework for Nairobi's Development," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, February 1972, p. 2.

#### SITE AND SERVICE SCHEMES

Even if the City Council's housing units could be reduced in cost, they would continue to be beyond the economic reach of the two-thirds of the City's families with incomes barely above subsistence level, including twenty per cent of Nairobi's labour force estimated to be unemployed in 1972. The only realistic alternative for these people was the so-called "site and service scheme", providing rudimentary services (water, sanitation facilities, roads, public transportation, schools, etc.), together with opportunity or encouragement for self-help construction. Indeed, a number of experts associated with the City Council argued that people be allowed to build the "cheapest form of shelter at minimum standards of acceptability," i.e., mud and wattle huts.<sup>33</sup> "Such dwellings may be ramshackle," Rozental noted, "their mud and wattle appearance may be jarring to many eyes, but they will be the best that a significant proportion of households will be able to afford."<sup>34</sup>

The most persistent supporters of site-service schemes were the members of the Nairobi Urban Studies Group, formed early in 1971 to undertake long-range planning for Nairobi's future. The Urban Studies Group, however, consisted mostly of expatriates, funded largely by international or foreign organizations and foundations. Often their reports seemed to be more directed to those funding them than to the City Council, ending up in files that were unread or unnoticed by the Councillors and chief officers. Consequently, they were seldom able to generate much political support for site-service schemes, even with the encouragement of the 1970-74 Development Plan, A.I.D., and the World Bank. While it was hoped that these schemes would provide for the housing needs of fifty per cent of the urban population, only 750 units in Nairobi resulted between 1964 and 1970, representing 16.1 per cent of the City's post-independence housing. "Development plan writers and other expatriates speak one language," Morrison concluded, "politicians and administrators another. The gulf between the two is immense."<sup>35</sup>

Those objecting to site-service schemes viewed them as inappropriate for a city such as Nairobi, being more suited to rural than to urban conditions. These schemes, it was feared, would inevitably lead to slums, spoiling the beauty of the city and bringing crime or disease. Many agreed with President Kenyatta's denunciation of Ministers who advocated permitting "native houses" for Africans in the urban areas, recalling that these were the sort of houses that Africans had to live in during the colonial days.<sup>36</sup> Such Ministers would be sacked, he warned. Moreover, according to the President, site-service schemes would inevitably encourage the influx of people from the rural areas who had been misled into believing "that their salvation lay in residing

33 John R. Yost, "Towards a Housing Policy for Nairobi," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, November 1969. Yost's recommendations are based on an article by C. Rosser, "Housing and Planned Urban Growth: The Calcutta Experience," in Saifer, ed., *The Role of Urban and Regional Planning in National Development for East Africa*, op. cit., pp. 234-247.

34 "Long Term Framework . . ." op. cit., p. 14.

35 Morrison, "The Site and Service Scheme . . ." op. cit.

36 *Sunday Post and Sunday Nation*, 23 July 1972.

in towns or the City of Nairobi."<sup>37</sup> Thus, it was the Government's responsibility, not to facilitate the urbanization of these people, but to repatriate them to their own areas.

The practical problems of site-service schemes were also emphasized by those opposing them. Indeed, the schemes attempted in Nairobi had never worked out as planned. Eighty per cent of those allotted plots in the Kariobangi Site-Service Scheme had by 1968 either sold their plots or were no longer living on them.<sup>38</sup> The regulations prohibiting the sale of these plots and absentee ownership proved unenforceable. Many of these plots were acquired by people interested in nothing more than quick profits.

#### THE SQUATTER VILLAGES

Lacking a consistent, realistic approach to the housing problem, the City Council could not cope with a vast burgeoning of shanties and other forms of unauthorized construction. By 1971 it was estimated that one-third of Nairobi's population lived in unauthorized housing.<sup>39</sup> Many others lived in poorly serviced, overcrowded, and deteriorating dwellings. At least one-fourth of Nairobi's houses were unapproved, and that percentage was rapidly increasing, largely as a result of the activity of African land-buying societies, cooperatives, companies, or partnerships, sometimes collectively referred to as Local Resident Associations (LRA's).<sup>40</sup> These LRA's were very effective in mobilizing local reserves of private capital to create inexpensive housing, ranging from Shs. 40/- to Shs. 150/- per month per room. Using large tracts of cheap land available for purchase, they managed to construct an estimated 5,000 dwelling rooms annually, from which they could recover their initial construction capital within less than a year, thereafter making as much as 120 per cent annual return on their original investment. "Such success has led to quick popularity among those with ready cash in Nairobi," Haldane writes, "and the company rosters (if they could be found) would show an intriguing web extending throughout both private business and public service sectors."<sup>41</sup>

Because these LRA's were viewed officially, in the words of the City Engineer's Department, as "the inefficient by-products of rapid urbanization," they were neither recognized or assisted in any way, nor supervised or controlled.<sup>42</sup> As a result, a large number of squatter villages emerged, usually without a water supply or a means of waste disposal, thereby greatly alarming the officers of the City Council. One place near the centre of the city—Kaburini—was, according to the Medical Officer of Health, "so crowded with

37 *E.A.S.*, 6 July 1971.

38 Thomas S. Weisner, "One Family, Two Households: A Rural-Urban Network Model of Urbanism," University Social Sciences Council Conference (Nairobi, December 1969), p. 4.

39 David Etherton, ed., *Mathara Valley: A Case Study of Uncontrolled Settlement in Nairobi* (Nairobi: Housing Research and Development Unit, University of Nairobi, August 1971), p. iv.

40 City Engineer's Department, "Interim Urbanization Projects. . ." op. cit., p. 16.

41 D. Haldane, *Those Without* (Nairobi: National Christian Council of Kenya, 1971), p. 29.

42 City Engineer's Department, op. cit., p. 16.

shanty dwellings that passages barely allowed anyone to pass through. A visit to Kaburini filled one with horror."<sup>43</sup>

The City Council periodically attempted to destroy the squatter villages, despite the 1970-74 Development Plan's admonition against doing so until the housing shortage could be reduced. In November 1970, 49 shanty settlements, containing about 7,000 dwelling units worth an estimated \$300,000 and accommodating perhaps 40,000 people, were pulled down or burned by the Council's askaris.<sup>44</sup> To prevent rapid rebuilding, some of the corrugated iron sheets and timber from the demolished shanties were confiscated.

The Council's 1970 demolition effort did not receive as much public approval as was hoped. Indeed, to quote Siganga, "the public outcry that followed this very innocent action was completely out of proportion with realities."<sup>45</sup> However, the realities included the need to take care of those left homeless by the demolition. Where could the Council find homes for Shs. 40/- per month, such as was charged for some of the shanties, Dr. L. M. Waiyaki, the member for Mathari, asked in Parliament.<sup>46</sup> Mayor Lugonzo admitted that the City Council did not have the £19 million necessary to provide housing for Nairobi's estimated 100,000 illegal squatters.<sup>47</sup> Even providing tents and food for one of the demolished shanty settlements proved too costly to continue for more than five days.

According to Mayor Lugonzo, the Council's struggle to prevent or discourage unauthorized structures was undermined by certain leading politicians who "would like to see slums and unsanitary surroundings mushroom in the city and then turn around to blame them on the City Council."<sup>48</sup> Most upsetting to the Council was the public comments of Dr. Kiano (the Minister for Local Government), expressing "horror" at what he called the wholesale burning of people's homes.<sup>49</sup> Dr. Kiano had personally approved the clearing of shanty towns, Lugonzo insisted, adding: "We do not wish to take issue with the Minister, but if he now feels we should stop our operation, then he must order us to do so." Yet, the Council's efforts to demolish shanties continued to have the firm support of President Kenyatta, who told the Councilors that they should ignore Parliamentary or public opposition, as they had a higher responsibility, that of governing the city effectively.<sup>50</sup>

What the City Council failed to recognize was the futility of destroying squatter villages without dealing with their causes. Almost as quickly as the shanties were demolished, they could be rebuilt. "It really boils down to who gets tired first," the editor of the *East African Standard* noted, "and it is sad

43 J. Kabiru, *Annual Report, 1969* (Nairobi: City Hall, 1969), p. 2.

44 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Economic Development in East Africa*, Vol. II, Kenya (Washington, D.C.: I.B.R.D., 30 July 1971), p. 27.

45 *Annual Report, 1970*, op. cit., p. 2.

46 *E.A.S.*, 20 November 1970.

47 *E.A.S.*, 23 January 1970.

48 *E.A.S.*, 17 October 1969. The Mayor at this time may have been reacting to the suggestion of, among others, Dr. Mungai, Minister for Defence (*E.A.S.*, 27 August 1969) that it was better to help people improve their housing than to demolish what they built.

49 *E.A.S.*, 23 January 1970.

50 *E.A.S.*, 6 July 1971.

to say that the shanty builders seem to be the more enduring."<sup>51</sup> Insofar as the Council succeeded in permanently destroying the shanties, it actually decreased the available housing stock. This, in the words of Haldane, "led to vastly swelling the demand, decreasing supply, and allowing greater exploitation to exist in those few areas which somehow escaped destruction through political intervention or other means."<sup>52</sup> In the process, the initiative of what the 1972 International Labour Organization study of Kenya refers to as the "informal sector" became discouraged.<sup>53</sup> This "impoverished and economically deprived modern sub-sector," even when pursuing similar economic activities to those in the formal sector, was required to operate illegally on the periphery of the formal sector. The squatter villages, after all, were the reception centres for predominantly unskilled and illiterate villagers, providing not only cheap housing, but also employment opportunities in marketing or family and cottage industries, education in productive and entrepreneurial skills, social support facilitating the search for wage-earning jobs, and close proximity to places of work.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, this destruction not only undermined the people's capacity for self-help, but also decreased the city's available goods and services.

The potential of squatter villages for self-improvement was evident in the case of Kitui Village, one of those uprooted in 1970 by the City Council's askaris. An official investigation of the village, following a letter describing its plight to the Chairman of the Council's Housing and Social Services Committee, revealed that it had been a well-organized community of about 800, squatting on an area of less than two acres.<sup>55</sup> The village had been administered by a council of elders, led by a powerful chairwoman. The church/school, which had been located amid the mud and wattle houses, also served as the social centre of the village. Here a nursery school handling fifty children had functioned each morning. In the afternoon, it had been used for adult literacy classes regularly attended by about twenty people, and occasionally for health classes. With the help of a Danish woman, a Maendeleo Club (an organization for women) had been making traditional Wakamba jewelry, handicrafts and basket work, earning profits averaging almost \$300 per month. The village had also provided traditional dances on Sunday afternoons for visitors and friends. Obviously, these villagers did not fit into the shiftless, lazy, criminal stereotype of squatters held by many officials.

The destruction of Kitui Village left the community in despair, apathetic and hopeless. Why invest more money and effort into a place that was likely to be destroyed again? Meanwhile there was no other place for these people to go. Most of those who remained after the destruction of the village survived in cardboard hovels with hardly any food, clothing, or blankets. There was no water or method of disposing of waste materials. "Conditions can be

51 5 June 1972.

52 Op. cit., p. 30.

53 Cf. "Informal Sector Development," (Technical Paper No. 22) in International Labour Organization, *Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya* (Geneva: I.L.O., 1972), pp. 503-9.

54 Yost, "Towards A Housing Policy for Nairobi," op. cit., p. 3.

55 "Kitui Village: A cursory Glance," Nairobi Urban Studies Group, 1971.

described as squalid, to put it mildly," the official investigation concluded, adding: "When faced with extremely adverse circumstances, these people, through their persistence and strength not only as individuals, but also as a group, have shown that they deserve, as much as anyone, a chance to make a decent life for themselves and for their children." But while a few charities provided limited assistance for Kitui Village, no official help was forthcoming, not even a reply to the village's application for site and service facilities.<sup>56</sup> Instead, the police again destroyed Kitui Village in September 1972, arresting 292 people (mostly women and children) as vagrants—an action described by Mr. Maina Wanjigi, an Assistant Minister of Agriculture, as "punitive, badly motivated, and unacceptable in a free Kenya." The Nairobi Provincial Commissioner, Mr. Mburu, however, defended this new 'clean up' as necessary because many unauthorized houses were being used as hideouts by gangsters who slept during the day but robbed people at night.

Many experts agreed with Mr. Wanjigi's argument that Nairobi's primary concern should be not so much the quality of housing within squatter villages as the quality of their physical and social environment.<sup>57</sup> Insofar as the Government could rid the existing squatter settlements of their uncollected human wastes, pestilential open drains and ponds, inadequate and polluted water supply, litter and filth, and dark unlit lanes, it would not have to worry about their visual appearance. In support of this position, a 1971 study of the University of Nairobi's Housing Research and Development Unit was cited. It showed that while sixty per cent of those living in site-service schemes complained about communal toilets, road lighting, dirt and rubbish, roads, water supply, etc., only four per cent complained about the quality of their dwellings.<sup>58</sup> With security of tenure and a system of positive incentives, people would improve their housing as their income permitted. Even the Local Resident Associations, which were accused of "exploiting the poor", would not have to be feared because, as their number increased, competition would force them to reduce their rent while offering a better product.

To facilitate the functional development of squatter villages, a number of suggestions were offered.<sup>59</sup> Only the most rudimentary services, such as common water points and pit latrines, need be initially provided. Otherwise there would be too much expense and delay involved, considering the shortage of funds and the desperate need for housing. But the organization of the housing areas would have to be carefully planned, so that roads, public utilities, schools, clinics, etc., could be later introduced without unduly disturbing the settlements. The initial plots might be no more than 1/16th of an acre, or the minimum possible under public health requirements. Those acquiring the plots would be subject to a lease arrangement that would encourage the improvement of property. For example, a two-year lease might be

56 E.A.S. and D.N., 9 September 1972.

57 Yost, "Towards A Housing Policy for Nairobi," op. cit., p. 3.

58 Hurrell, "Low Income Housing. . .," op. cit., p. 16.

59 Cf. E. T. Farnworth, "Report on the Nairobi Squatter Situation. Proposed Solutions," Nairobi City Council, June 1970; Yost, "Development Recommendations: Eastern Dagoretti," op. cit.; Etherton, *Mathare Valley. . .*, op. cit.; Haldane, *Those Without*, op. cit.

initially given, extended another five years for a timber house, and an additional twenty years for a stone dwelling. This flexible lease arrangement could also be used to maintain some control over the plots that were sold or rented by the original allottees. While the allottees were expected to expand their dwellings as their funds or space allowed, renting out those rooms not needed for their families, they would be subject to conditions whereby the Council, at some specified or unspecified future date, could provide certain services, for which they would have to pay. In this way, the settlements could be improved without unduly burdening the City Council. Indeed, it was expected that the inhabitants would want more and better public services as their ability to afford them increased. Moreover, as it shifted the responsibility for management and rent collection to the private sector through these settlements, the City Council would have more funds for the provision of needed services.

### *Mathare Valley*

There was hope that the City Council might follow some of these suggestions in the case of Mathare Valley, the largest area within Nairobi of uncontrolled settlement, having, as of June 1972, an estimated 80,000 people "living in shanties in unhygienic conditions."<sup>60</sup> Mathare Valley had long been used by Kikuyu squatters, being less than five miles from the central business district and the industrial area of Nairobi and yet somewhat hidden by the nature of the terrain along the southern banks of the Mathare and Gitathuru rivers.<sup>61</sup> During the Emergency of the 1950s, most of the squatters, then numbering about 4,000, were expelled; but they gradually returned during the early 1960s, including many ex-detainees, who had enough political influence to repulse a 1963 demolition threat. Thereafter, squatters who were expelled from other areas of Nairobi tended to go to Mathare Valley. This population influx was encouraged during the late 1960s by the activity of the Local Resident Associations which, by November 1970, had built, according to a Council survey, 1,220 houses containing 7,628 dwelling rooms. The residents were by then apparently well-organized, with village committees, officers, courts, and policemen functioning with varying effectiveness.

The impetus for the first Pilot Improvement Scheme for Mathare Valley came from President Kenyatta in 1969 for reasons that were never explained. "Some said the President passed the area almost daily and was concerned that the blight should be removed from the city. Others said that he owed a debt, personal and political, to the freedom fighters."<sup>62</sup> The coming Parliamentary and local elections might have also figured in his thinking. In any case, the President's word is generally enough to get things started in Kenya. The Minister of Housing, Mr. Ngei, appeared in the Valley with the District

60 E.A.S., June 3 1972.

61 The history of Mathare Valley is discussed by H. Morrison, *Mathare Valley Report: A Case in Low Income Housing* (Nairobi: Urban Studies Group, May 1972); Town Planning Section, *Mathare Valley Social and Economic Survey* (Nairobi: City Council, September 1969); Etherton, *Mathare Valley*. . . , op. cit.; Haldane, *Those Without*, op. cit.

62 Town Planning Section, op. cit., p. 9.

Commissioner, the Commissioner for Squatters, and the Mayor of Nairobi, announcing that all the people of Mathare would get free plots and building materials, £100,000 having been allocated for this purpose.

The 30,000 people estimated to be living in Mathare Valley in 1969 eventually discovered that the £100,000 promised by the Minister was non-existent. Even if this money had been forthcoming, it was insufficient to rehouse more than 300 families in very low-cost housing or to prepare more than 600 site-service plots, exclusive of the promised free building materials and a major sewer needed for the proposed resettlement area. As it turned out, the Government proved unwilling even to finance a pilot scheme of six experimental houses for the purpose of assessing the costs and benefits of heretofore untested low-cost housing techniques. The extent to which priorities were then askew is indicated by the City Council's 1970 proposal to spend £75,000 for a ceremonial drive to be used for "state occasions", while willing to provide only £50,000 for a project affecting the residents of Mathare Valley.<sup>63</sup>

In 1971 however, the Nairobi City Council, with the approval of the Central Government, unexpectedly allocated £1,800,000 for a two-year programme to provide 900 new houses and 1,650 site-service plots on a 115 acre section of the Valley.<sup>64</sup> Additional funds for this project were expected from A.I.D. and the World Bank. The houses and plots were to be carefully located on a grid, facilitating the gradual introduction of permanent access roads, street lighting, sewerage schemes, latrines, replacing the temporary facilities that were to be provided. Roads, piped water, and trunk sewers were also to service the eight existing Mathare villages, which by then accommodated an estimated 65,000 people. The houses were planned as simple structures (each containing a bedroom, toilet, shower, and kitchen), built by 'labour only' African contractors, with space for an extra room to be added when the occupier could afford to do so. The site-service section was to be divided into plots having communal toilet and shower blocks and those complete with private facilities. The City Council also agreed to work together with the University of Nairobi and the National Christian Council of Kenya to do the necessary survey work and planning for schools, clinics, shopping centres, open-air markets, and a cottage industrial area.

After nearly two million pounds had been put into the Mathare Valley project, with much of the infrastructure (roads, sewers, toilets, and streetlighting) installed in the western settlements of the Valley, it came as a shock to the City Council to be instructed in June 1972, to cease further building of new houses, roads, and sewers in the Valley.<sup>65</sup> Just as the Central Government's initial enthusiasm for the redevelopment of Mathare Valley was never explained, its disenchantment (at least temporarily) with the project was also never elucidated. The reasons can only be surmised.

Administrative ineptitude blighted the project from the beginning. The

63 E.A.S., 2 March 1970.

64 Cf. article by Richard Derwent, *E.A.S.*, 30 June 1971.

65 City Council of Nairobi, *Minutes*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 11 (June 1972), p. 2390.

necessary coordination of over thirty agencies spanning the Central Government, the City Council, and the private sector proved practically impossible to achieve. "A clear designation of leadership was never made," reports Haldane, "and no one was delegated the task of creating a common ground of factual information among participants."<sup>66</sup> Unexpected changes were frequently made in policy goals and client groups.<sup>67</sup> Because of the absence of a qualified resident engineer and of poor communication from City Hall to the site office-centres, there were frustrating or costly misunderstandings and mistakes. Likewise, communication often broke down between the City Council and the Central Government. For example, the Special Commissioner for Squatters, who was supposed to facilitate intra-Governmental cooperation in dealing with squatters, severely criticized certain social welfare programmes carried out in the Valley in 1970, apparently without realizing that these had been sanctioned by the District Commissioner for the Nairobi Area. This point was forcefully brought out in a letter from the D.C. to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands and Settlement, noting that "the Minister for Local Government is always consulted and authority sought before any funds are spent on any project in Nairobi." According to Morrison, however, the biggest problem for the resident staff of the City Council's Department of Social Services and Housing was the attitude of the Department's leadership, which "evidenced a singular disinterest in the project and throughout was politically less than courageous, preferring to avoid making controversial decisions whenever possible."<sup>68</sup>

The weakness of administration both resulted from and contributed to confusion over priorities for Mathare Valley: improving the existing squatter villages, providing permanent housing of good quality, introducing site and service schemes, or a number of variations in between. Anyone following the arguments too closely developed, in the words of Haldane, "a persistent nagging sense of vertigo."<sup>69</sup> There was constant political pressure from Councillors, officials, and potential clients to improve the houses and services that were initially planned: the unimaginative rows of undistinguished dwellings, the small rooms with insufficient ventilation, the unsightly pit latrines that were inconveniently located, the inadequate footpaths and roads, etc. While their complaints may have had some justification, they entailed the danger both of making the project too expensive for the Government and of driving away those most in need of cheap housing, particularly the mud and wattle huts or the incomplete 'self-aided' units which were considered undignified for a modern urban housing scheme. The muddled objectives of the decision-makers were perceived by many squatters as an indication of hostility. Dan Manyatta (a journalist) quotes one of them as saying: "They are simply chasing us. They do not want us. We are an eye-sore. But where shall we go?"<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, the squatters of Mathare Valley were the object of official scorn.

66 Haldane, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

67 Morrison, "The Site and Service Scheme. . .," *op. cit.*

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Op. cit.*, p. 35; Morrison, *Mathare Valley Report. . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34, 72.

70 *Sunday Nation*, 18 April 1971.

"From the beginning, Mathare Valley has had a terrible reputation as the home of criminals and ruthless people," one of the City Council's medical inspectors noted in 1971, adding: "They throw refuse everywhere and want our people to collect." Even this official, however, realized that the squatters might have been more sociable or cooperative were they not so insecure, neglected, and demoralized. The scholars working in the Valley were generally convinced that the people here were no more immoral, crime-oriented, or irresponsible than anywhere else.<sup>71</sup> Nearly two-thirds of the adult population were employed (though only twenty per cent were full-time wage earners), and most had resided in the city for over five years. As such, they were capable of vigorous effort to organize themselves and to improve their standard of living.

Unfortunately, helping the squatter villages proved more difficult than anticipated, even when there was a genuine willingness to do so. The existing plot sizes were often too small or irregular, making impossible the proper installation of sewers, water, and roads. Actually, many villages were so densely populated that it was hardly feasible to demarcate individual plots so that charges might be assessed for services rendered. The land was usually owned by absentee landlords, many of whom refused to repay improvement costs. Since the land in the Valley had become highly inflated in price (rising from \$392 per acre in 1960 to \$6,020 per acre on average by 1970), there were insufficient funds for the Government to buy all of it at current prices. But the Government's proposal to acquire the entire area by compulsory purchase at original prices was resisted by those politically powerful people who had bought this land from the former Asian landowners. What also complicated the situation was the difficulty of determining land ownership in certain parts of the Valley because of the inadequate records and survey, legal, and clerical services.

Many of the Local Resident Associations (most of which took the form of limited liability companies, the simplest organizational form under Kenya's Business Names Act) tried to work with City Council to get legal building approval. Some even paid employees of the Nairobi City Council to draw up plans, but this seldom facilitated negotiations with the Town Planning Department. Even using architects, surveyors, and lawyers, it can take between six months and one year to obtain the multiple approvals and permissions necessary to build a house, adding as much as \$150 to the cost. Longer delays could be anticipated when exceptions to the regulations required the approval of the Ministry for Local Government. In any case, the standards for rental houses, formulated in colonial times when few Africans owned housing in Nairobi, were generally beyond the resources of the LRA's, prohibiting impermanent housing and more than five dwellings to an acre in unserviced areas.<sup>72</sup> LRA's would occasionally try to raise the funds necessary to fulfil Council requirements by expanding their membership, but this led to endless disputes over leadership, procedure and contractual arrangements or stipulations, there-

71 Etherton, *Mathare Valley. . . .*, *op. cit.*, Morrison, *Mathare Valley Report. . . .*, *op. cit.*

72 Town Planning Section, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.



by undermining agreements worked out with the Council. Probably the biggest problem for the LRA's was the need to delay housing construction, pending the installation and payment of such required services as water, sewers, and roadworks (which could take as long as three years).

Being unable to meet the Council's financial, legal, and planning constraints and anxious to recoup investments, the LRA's eventually abandoned further negotiations with the Government and proceeded with their plans, building nearly 8,000 rooms or family units in 1969 in Mathare Valley (over five times more than the City Council could annually build). While this housing was at least as good as much of the older public housing, it remained illegal. As mentioned earlier, however, many of those in positions of power were themselves investors in these companies. Although legalization would have made their investments more secure, they feared having to pay Council charges and taxes and being subject to Governmental regulations and inspections. As such, they may have secretly supported or even initiated the Government's abandonment of the Mathare Valley project. Consequently, incentives were eliminated for improving the living conditions in the Valley, where 62 per cent of the children examined in 1970 by the Nairobi City Council suffered from bilharzia, 81 per cent from roundworm, and 27 per cent from hookworm. Yet, the worse the living conditions became, the less likely it was that the building being done in the Valley could ever be officially approved.

The Mathare Valley project also involved the politically delicate problem of allocating plots and houses. Since the plots were originally supposed to be free to impecunious and worthy squatters, they were obviously in great demand. The Commissioner for Squatters feared that people would deliberately burn their houses throughout the city to be included in the allocation lists. Whatever was done for the squatters, he felt, would simply attract more into the city, thereby making it more difficult to expel squatters back to the rural areas. As in the Kariobangi project, the Councillors were anxious to determine who would get plots, but the Land Commissioner was equally anxious to prevent this. This persistent conflict between the City Council and the Central Government over plot and housing allocation was seen as an obstacle to the continuation of the Mathare Valley project. Concern was also expressed about the previously mentioned problem of preventing the original allottees from selling their plots to those using them to build rental housing. While this was considered a gross misuse of the Government's generosity, there appeared no way to prevent it.

So long as the Mathare Valley project seemed doubtful, many members of the City Council's professional staff, particularly in the Urban Studies Group, felt in a quandary. They needed to work closely, according to Morrison, with the small group of politicians and administrators who shared both their concern about the rapid influx into the city of impoverished peasants and their affinity for site and service schemes.<sup>73</sup> But this was difficult to do without formal Governmental support. "In other words," Morrison wrote,

73 "The Site and Service Scheme. . . ." op. cit.

"to proceed effectively, we simply need a turn-about in actual Government policy." Meanwhile, the efforts that were being made to establish site service schemes or to guide the development that was taking place in other parts of Nairobi, such as in Dagoretti, which was approaching Mathare Valley's level of unauthorized construction, had to be accomplished almost surreptitiously.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, in the absence of meaningful policies for housing, the expensive master plan being prepared for the year 2000 was considered by a number of experts to be a waste of time and money. Such a plan also required basic decisions concerning transportation. A thousand additional vehicles a month were estimated to be entering the streets of Nairobi, necessitating more roads, traffic controls, and parking facilities which, while demanded by the élite, led to the congestion, noise, pollution, and inner-city decay faced by American cities. Instead of concerning themselves with "producing an architectonic design for a decade or two ahead," Michael Safier argues, planners in East Africa should be mobilizing the latent energies of the new urban settlers in order to channel them into productive activities.<sup>75</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

One emerges from the study of Nairobi's politics of housing rather more depressed perhaps than one would from a similar study in a city such as Accra, Ghana. This feeling arises from Nairobi's greater potential for coping with its housing crisis and thus, the greater gap between possibilities and achievements. The Nairobi City Council's annual gross revenue is between three and four times that of the Accra-Tema City Council (taking somewhat into account the softness of Ghanaian currency).<sup>76</sup> In 1960 Accra managed to collect only £192,827 in rates from a population of 327,800, while Nairobi's rate income that year was £1,016,071 from its population then of 250,800. This indicates Nairobi's advantages over Accra in its ability to evaluate property, determine ownership, and enforce rate collection. Even to find and inspect property in Accra amid the often unmarked, intertwining alleys presents an overwhelming problem. The Nairobi City Council, on the other hand, according to Rozentel, could collect a much higher percentage of the city's gross domestic product (being less than four per cent, as of 1972) by shifting the incidence of revenue collections from the poor, the wage-earners, and the civil servants to the rich, the self-employed, and the professions.<sup>77</sup> In any case, despite the inadequacies of its manpower, the Nairobi City Council could afford to hire the quantity and quality of professional staff that Accra could hardly hope for.

Nairobi's advantages, however, are only apparent in the sections of the

74 Yost, "Development Recommendations. . . ." op. cit.

75 "Urban Problems, Planning Possibilities, and Housing Policies," in Hutton, *Urban Challenge in East Africa*, op. cit., pp. 27-37.

76 Comparable facts and figures are available from E. K. Akyea-Djamson, Chairman, *Interim and Final Reports of the Commission of Enquiry into the Accra-Tema City Council* (Accra-Tema: State Publishing Corporation, 1969), and the City Council of Nairobi, *Memorandum of Evidence to the Local Government Commission of Inquiry* (Nairobi: City Hall, May 1966).

77 "Long Term Framework. . . ." op. cit., p. 17.

city seen by the tourists, the expatriates, and the élite. Here exist the parks and gardens, the tall public buildings and impressive hotels and theatres, the adequate sewage and drainage systems, the good water supply and other public services which are so lacking in Accra. Yet, as mentioned earlier, at least a third of Nairobi's population lives in areas which are considered an embarrassment to the City Council. "The City refused to recognize and service such areas, stating that they were only temporary and would be removed as soon as satisfactory alternatives were provided."<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, the existing wealth differentials maintain the impoverished and economically deprived modern sub-sector (analysed in the I.L.O.'s 1972 study of Kenya previously referred to), which has "only limited, fortuitous, and restricted access to the sources of income that generated the wealthy zone."<sup>79</sup> The people of this sub-sector, when not ignored, face the harassment of the powerful wealthy sections which benefit from the weaknesses of their unfortunate neighbours. Even shoeshine boys are hardly tolerated by the Nairobi City Council.

A similar segregation of sectors does not exist in Accra, despite obvious socio-economic differences within the population. This almost certainly makes life easier for the impoverished masses here, even amid the squalor they must endure. This may also partly explain the fact that Nairobi lacks the excitement or vibrancy of Accra or even Mombasa, Nairobi's sister city on the coast. "Beautiful downtown Nairobi," to quote a visiting journalist, "is about as dead as beautiful downtown Pennsylvania Avenue across from the FBI building in Washington. Dead, that is, as regards *joie de vivre*, the easy laughter, even of the music that I had taken for granted was a part of the lifeblood of Africans wherever they are."<sup>80</sup> "Face it," admits a Kenyan journalist, "in this routine, rat-race city of leisure, life at night is often dull, mostly a bore."<sup>81</sup>

It may be significant that perhaps the most interesting and lively area, resulting from the oldest existing site-service scheme in Nairobi, was the part of Pumwani which has so far escaped redevelopment. With all its destitution, over-population, and crime, it is described by a survey group as being early in the evening "noisy and gay, one enormous nightclub."<sup>82</sup> Whereas the people of Pumwani regard themselves as a closely-knit community, "proud and independent in spirit, as can be seen among even the oldest residents who have constantly refused to join relatives living in other parts of Kenya," most of the population regard Nairobi more as a place to work temporarily than to live permanently.

One also emerges from the study of Nairobi's efforts to cope with its housing crisis convinced of the need to re-examine some recent propositions about bureaucracies in the third world: that the more underdeveloped a political system is, the more likely the bureaucracy is to dominate the other political and governmental institutions; and that this political-administrative

78 Town Planning Section, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

79 Op. cit., pp. 503-9.

80 William Raspberry, "Impressions of Kenya," *Washington Post*, 26 June 1972.

81 "Fernandes on Sunday," *Sunday Nation*, 20 February 1972.

82 Enid de Silva, "Pumwani—The Slum Whose People Don't Want to Leave," *E.A.S.*, 18 September 1970.

imbalance prevents the development of structures which could facilitate the interest articulation and interest aggregation necessary for political development.<sup>83</sup> A recent book, edited by Goran Hyden, Robert Jackson, and John Okumu, relates these propositions to Kenya.<sup>84</sup> According to the authors, the organization of administration here is highly centralized, with an emphasis on maintaining control (law and order) rather than on achieving real change or development. In the process, potential structures and devices for checking administration (e.g., the legislature, the judiciary, the press, the functional associations, and the opposition parties) have been rendered relatively ineffective either by political discouragement or by socio-economic circumstances. Consequently, the goals cherished by the leaders prevail over those sought by the masses. This means that the apparent progress of Kenya (indicated by the rising gross national product) benefits more the élite than the general public.

The argument presented in this article is that the Kenyan administration is powerful only in a limited sense. Those heading the bureaucracy can certainly initiate or terminate programmes, such as the Mathare Valley project, without explanation to or consultation with subordinates, representative institutions, or the general public. But the ability to formulate comprehensive plans of great magnitude or innovation and to carry them out with the requisite efficiency and effectiveness is beyond their capacity. Thus, in the case of the squatters, the Government could harass and even uproot them, but it could not prevent or control them. And by denying the squatters the means for improving their standard of living, the Government actually worsened the problems it faced.

The reality of a powerful Government that is also ineffective clearly emerges from this case-study of housing. The leaders did not properly utilize the experts at their disposal, partly because they did not understand these experts and partly because they were unwilling to accept their advice. Consequently, their policies tended to be ambiguous and inconsistent. Without clear or meaningful policies, the leaders themselves became confused as to what they really wanted and lost much of their commitment to the policies they had initially supported. Moreover, what was lacking was the necessary co-ordination among and within Ministries, agencies, and City Council departments, together with the necessary competence for successful implementation. Thus the control sought by the leaders could only be sporadically exercised, leading to endless 'on and off', 'stop and go' cycles. At the same time, policies were imposed without taking into account the needs and desires of the public. Insofar as the public exercised limited influence over the Government, it ceased to respect the Government. Because the Government could not anticipate the willing cooperation of the citizenry, it had to rely upon the sort of coercive devices that tended to be very costly and of limited usefulness.

83 Cf. Lee Sigelman, "Do Modern Bureaucracies Dominate Underdeveloped Polities? A Test of the Imbalance Thesis," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. LXVI, No. 2 (June 1972), pp. 252-28.

84 *Development Administration: The Kenyan Experience* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970), passim. Also cf. my review of the book in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. LXVII, No. 1 (March 1973), pp. 253-55.