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HISTORY AND THEORY OF URBAN
POVERTY IN NAIROBI
THE PROBLEM OF SLUM DEVELOPMENT

By

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DISCUSSION PAPER 139

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I.D.S. Discussion
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Abstract

This paper attempts to explain the generation of poverty in Nairobi. The first part is theoretical and considers the validity of the assumption that urban development in Africa has been and will be comparable to urban growth in the West. Parts two and three consist of an empirical study of the Nairobi slums during the colonial era. The paper considers the reasons why people migrated to the city and what problems this caused in terms of housing, health and municipal resources. It also considers the response of the Colonial authorities to the influx, which was partly expressed in terms of segregated urban facilities and the control of population movement. The failure of these policies is demonstrated.

The paper concludes that the problem is still unsolved although the administrative responses have changed. The basic problem is of an urban population growth rate too high in relation to available housing, and a level of wages too low to finance sufficient housing or to meet high rents.

HISTORY AND THEORY OF URBAN POVERTY IN NAIROBI:
THE PROBLEM OF SLUM DEVELOPMENT*

INTRODUCTION

Poverty in Nairobi is as old as the city itself. In this paper I am attempting to explain why Nairobi has tended to generate this poverty.

This paper is divided into three parts, the first of which makes a theoretical approach. It considers the validity of the assumption that urban development in Africa has been and will be comparable to urban growth in the West. It questions whether it is analytically useful to compare urbanisation in Africa with that of Western Europe and whether there is sufficient wealth created in Africa to adequately deal with the problem of urban poverty.

Parts two and three consist of an empirical study of the Nairobi slum during the colonial era. It questions why people migrated to the city and what problems this migration caused in terms of housing, health and municipal resources. The paper also considers the response of the Colonial authorities to the influx of people, which was partly expressed in terms of segregated urban facilities and the control of population movement. The paper, however, demonstrates their failure to achieve the goals of segregation, of the provision of facilities or of control of migration.

In 1962 a partial survey showed that in Nairobi some 100,000 persons were living in only 28,387 rooms and two households out of every three had an occupancy of four or more persons per room. Since 1962 the problems of overcrowding have become even more severe.

The urban problem of poverty is still with us and becoming worse although the administrative responses to it have changed. The basic problem remains that of a situation where too many people are

Note

* Part I of this paper has been considerably improved due to the criticisms of Zul Mawemi, Kerschinn Leitner and members of an IDS seminar. They are due my thanks, the paper is of course my own responsibility.

entering the city in relation to the housing or to meet high rents. It is hoped that an analysis of the past situation may throw some light upon the contemporary scene.

PART ONE

a. Urban Theory

The vast majority of urban East Africans have always lived in slums. The term slum is a euphemism which has little precise meaning but is generally a reference to that part of an urban area which is considered to have qualities of dirt, smell and untidiness which the user deprecates. A slum can refer to almost any urban condition and the word varies in its usage according to history and culture. The African slums of Nairobi that the article refers to, were the living areas of the majority of the African peoples in that city; specifically the term refers to the conditions of housing, sanitation, wages, rents and occupations of African peoples of the city. The term refers to the collection of attributes which together describe the conditions under which the African people were able to live. The paper will therefore examine these attributes in an attempt to explain the origins of Nairobi's urban poverty.

The poverty of the people in urban areas in many parts of the developing world, in the last ten years or so, has become the concern of many academics. The importance of urban poverty has been recognised by revolutionaries who have understood the reality of the suffering of large sections of the so-called lumpen proletariat viz. the Tupamaros of Uruguay, by economists, sociologists, demographers, and missionaries who, concerned about the urban population explosion and urban poverty, have studied problems of employment, of migration and other related topics.

One particular work by Oscar Lewis, The Children of Sanchez is a very moving account of what he terms the "culture of poverty". Lewis examined in depth the quality of human life in a Mexican city.¹

1. See also A. W. Southall and P. C. W. Gutkind, Townsmen in the Making EAISR, 1957; P. C. Gutkind 'From the 'energy of Despair', to the 'anger of despair', IDS, Sussex Paper 1971 for a similar approach to Kampala and Lagos.

Yet, despite the impact of such a classic work as this, there seems to be a lack of an understanding of the origins of urban poverty in third world communities; the process by which urban poverty was created. Historical studies which can begin to deal with such questions in urban areas in the developing world are almost non-existent, despite the fact that the poverty of the urban areas is a very important historical question, which I believe, can throw light on contemporary problems.

The Nairobi slum development has been just one part of the wider economic and social development of the city and of the society as a whole. The significance of the growth of Nairobi slums is due to the fact that the people who lived in them during the colonial period constituted the majority of the city population; also, that the development of these urban slums was directly related to the character of economic development in the rest of the society of Kenya. Urban and rural areas must always be intimately connected if only because the urban areas depend on the countryside for food. Western urban societies import a large part of their food requirements, so imposing a close relationship between the rural food producing nations and themselves. Third World urban centres import luxury foods for the wealthy section of the population but not for the poor who have to buy local foods. Thus, accordingly, the urban slums of Nairobi were directly related to the growth of the city and hence to the countryside. The character of the urban/rural relationships that occurred in Kenya can best be examined by showing how Nairobi's development differed in certain marked respects, from the major urban developments that have occurred in the Western world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

(b) The Role of Urbanisation in Relation to Western Capitalist Development.

Urban centres have developed in all major civilisations and in all parts of the world, and there was certainly nothing new about the urbanisation that was a concomitant of Industrial Revolution in the West. What is new in world history is the extent of the growth of city civilisation. In all the already existing industrialised nations the process of urban cultures and economies has come to dominate the societies. In Britain, the most urbanised of all industrial nations, only 4% - 5% of the people are still making a living from farming. The proportion of people working on the land in Britain has been nearly static for roughly the last seventy years. This one fact alone, is indicative of the truly revolutionary character of Western capitalist

society and suggests that the process of urbanisation in such societies is very different, in important respects, from all pre-industrial urban communities. In terms of quantity of the proportion of rural to urban peoples, history has not seen the like. Thus, to conceive of pre-industrial and Western industrial, urbanisation as "a continuing process, related to the increasing functional specialisation in human society", of "communities at different stages of this process"² is to badly miss the point. A great deal of urban studies, in particular sociological studies of developing countries, like Mabogunje's quoted above, fail to understand that urbanisation is not, historically, a linear process, through which all societies are likely to pass, but is a process closely related (a) to the relations between urban and rural production and (b) to technology of the means and relations of that production; and that the all-pervasiveness of urban living in the West, which is quantitatively and qualitatively new in history, is due not just to the technology of Western society, but to her relations with the rest of the world. The explanation for the growth of pervasive urbanism in the West is due to the character of industrial technology of the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the relations of technology to production. The relationship between industrial technology and (capitalist) methods of production cannot be examined here but the consequences of the relationship has led to the exploitation of technology, the formation of factory production and the intensification of the division of labour.

The social and political fabric of Western societies has, by comparison with all the pre-industrial periods, been profoundly restructured. The consequences of Western urban and technical revolutions have been to destroy the old structures of pre-industrial society; for instance the old feudal relations, the power of the monarchy and the relations of Church and State have been broken forever. The relations of the mass of the people to the land and the social relations which surround the land have been irrevocably altered.

Gradually, over a considerable period of time, beginning in the late fifteenth century in Britain, and continuing over four hundred years, the right of the people to use farm and pastoral

2. A. L. Mabogunje Urbanisation in Nigeria University of London, 1968

land was removed. The process was accelerated after 1760 or so and it led slowly and irrevocably to the "proletarianisation" of the vast majority of the people. A proletariat in its simplest sense is a people who have no ownership of the means to produce, except their labour, which they have to sell; in the simplest sense it is the removal of the people from the right to use land. In Western Europe the process by which families were removed from this traditional right to the land occurred concomitantly with the process of industrialisation and urbanisation. The process by which men and women in the West have been proletarianised is again something which cannot be examined here. Each territory has, to some extent, a different history, but all to a greater or lesser extent, have had a considerable proportion of their rural people torn from their rural roots and forced into the towns to work in factories.

In Western Europe the towns provided the means for the rural migrants to find work, while the urban demand for food stimulated production in the rural areas. Western urban production in the nineteenth centuries was capitalistic; which means that unlike previous pre-industrial systems of production it was tied to a process of continuously increasing productivity and increasing technical change which historically has meant that urban production has grown much faster than rural. The urban areas of the Western nations have grown at the expense of the rural countryside. The British farmers were, despite continuously increasing productivity, quite unable, after 1850, to satisfy the British urban people's demand for food. The predominance of urban over rural growth has been a critical aspect of Western industrial history and it has led many sociologists to look at all urban development as the focal point of growth in society. For instance, Professor Kenneth Little argued in 1965 with reference to West Africa that "urbanisation is at the heart of social change" and that "the industrial forces which provide the main impetus to urban growth largely determine at the same time the pattern of the social system".³ Little's argument, which is correct in general terms for the West, ignores the productive basis of urban development in Africa which, as I shall illustrate, for Nairobi was mainly rural and not urban at all. In the West the rate of growth of urban industries was more rapid than the growth of agriculture. The greater industrial specialisation of productivity led to the industrial sector growing

3. K. Little West African Urbanisation, OUP 1965 p. 163

faster than the rural sector and so by the 1850s to the balance of society being urban rather than rural. Industry rapidly demanded more raw materials and the urban people more food. Because the nearby countryside had been denuded of its people, there was a need to find the food and raw materials from further and further afield. The fact that Western Europe has developed into an urban capitalist community, while East Africa and most of the developing world has developed, through the colonial period, into a capitalistic rural community, is no coincidence. Ever since the industrial West began to penetrate the present developing world, roughly after 1815, the latter territories have produced the food and raw materials which the European farmers have been unable to produce either for reasons of climate or land shortage.

In the nineteenth century, the colonialism of Western Europe was, at least in part, due to her need for markets for her expanding industries. The result was twofold. On the one hand, as Europe specialised in industrial production supplying the world with finished goods, so the rest of the world was brought into an unequal relation with Europe whereby it provided her with food and raw materials. Urbanisation after 1850 in Britain, and somewhat later in Germany and France, became the normal pattern of existence for the major part of their populations. The remaining domestic rural areas were unable to provide adequate food supplies for the urban centres and it became imperative that the latter should be supplied from elsewhere through trade. In a sense, therefore, the rural areas which supplied a large part of the food and raw materials needed in the West became the underdeveloped parts of today's world. The process whereby these underdeveloped regions could be brought into this form of relationship of economic domination cannot be elaborated here; but it is evident that one of the conditions for the extent of the urbanisation which occurred in the West was the development of a form of rural capitalism in the third world. Changes during the colonial period occurred (with the exception only of those towns based upon extractive industries) not in the towns, as had occurred in the West, but in the rural areas. Changes involved dominantly export-orientated economies based upon the production of food and raw materials for the West. It therefore took the form of the introduction of new crops, either through peasants or settlers, which were then exported. There was little development in the area of

restructuring, as had occurred in the West, rather the vast majority of the people remained upon the land and within the confines of their traditional, social framework. What urbanisation did take place was not a consequence of secondary industrial development but was directly related to the supply of export services. The export based cash crops of the countryside demanded urban centres for their distribution, centres which were very different to urban areas in the West.

The Role of Nairobi in the Development of Kenya.

The profound restructuring of society which occurred in the West, admittedly over a considerable period of time, does not appear to be occurring in the same manner in the less developed parts of the world. In East Africa for instance, there have certainly occurred many major social and economic changes since the advent of the colonial system in the 1880's, but there has been nothing comparable to the kind of wholesale destruction of the old order that we find in the West. In particular there has not, until very recently, been the growth of widespread urbanisation, such as took place during the Industrial Revolution in the West. As recently as 1964, a geographer was able to comment that:-

"Most African countries possess only one fairly big city, followed after a wide chasm by a number of midget or microscopic ineffective towns. Such urban scatter is in fact so typical of most backward, colonial countries that it can safely be called the 'colonial urban pattern'." (4)

Despite the growth of Mombasa, which has expanded due to its role as a port resultant upon the geography of both Kenya and Uganda, the urban growth which has occurred in both countries may be included in this "colonial urban pattern," in which over 90% of the people of both territories remain predominantly rural. The growth of only one or two major cities has not occurred by chance. Its explanation lies in the lack of industrial development which is a negative characteristic of the East African territories. This fact, which is one aspect of the failure to achieve a profound restructuring of these territories, may be illustrated through reference to the

4. G. Homolen "Capitals of the New Africa", in Economic Geography v 40, 1964, pp 239 - 253.

proportion of their peoples involved in industry. For instance between 1954 and 1968, employment in manufacturing, building and construction, (predominantly urban occupations) has varied between 9 and 11 per cent of the total enumerated employment per annum.⁵ However, comparisons with earlier periods, and in particular with the colonial period, are nearly impossible to arrive at, since the categories from which the figures are taken have changed. In 1927, for instance, a report from the Native Affairs Department categorised 6654 African employees as servants of various kinds and another 8460 people as gangers, navvies or factory hands. How many of these latter group were working in areas of industrial production is difficult to estimate. These two groups accounted for just over 15,000 employees in 1927, the other 6,000 or so all being in non-productive occupations, so that even with the assumption that the figures were probably fairly inaccurate, as were most colonial statistics about Africans at the time, and giving the 8460 the benefit of the doubt, there were still a minimum of 12,054 men and women of 21,000 employees working in the "tertiary" sector of employment.⁶

A rather better occupational census of the city was undertaken in 1939 and provided the following figures:-

Occupations of Labour in 1939.⁷

Domestic Servants	8457
Employees of Central Administration, the Municipality and Railway.	9049
Skilled workers - tailors, bakers, messengers.....	4756
Headren, Garage Hands etc.....	<u>5507</u>
	<u>27,769</u>

The number of workers who were "productive" rather than administrative or servants was comparatively small and although, given the data, it is hard to be precise, it is clear that Nairobi grew up as an urban centre designed to "service" the rural economy; not as a centre of economic stimulus. Nairobi was concerned with administration, the development of transport, the provision of commercial facilities for the White Highlands and to provide amenities for the wealthy minority.

5. See Kenya. Statistical Abstract, for each year.

6. Native Affairs Dept. Report in Nairobi 1927

7. E.R. Davies "Some problems arising from the conditions of housing and employment of Natives in Nairobi" 1939.

It is true that a certain amount of manufacturing industry had been initiated by the early Europeans and Asians. There were the railway workshops, which included a foundry, blacksmiths and machine shops, a soda water and brewery company, a bakery, the East African Standard printing press, Uplands Bacon factory, the Unga flour mill, timber and saw mills and there were also cab makers, safari equipment producers, tailors and outfitters and other small scale workshops. However, they were not, as a rule, large employers of labour,⁸ and their presence does not alter the basic assessment that Nairobi, throughout the period up to 1939, was developing as a service centre for the inhabitants of the city and for the rest of the colony.

That Nairobi grew up initially as an administrative city forms a third aspect of the failure to restructure the territories profoundly, as the foregoing employment figures make clear. From the earliest stages of Kenya's colonial history, Nairobi lay at the point where the railway entered the Highlands. It thus became the collecting centre and distribution point for the export produce of the community. All export commodities were collected and graded in the city, all imports passed through the city on the way to their destinations. It is in this sense that Nairobi originated as a service city.

It was because Nairobi was the capital centre of the European settler economy that the communication service developed more rapidly than in Kampala or Dar es Salaam. It was also because there were so many Europeans in the city that capital flow, especially industrial capital, tended to be in Nairobi's direction. Hence one finds that in the post 1945 era, with the development of secondary import substitution industry, Nairobi acts as a major magnet to external capital.

After 1963, with the increased speed of economic development associated with independence, Nairobi continued to draw in foreign capital more effectively than the rest of East Africa. For instance between 1963/64 and 1966 Britain alone provided the Kenya Government with £62.5 millions in sterling for various schemes as grants and loans.⁹

8. Information kindly supplied by Rev. A. Hake.

9. See Africa, June 1972, P 62.

International firms from the USA and Western Europe who have been interested in "development" in Africa, have made their headquarters for the whole of Eastern Africa in Nairobi. In short, since 1945, Nairobi has become the centre for new light, capital intensive industry. Similarly, it has become the centre for Eastern Africa for the international community, foreign journalists, U.N. personnel, diplomatic missions and foreign agencies. These changes are symbolised by the international communication network and the telephone satellite.

The urban pattern of development has therefore altered in many respects since 1945. The city of Nairobi has grown considerably faster than any other part of the society. There has been a tendency towards the centralisation of development in East Africa in Nairobi. Whatever indices one takes, it can be shown that Nairobi has drawn in, the people from the countryside, foreign capital and personnel and light industry from abroad. There seems to have been a strong tendency for Nairobi to suck in a high proportion of development resources from outside. In a sense therefore just as Europe functions as the centre of the economic system of which East African is the periphery, so Nairobi acts as the centre of the East African economic system and the other towns and cities function on the periphery; reproducing on a smaller East African scale the international pattern of the occurrence of wealth and poverty.

An important point to notice is that although the productive base of the capital city has altered, as the employment figures illustrate, there has not been any fundamental change. The centre of economic activity remains in the rural areas; export earnings are still the mainstay of the community and the city of Nairobi still functions as a depot where export commodities are collected and imported goods distributed. The city is still based predominantly upon tertiary industry and is dependent upon the productive earnings of the countryside.

Perhaps the one factor of major importance that should be noted is that during the nineteen twenties and thirties Nairobi did not act as the kind of economic magnet as it now appears to be. Eldoret, Naivasha and other small centres also provided the kinds of services required by the export farmers. Since 1945, however, there seems to have developed a tendency for Nairobi to absorb more and more of the country's development potential. With the expansion of tourism and the growth of secondary industry, Nairobi is becoming the focus not only of capital but of labour, with a developing drift

of manpower towards what opportunity exists. Hence what we are experiencing is the centralisation of effort in an area which continues, however, to act parasitically upon the majority of the community.

The growth in the size of Nairobi is only partially due to secondary industrial development, the growth of the "tertiary" industrial sector is still very important. By contrast, most of the towns and cities of the West grew in the nineteenth century in response to the demands for labour of the industrial sector; while for a considerable period the service sector remained relatively small. It is only recently, in the middle of the twentieth century, with the advent of "mass consumption", that the tertiary sector has grown rapidly. On the other hand, in Kenya the centre of economic growth during the colonial era was not in the city at all but in the countryside. The rural areas where growth was stimulated were in the White Highlands and it is due to Kenya's rural development that the concomitant development of the tertiary sector of urban growth was stimulated. Government had to be paid for by taxation and the wealth for that taxation was created through exports from the primary sector.

It may be argued that the charge of a failure to restructure society is a gross oversimplification, since it takes no note of the spread of the money economy nor of the new political order imposed upon the people. But in fact much of the old clan structure, the foundation of the pre-industrial, pre-colonial society, has remained relatively intact. Indeed much of the small scale pre-industrial technology persists in the rural areas, for instance, in the field of medicine and in crafts such as blacksmithing and small iron work. On the other hand it would be jejune to argue that significant changes have not occurred in the rural areas. Major religious, educational, economic and cultural influences have manifestly disturbed a considerable proportion of the people, but there has not occurred the very fundamental destruction of the political, economic and social scene which has been a feature of Western industrialisation and urbanisation and which can be seen to have erupted so dramatically in Russia and in China during this century. The most important developments now affecting urban growth in East Africa are the population explosion, land shortage and the development of capital intensive industry and these are not the type of change likely to lead to the wholesale proletarianisation of the people which has been so significant an element in the restructuring of urban life in the West. As in colonial times, most urban people

will need, in the foreseeable future, to maintain their rural links as a kind of social insurance policy. Similarly, rural people will help to maintain their urban kin in order to keep in touch with job opportunities for their young people. The reasons may have altered, but it seems likely that clan life will continue and a pattern of fragmentation into nuclear families seems unlikely to emerge.

The maintenance of so much of the old order in Kenya is partially due to colonial policy, which was directed to preserving traditional ways of life, but such maintenance was, up to the 1950s, in the long run due more to the character of settler production and the export economy than to deliberate government policy. Up to the mid nineteen fifties, wages were so low both in the rural and the urban areas that very few people could contemplate moving permanently into urban life. From around 1900 up until the mid fifties the low wage structure and lack of widespread critical land shortage meant that few people became proletarianised while the vast majority remained associated with the land and thus with the traditional structures of their communities.

After 1940, with the increased economic activity due to the war, and again in the period of renewed activity after Independence in 1963, people nonetheless remained on the land. Over the last thirty years, as many new industries have been introduced, they have tended to be import substituting industries dealing only with the final stage of a production process and being technologically capital intensive. The characteristics of these industries have been largely determined by overseas based giant international companies and are such as not even to have provided employment for the increase in population. Thus, just as in the colonial period, the rural social fabric remains largely intact.

But although the characteristics of production, despite changes during the last quarter century, have remained rural since 1940, what has altered the equilibrium over the past fifteen years or so has been the beginnings of widespread land shortage. Previously, short term migrant labour had been a possible expedient for earning sufficient cash for low level needs, but with the advent of large scale land shortage and the increased differential between rural and urban earnings the rush to secure permanent occupation in the town, and in Nairobi in particular, has reached such a pitch that the growth rate of the city is now twice that of the population increase. At the present time it is population pressure upon resources rather than industrial technology

which is proving to be the main dynamic of the society and which threatens to disrupt the traditional rural pattern of society.

Comparisons with Western development remain erroneous, since development in the West occurred through urban centres of manufacture whereas in Kenya it has continued to occur in the rural sector. The growth of the tertiary sector in the Western world was the consequence of increased affluence, but in Kenya it was the consequence of rural development and was therefore a major reflection of a situation of underdevelopment.

In this important respect the growth of Nairobi during the colonial period differed from the pattern of development established in Western cities. Nairobi grew up parasitically, as a colonial urban centre concerned in the main to provide the services for the running of a rural colonial economy, its predominant concern being the provision of administrative services, a transport system and the commercial facilities of credit and trade. Thanks to Nairobi's parasitical role in relation to the countryside, there has been little major structural shift in employment towards industrial occupations. The city has therefore failed to play a leading role in the stimulation of economic growth, although it should be pointed out that, from the nineteen twenties onwards, it has provided the surrounding people with an opportunity for trade. Overall, however, there has occurred no major shift of ideas and values such as is described by Weber or David Reisman as being concomitant with industrialisation. The only important area of comparison with the West has been the rapid population growth, and this has been due in the main not to the prevalence of economic opportunities in the town, but to the lack of such opportunity in the rural areas.

For the city dwellers, the consequence of the pattern already described is the poverty of a large proportion of their number. Administrative based cities in many parts of Africa appear to grow up with an endemic slum problem, with which it has so far proved beyond the means of both colonial and independent municipal authorities to deal. Nairobi is no exception to this dismal rule. Successive draconian measures have been taken over the past seventy years to deal with Nairobi's slum problem and all have failed. Gross urban poverty is still with us and seems likely to increase rapidly alongside the expansion of the city as a centre for East Africa.

During the colonial period, as the following sections will show, employers and municipal authorities were not interested in their workers as human beings; unskilled labour was simply one factor in the process of production and commerce. Almost no urban amenities were provided, so long as the supply of labour was cheap and plentiful, and basic human needs were ignored. During the colonial period, racial differences made it easier to justify the situation, which does not in fact appear to have differed materially from the gross deprivations endured by urban unskilled labourers in the nineteenth century in the West. In twentieth century East Africa, as in nineteenth century Europe, an oversupply of cheap, unskilled labour meant that employers could pay absurdly low wages, backed by poor working conditions and only very limited housing facilities.

But the situation in Western Europe altered through the development of the productive process of industry. A demand arose for greater skills, increased productivity and higher profit, bringing with it two main consequences. These were, (a) an attempt to provide skills by stabilising the work force through granting increases in pay and conditions and (b) an effort on the part of the political parties to integrate workers into the system through the provision of state medical and insurance systems, following upon the growth of political involvement among the labour force since the eighteen seventies. In this case, the state is providing those facilities which industry failed to make available.

But, as has already been argued, African urban productive experience is progressing along quite different lines from those familiar in the West. Only in urban areas connected with the mining industry has there been any attempt to stabilise the work force by providing the pay and welfare conditions which will hold semi-skilled workers. For instance, Luanshya, a Zambian town developed around the Roan Antelope copper mine, has been described by Marcial Wright as 'a prototype of company paternalism'.¹⁰ Half the initial housing erected by the company was reserved for married employees in order to attract relatively permanent labourers. The diet offered to the workers was adequate to maintain health standards and was therefore considered by many Europeans to be of a high standard, since the diet generally offered to employees throughout colonial Africa was below the minimum daily requirement to preserve the health of a manual worker. Wage levels were also considerably higher than in non-mining occupations. This pattern of company paternalism had been copied from the experience of conditions offered by the Union Miners in Katanga.

10. "Ethnicity on the Copperbelt, Ndola and Luanshya before 1935" USSC paper 1971.

A similar pattern to that described in Luanshya can be found in many of the Congolese colonial cities. From 1926, the Belgian colonial government had embarked on a policy of labour stabilisation. Comfortable camps were provided and the cost of food produce brought into the city was kept low in relation to wage levels. Adequate housing was provided by the large industrial and mining employers and minimum wage standards were introduced much earlier than in other colonial territories. As a result of all this, the example of Congolese employers was often upheld as a model for others in colonial Africa.¹¹

It is instructive, however, to compare social conditions in both Zambia and the Congo with the non-industrial, administrative type of town. In Congolese towns without extractive industry salaries were too low to provide basic subsistence and as in Nairobi, families were forced to maintain their links with the land.¹² Similarly, in Zambia, the non extractive urban sector did not provide the conditions for labour stabilisation. As Kay has noted "in almost every case shortage of public funds have led to the division of responsibility for town building. The most obvious result of such divisions is the emergence of twin 'company towns' and 'public towns' at each of the copper mining centres." He further points out that the shanty towns and squatter settlements are associated with the public towns.¹³

The logic behind the emergence of two separate types of urban life is clear enough. The cities and towns which developed around extractive industries required large numbers of skilled and semi-skilled as well as unskilled labourers and the only way to obtain these people was to provide them with conditions which would compensate them for leaving their homes for relatively lengthy periods. The need for a relatively stable semi-skilled labour force induced industry to distribute a proportion of its resources through better wages and conditions of work. Unlike urban service industries, extractive concerns have sufficient surplus to provide the kind of conditions necessary to stabilise their work forces, and while they do not appear to have produced a stimulus towards further industrialisation (since they import most of their machinery, export their raw material and provide the services for their own employees) they

11. C. Young Politics in the Congo Princeton U. P 1965. p. 204-210.

12. Ibid. p. 211.

13. G Kay. "The Towns of Zambia" in R.W. Steel and R. Lawton Liverpool Essays in Geography. Longmans 1967.

have been able to generate enough funds to rationalise their labour process. This latter fact is probably due to the international character of extractive industrial firms and their ability to raise finance through their banking connections.

On the other hand, the administrative based city, such as Nairobi or Lusaka, for many years lacked access to the finance of the international companies and in any case had a more or less constant surplus of unskilled labour, rendering it unnecessary to deal with their slum problem, beyond ensuring that the African living areas were kept physically distant from those of their European employers. As has been emphasised, in the period up to the early nineteen fifties, the growth of such administrative cities was dependant upon growth of agricultural exports, the basis of all cash for taxation on which a city such as Nairobi depended for survival. In short, the size and wealth of cities was dependant upon the size and wealth of the agricultural export sector; and, as colonial towns were developed along racial lines, the scarce urban resources tended to be spent on the services for Europeans.

Since the early fifties, with the growth of secondary industries based on foreign capital, there has been a tendency for such industries to pay considerably higher wages than were previously current, in a similar fashion to the earlier extractive industries and with the same motive, that of stabilising their skilled and semi-skilled labour force. Giovanni Arrighi had rightly described this group of workers as an aristocracy of labour. But because foreign capitalist industry is so weakly developed, the vast majority of the population remain within traditional low level technology constraints of production. There is no possibility of introducing the counter strategy of the welfare state, as in the West, and the consequence continues to be urban poverty.

The historical development of Nairobi should therefore be understood in terms of a predominantly administrative city which has grown through tertiary low wage industries, peopled by migrants from the countryside who have typically stayed only for a short period before returning to their homes. It was and remains a city offering scant opportunity and little or no welfare protection services. Without the development of manufacturing plants on a massive scale, which would employ thousands of people, there seems no likelihood of an alleviation of the dire problems of urban poverty in the immediate future. And as the rural population has exploded and landlessness increases, so the pressure of urban slums is likely to become rapidly worse.

A HISTORY OF URBAN POVERTY: NAIROBI

Urban segregation and poverty

In the West, the spatial distribution of urban populations has been largely determined by the free play of the market in land values. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were few economic controls upon the growth of western cities and the resulting urban population distribution was largely determined in relation to land use. The desirability of a particular area for a particular use would depend upon the demand for land from commerce, production or transport, while the domestic character of a neighbourhood was determined by the relation between income levels and appropriate housing. In both circumstances, the central determining factor was the market in land values.

The growth of Nairobi, like most colonial towns, was however different, in several important aspects, from the characteristic Western pattern. In this case, the spatial distribution of population, commerce and industry was determined by administrative dictate.¹⁴ The Municipality, the governing body of the city, was from the outset enabled to determine the spatial distribution of the population. The urban areas presented just another section of the colony where land was to be allocated according to racial ideas. The important distinctions between peoples in Nairobi were understood to be racial ones, so that from the beginning the so-called races - "Europeans", "Asians, and "Africans"- lived separate lives from each other. Thus instead of land use being determined according to the economies of the market along lines of social class, its distribution was made along racial lines. Within each racial division, however, the market was free to segregate rich and poor as in Western cities. Such a situation could only have arisen because the Municipality was dominated by Europeans who were able to dictate the early patterns of growth.

The significant aspect of Nairobi life has been the separation of the various communities. The European sector has always been

14. See D.N. McMaster "The Colonial District Town in Uganda", in Urbanisation and its Social Problems ed. R.P. Bechuriale and J.M. Houston. Blackwell 1970 pp. 330-351. It would seem that all colonial towns developed along similar racially divided lines. Prof. Simpson providing the rationalising ideology "health needs" for the racial division.

characterised by its wealth and by the "garden city" aspect of its lay out. Parklands, the predominantly Asian area, has had an intermediary character, while the mass of the population has always lived in Eastleigh, Pumwani, Pangani and recently Mathare Valley.¹⁵ Nairobi was never a hospitable town for Africans at any stage of the colonial period. It provided few of their needs in terms of urban living, since the Europeans, who dominated the City Council and distributed its urban resources, did not consider that Africans had any right to a permanent place in the town, believing that their only acceptable role there was as short term labourers.

A consequence of Colonial urban policy has been the spread of urban poverty, squatting and unemployment with a related incidence of violent crime - all of which have reached endemic proportions in the post colonial period. The differences between the present situation and that of fifty years ago would seem to be only those of degree, the problems are clearly becoming more acute as the influx into the town accelerates. As a consequence, the social consciousness of the plight of the poor appears to be increasing as the following quotation indicates:-

"Internal immigration from farmland to the urban area is well underway . . . the bulk of the houses completed so far have been for incomes in the middle range while almost 70% of the demand is by the lowest income groups. Consequently, this shortage of housing has been met by houses built in a random and uncontrolled manner - usually by squatting on public and private land - resulting in a proliferation of mud, wattle, cardboard and tin shelters in all the major urban areas of Kenya".¹⁶

There appears to be a continuity between the colonial period and the present within the context of urban poverty. The problem is in its essence a simple one, that of too many people competing for too few houses at too high a rent in a city with too few jobs and too low wages. The origins of the problem of urban poverty are historical as the paper will attempt to explain.

15. In 1963 it was estimated that 50% of Nairobi's population (70% of the Africans) lived in Eastleigh which was only 10% of the housing area, see E Etherton, ed, Mathare Valley: a case study of uncontrolled settlement in Nairobi. Nairobi, 1970

16. G.M.G. Kakuli "Tenant Unionism protection for tenants" East Africa Journal, April 1970, p5.

Popularity of Urban Employment

Urban poverty in Nairobi has always been due to a larger influx of people into the city than it was able to employ or accommodate. Why people should have migrated to the town during the colonial era when there was otherwise a shortage of labour is difficult to answer. Such migration was possibly due to the higher wages paid in the city than in the rural areas and land pressures may have been an important determinant in this process. There is a small piece of evidence supporting the hypothesis that higher wages were the main attraction which was collected by Stone, a District Commissioner in Fort Hall, who in 1925 examined the Registration Certificates of three hundred young men from six locations in order to assess whether they should be forcibly recruited for work on the Uasin Gishu Railway development.¹⁷ His survey did not offer comparative figures for urban and rural wage levels, but it was reported that he remarked that:

"these documents show how few natives comparatively speaking were employed in ordinary farm work and how the great majority find their work in the towns. Every imaginable condition of skilled and unskilled labour was represented except that of farm labourer. The reason presumably is not far to seek for in nearly all classes wages were found to be far in excess of those offered by estates."¹⁸

Unfortunately, we do not have precise details about Stone's work and his comments have remained unsubstantiated by any other comparative contemporary work. Indeed no other investigation of comparative rural and urban wage rates was attempted until 1937. The 1929 "Report on the Employment and Housing of Servants in Nairobi" indicated comparatively high wage levels. The Municipal Native Affairs Officer had taken a special labour return in November 1938 from every householder or employer in the city. Employers were informed in advance about the return and it is probable that the evidence obtained was of a higher order of reliability than most colonial statistics. The level of monthly wages indicated by the report has been set out in the following table:-

17. The Uasin Gishu Railway had been started in 1922, but due to a high rate and a large demand for rural workers had not been able to recruit sufficient labour. The Imperial authority had sanctioned the use of forced labour in these circumstances.

18. See Oldham papers in Edinburgh House: Rev. Hooper quoting from a private letter to Oldham 29.1.1925 in a box marked "Kenya Correspondence," J.W. Arthur, H.D. Hooper.

Table of African Wage in Nairobi

November 1938 19

	<u>Number of Employees</u>
Up to 10/- for 30 day month	1786 (which included 1506 people under 16)
Between 10/- & 20/- for 30 day month	15661
Between 20/- & 40/- for 30 day month	9069
Between 40/- & 80/- for 30 day month	1727

The average wage was 23 shillings 57 cents a month, but over sixteen thousand people received less. There is unfortunately no similar return for wages paid in the rural areas, so it is difficult to assert categorically that these were higher rates than pertained in the countryside. However, the author's own researches dealing with much scattered data from District Annual Reports, Native Affairs Annual Reports and Colonial Office files would tend to suggest that a wage of fifteen to sixteen shilling for a month's work was high in 1938/39 and that a wage of ten to twelve shillings was quite normal on estates. It seems reasonable to conclude from this scattered evidence that the gap between urban and rural wage levels was a major factor in the decision to migrate to the town, probably from as early as the beginning of this century.²⁰

The other important factor influencing the movement to the town was the pressure on land. Professor Ominde noted in 1963 that the exodus from the rural areas to the towns at that time was due to lack of rural employment.²¹ In the nineteen sixties, as in earlier decades, population pressure upon land resources was localised within certain locations or districts.²² I have presented evidence elsewhere which

19. "Some problems arising from the conditions of housing and employment of natives in Nairobi" by E.R. St. Davies 1939, copies can be found in K.N.A. 9. 1707-70-257 and in Rhodes House Library in mss. Afr. t. 13

20. Clearly I cannot prove that the urban/rural wage differential was so large from 1903, but it seems a not unreasonable inference from the available data.

21. S.H. Ominde "Movements to towns from Nyanza Province of Kenya" in Urbanisation in African Social Change, Proceedings of the University of Edinburgh, Centre for African Studies Seminar, 1963.

22. R.N.A. van Zwanenberg "Primitive Colonial Accumulation" D. Phil, Sussex, 1971 chapters 5 and 11.

indicated that population pressure upon land resources was closely correlated with the incidence of "squatters" and "labour migrants". These groups were drawn largely from areas of agricultural land shortage in the 1920s and 1930s.

The relationship between labour migration and land shortage was a complex one, but scarcity of land resources does seem to have been a major factor in influencing people to look for spare land and the opportunity to earn cash away from home, and thus was an important element in producing the continuous influx of people into Nairobi in the twenties and thirties. For instance, there was considerable pressure upon the land exerted by the growing populations of the Kiambu and Dagoreti areas and while the evidence is not conclusive, it appears as if the combination of potentially higher wages for those who could find work together with the factor of land pressure in certain surrounding areas would have provided the sufficient conditions for a large influx in Nairobi.

Certainly the labour supply in Nairobi up to 1939 was nearly always greater than the demand, while in the rural areas for the same period there was an almost continuous labour shortage.²³ The over supply of labourers in the city thus deserves attention. In 1920, for instance, Ainsworth, the Chief Native Commissioner, noted that 20,000 natives in Nairobi are out of employment and while his figure was a guess he was probably right in thinking that large numbers of people had no regular work.²⁴ In 1935 St. Davies, the Nairobi Municipal Labour Officer, estimated that nearly a quarter of the male population was unemployed, stating that while a few were temporarily unemployed safari gun bearers, the majority were "plain bad hats, potential thieves and often actual vagabonds" who ate and lived with their friends. He noted that "Nairobi had a floating population of natives coming in from the surrounding reserves and locations for the sale of milk, vegetables and other produce"²⁵ There is little doubt that there was an over-supply of labour in Nairobi during the inter-war years, not only because of the rather superficial evidence presented here, but also because there is no evidence of political pressure being brought upon the Administration during this time to force labour into the town.

23. ibid chpters 6-10.

24. E.A.S. 22.5.1920, "Report of the General purposes committee of the Nairobi Municipal Council".

25. E.A.S. 15.3.1937.

Urban Poverty

1. Standard of Living: But despite the comparative attraction of wages in Nairobi, they were paradoxically low in relation to the cost of living. Evidence of the cost of living to Africans in Nairobi was collected by the Nairobi Medical Officer of Health and the Municipal Native Affairs Officer in the late thirties. The former was concerned with the sanitation and health of the whole city and therefore with the spread of diseases from the most unhealthy areas, while the latter was responsible to the Municipality for the African section of the city population. The Medical Officer of Health had shown concern about the health problems of urban Africans in the 1920s, and in 1933 his Department produced a schedule of what it considered an adequate diet composed of local foodstuffs and based upon the suggestions of the British Medical Association as to what constituted a minimum dietary requirement for the British working class.²⁶ The Kenyan diet consisted of 102 grams of protein, 100 grams of fat and 502 grams of carbohydrates, the whole amounting to 3409 calories per day. This African diet drew upon the same number of foodstuffs as the British version, but while the B.M.A. had called their own diet "monotonous" their Nairobi colleagues described the proposed diet as "varied and infinitely better balanced" than the normal African diet.²⁷

Whether the Colonial Medical Department's assessment of the situation was based on observation rather than prejudice would appear to be an arguable case. But the Medical Department was unique in the Administration in that they undertook research on questions of health and diet. By 1929 they had published their first substantial work on the subject and unlike most of their colonial colleagues they could back up their opinions with observed facts, such as, for example, the observation "that dyspepsia (difficulty of digestion, usually weakness and loss of appetite) was almost universal and its treatment impossible under existing conditions."²⁸ The problem about the diet which the Department proposed for Africans was its cost. The department estimated that the purchase price of the food would be 14/4 per month. Next to food, the greatest expenditure of the African labourer in the town was rent and the cheapest quarter available in Nairobi was 5/- a month. Thus, according to the 1933 estimate, the necessary expenditure for adequate living a month, without taking account of any expenditure upon clothes, beer or tobacco or the shilling per month taxation. Yet, the Department estimated that the average wage

26. Annual Medical Department Report, 1933, pp. 40-43

27. Loc. cit

28. ibid

was only 18/- a month,²⁹ with the obvious conclusion that even a single man without dependents could not afford to provide himself with an adequate diet in Nairobi. These overall conclusions were corroborated in the 1939 St. Davies report already mentioned. St. Davies had more adequate social and economic data than had previously been available for estimates of contemporary Nairobi social conditions and he had used these to construct a table of wage levels while a divisional engineer employed by the Railway had investigated the actual habits of employees. It emerged that the minimum actually consumed was posho and salt costing 4/10 cents a month plus 2/50 cents for tax and charcoal. From these figures St. Davies worked out that a "Resonable estimate of the monthly cost of living" for a single man was as follows:-

Food	6.00
Housing	3.50
Charcoal	1.50
Milk	2.00
Hut - tax	1.00
Soap, lighting,	
clothes	2.75
Drink, tobacco	3.00
Miscellaneous	1.00
	<hr/>
Total	20.75
	<hr/>

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One might argue that this was not a 'bare minimum' and that five or six shillings might be cut off by an abstemious individual prepared to exist on the bare necessities. But there were other considerations which affected a man's budget, in particular traditional dietary requirements and whether he could obtain food from friends or relations in neighbouring rural areas. Nevertheless, just under 16,000 men had an income of less than 20/- a month which as St. Davies pointed out, provided conditions for rapid labour turnover, malnutrition, low working capacity and endemic petty crime and prostitution.³¹

29. ibid

30. R. St. Davies, op cit

31. ibid

Housing: In colonial Nairobi, the Municipal authorities were unable to arrive at precise definitions of overcrowding, since they were dependent for their information upon the results of sporadic police raids. Night or dawn raids were conducted at infrequent intervals and some of these produced evidence of gross overcrowding by any standards. For example, raids in 1937 discovered 277 people occupying 15 houses in Pangani and 425 people in another 15 houses in Pumwani. Two years later, St. Davies estimated in his report that 14,617 people required housing in Pumwani, Quarry Road or Shauri Moyo - government created locations, but that the existing accommodation ought only to have accommodated 8,916 persons, according to the existing standards. This was an estimate of 5,916 extra people contributing to overcrowding and it took no account of visitors or unemployed. The picture of 'overcrowding' can be completed with a report on housing made in 1941 by the Senior Medical Officer of Health and Municipal Native Affairs Officer. This estimated that there were 18,000 people in Nairobi in "unauthorised accommodation". It was pointed out that "no accurate calculation had ever been made of the proper capacity of existing private native accommodation". African housing had suffered severe neglect in Nairobi up to this time.³²

Part of the housing problem lay in the fact that the authorities had wanted to keep wages down by maintaining a surplus of unemployed labour in the town. What the municipality apparently failed to understand was that the combination of a labour surplus, low wages and an insufficiency of municipal housing led inevitably to high rents and a lack of interest among private employers in providing accommodation. The social consequences were the appalling sanitary conditions revealed in every housing report, published or unpublished, of the period. For instance, the report of 1923 dawn police raid noted the "stench" of the latrines and the "Noisome green effluent" in the open drains. In 1930, Pumwani had only 24 latrine buckets for at least 1,000 people and a 1948 report mentioned "the gross misuse and overworking of the various conveniences".³³

The cost of housing had been a major element in the estimates of the cost of living made in 1933 and 1939. The cost of rented accommodation would take up to 40% or 45% of a month's wage from the poorest

32. KNA Labour 9.1707.70.257; EAS 7.7 1937 & "Report from the Senior Medical Officer of Health and Municipal Native Affairs Officer on the housing of Africans in Nairobi", Nairobi 1941.

33. KNA. 9.1707.70 257 & Annual Medical Department Reports 1947 p. 22-29 and 1948 p.23

sections of the people in the urban areas. These rents were high because there was an acute shortage of accommodation for Africans in the town. The responsibility for the shortage lay largely with the Municipality and private employers who were unwilling to erect and subsidise suitable housing. Employers found no necessity for this in a situation where there was a labour surplus, while private entrepreneurs were discouraged by the low level of wages and thus of rents. Thus what accommodation was available was priced very highly in relation to wages. By 1955, the situation had become so acute that the East African Royal Commission could comment, on the basis of 1954 Report of the Committee on African Wages, that wages were even insufficient to support a single man, insufficient that is for "basic essential needs of health, decency and working efficiency". Rents moreover took between 20 and 30% of most wages below 100/- a month, both in Nairobi and in Kampala.³⁴ It seemed that urban poverty had not decreased since the inter-war period.

The inadequate supply and the poverty of Nairobi's African housing from the earliest days can be illustrated by the following examples. In 1914 H.R. Tate (an Administrator who in 1919 put his job in jeopardy over the Northey forced labour crisis and who clearly took his job of "protecting African interests" seriously) noted in the Nairobi Sanitary Commission Report of 1913 that:

"for months past those up country natives who are not provided with quarters within the compounds of their employers, have been forced to rent miserable quarters in insanitary localities of the town and at excessive rates An enormous number of employees of government, of hotels and of private firms are absolutely without quarters of their own An inspection of some of the quarters rented by native employees of Europeans reveals the condition under which they have to live. Most of the rooms visited measured 8' x 10' and were occupied by 4 to 6 boys. The stench outside some of these places was very bad In many of them the roofs could be touched, by the hand while one stands in the centre of the room." ³⁵

Tate noted that even these "miserable" conditions did not meet the demand for housing. By 1919 Northey stated "with confidence that the state of affairs today (in Nairobi) is infinitely worse than it was in

34. E.A. Royal Commission HMSO 1954/55

35. PRO. CO 533-209, 29.7.1914

the middle of 1914" when Tate had been writing.³⁶ In 1923, for instance, a night raid found 47 people occupying a single house built "to contain a family in comfort."³⁷ Over three hundred and thirty houses were investigated that night and the average occupancy was found to be nine people. In thirty of the houses, however, there were thirty persons living in each.

The responsibility for the provision of adequate housing was never accepted either by the Municipality or by the private employers. This fact was made explicit in a test case which was brought to the resident magistrate's court by the Nairobi Labour Officer in order to secure an interpretation of the relevant section of the 1910 Master and Servants Ordinance. This stated that:-

"During the period of service employers shall at all times at their own expense cause every servant to be properly housed, provided the obligation of an employer shall not by reasons of this section extend to any case in which the servant is able to return to his home at the end of his daily work or to obtain suitable and proper housing at or conveniently near his employment."³⁸

Eight years later, in 1922, the Medical Department had raised the matter of the legal obligations binding upon the employer and had pointed out that "The government and Municipality, the two largest employers in the town are the worst offenders in this respect and a large proportion of their native housing is totally unfit for human habitation." It emerged from the 1930 test case that these two major employers were not alone in their lack of concern, and that very few employers provided any form of housing at all for their employees.³⁹ It became apparent that it was the general custom among Nairobi employers "that the Native should obtain their own housing out of the monies they received", and that few employers investigated the housing conditions of their employees, believing

36. Ibid. 24.4.1919 Northey to Secretary of State

37. Rhodes House, Mss. Afr.s.633 Coryndon 5/1 "Memorandum to the Native Location of Nairobi"

38. E.A.S. 25.11.1930 "Housing of Native Servants"

39. Annual Medical Report 1922 p.72 see also K.N.A. 9.1707-70,257. Dr. Fisher, Principal Labour Officer to Governor's Private Secretary 10.3.1931, pointing out the appalling conditions in which the Governor's "Servants" were housed, and that these did not comply with the law.

that this was the responsibility of the Municipality. The employer who was defendant in the test case did in fact realize that no municipal housing was available, for his firm had been unable to purchase a plot of ground in a Native location since there was none vacant.⁴⁰ It became clear during the case that most employers ignored their legal obligations. The Municipality might have opted to enforce the law, but sixteen years later another official report made it clear that little had changed.⁴¹

Many Europeans who concerned themselves with African development failed to understand that the housing problem could not be separated from the whole employment situation. They approached the question of provision of better housing simply in terms of reducing the health hazard of the slums. Many of the poorest Africans obtained their housing from so-called "lodging house keepers". These paid a rent to the Municipality of 5/- a month for their homes, of which they proceeded to rent rooms, verandahs and any other available covered space for sleeping. Rooms such as this, sub-let for multiple occupancy, cost 5/- a month. Other poor people, according to the Medical Department, "cannot reasonably be stated to be housed at all, odd corners, kitchens, passages, verandahs, bathrooms and even latrines were used". These conditions generally applied to casual labourers whose plight was at the basis of the housing problem and "with whom we are really concerned". The Municipality had made no provision for this group in its Pumwani project and the M.O.H. noted that even the lodging house keepers, who catered for the poorest class, still left untouched a group of semi-destitute. He argued that the Pumwani development "has never touched the real problems in the past" and he was not optimistic that it would do so in the future.⁴²

The high cost of urban living led directly to the growth of suburban villages on the perimeters of Nairobi. The development of periurbanisation has a long history - as early as 1914. Dr. Parker has pointed out that there was a growth of "African villages" around the town. There was one at Parklands, another on the Fort Hall Road called Maskini, a third was called Mombasa Village and there was a fourth one to the west of Nairobi, named Kileleshwa.⁴³ Periurban development

40. Loc cit

41. G.C.W. Ogilvie 'The Housing of Africans in the urban areas of Kenya' Nairobi 1946.

42. Medical Annual Report, 1922, page 2.

43. M. Parker, "Political and Social aspects of the development of the Municipal Government in Kenya with special reference to Nairobi, Ph.D London 1949, pp. 185, 196-8

flourished as it enabled people to supplement their wages by cultivation, renting land from local inhabitants. Suburban developments like Kariobangi, Dagoreti Corner and Kabete had grown up by 1944.⁴⁴ The slum development on the periphery of the city was a direct response to the stresses of urban poverty, and while successive regimes could and did destroy such communities this did not do anything to remove their rationale for existence. These suburban growths were the suburbia of the poor.

The "slum question" has remained a major problem over the years for the urban authorities in Nairobi. While it is impossible to assess what has happened to the social conditions of the African people over the years, it seems that the vicious syndrome of poverty, low wages in relation to the costs of food and rents, and bad housing has continued unchanged except that population increase has greatly extended the dimension of the problem since 1940. In 1969, for instance, Niels Jorgensen at the Institute for Development Studies, found that the poorest section of the population in Nairobi paid over a quarter and often more than a third of their total income in rent; that private undertaking alone provided accommodation for this section of the community; that it was the low income group whose housing need was the greatest but that the Municipality tended to leave this group to the private sector.⁴⁵

In another report of the same year, the National Christian Council of Kenya outlined the problems of urban poverty with reference to Pumwani; these were described as low wages, unemployment, prostitution and criminality, low quality housing, high population density and overcrowding.⁴⁶ All these factors had become familiar over the years and it seems that they had merely been exacerbated by population growth. The urban economy in Nairobi has greatly expanded since 1945. As a consequence, urban wages have continued to rise faster than rural wages, while at the same time the pressure of population upon the land has reached critical levels; as a result the drive to secure urban employment has become intense. Yet even though urban wages are higher than rural ones, they are still low in relation to the urban cost of living and the cycle of urban poverty continues.

44. ibid p. 242.

45. "Some Aspects of Housing Policy and Rent Structure in Kenya" IDS 1969 Staff Papers No. 48.

46. "Pumwani redevelopment" 1968-69.

The European response: Segregation.

The Economics of urban segregation: The presence of the Africans living in Nairobi was not entirely ignored by the European Administration. They responded by segregating the various races into locations and instituting pass laws in order to exclude people from the city who could not establish that they were in employment there. Urban segregation had been proposed as early as 1907 by the William Commission.⁴⁷ According to Dr. Vicar and Dr. Parker, two of Nairobi's historians, the main motives which lay behind the decision to develop African Locations in the city were firstly the desire to reduce the health hazards associated with urban squatter villages which had sprung up within Nairobi, and secondly to increase the physical security of the Europeans and to improve the efficiency of the African labour force.⁴⁸ But this was the rationale given by the Europeans themselves.

Behind the drive for the creation of "Native locations" was the racist view of the Europeans who wished to see the colonial community divided at every level along boundaries of race. Simpson's report of 1913 which articulated this view, embodied nothing more than the justification of racial stratification - a stratification which would ensure that the choicest land was reserved for the privileged "race" and that the "native" groups could be controlled. Since natives were only required in the city in their function as labourers, urban segregation could, it was thought provide the conditions for the control of immigration and population movement. However, the control of the urban influx was no simple matter, as the Municipal authorities rapidly discovered.

The problem was that the needs of the authorities were mutually incompatible. They wanted cheap labour, an urban environment free of contagious diseases and segregated areas set aside for African habitation, but no coherent policy existed for the achievement of these objectives. Cheap labour could not afford sanitary housing and although the relationship

47. Bransby William, "Report on the Sanitation of Nairobi" 1907.

48. K.G. Vicar "Twilight of an East African slum; Pumwani and the evolution of African settlement in Nairobi" Ph.D. University of California 1968 p. 106. M. Parker op. cit. page 83.

between poverty and disease was understood, the Municipal authority was unwilling to shoulder the responsibility of providing adequate subsidized housing. In 1915 for instance, the Municipal committee was reported to "have set their faces against all but wholly necessary expenditure. The natives in the town are comparatively well off and are able to pay what would amount to a satisfactory rate of interest on all and more than all the capital the expenditure of which is now recommended".⁴⁹

The committee was mistaken in its judgement that the majority of Africans had the funds to pay an economic rent and this bold but confused statement does not appear to have been repeated in any other form. A further example of intransigence is found in 1930 when the Colonial Secretary argued that "he could not understand why the government should be responsible for housing its native servants when they are living in their own country". It was explained to him that "they were living far from their actual homes and that there was no suitable accomodation for them in Nairobi".⁵⁰

At the existing wages, the Council would have had to construct and subsidize homes for the poorer sections of the community if they were really to achieve their goal of "proper" sanitary conditions. In actual fact the Council was only willing to spend between 1 and 2% of its net revenue on African services between 1932 and 1947.⁵¹ During those years, the net expenditure from the Nairobi City Council General Revenue Fund did not exceed £2,500 and in 1942 it fell as low as £1,048. This expenditure included such items as housing markets, burials, social welfare, Native Affairs Dept., expenses, refuse collection, street lighting, roads, drains and sanitation. This incredibly miserly provision was due to a circumstance which was beautifully described in 1924

"the occupation of some 2,700 acres within the municipality boundaries by no more than 2,235 Europeans of all ages.... The wide distribution of the European population of the town makes the cost of supplying its 2,235 European inhabitants with roads, water, public lighting and sanitary services extremely high".⁵²

This was the simple explanation of the low expenditure upon African areas and without considerable expenditure the Municipality could

49. Quoted from Dr. Parker's thesis ibid pp 213.

50. K.N.A. Labour 9.1707.70 257 Extract from minutes of meeting with P.C. 11.8.1930.

51. Parker op cit p. 416 and appendix II.

52. A. Leys, Kenya, London 1924, p. 271/2.

not have achieved its sanitary aims. In fact, the failure to provide sanitary housing undermined the other aim, that of achieving segregation. That the failure to provide sanitary accommodation underlay the failure to achieve efficient segregation, up to 1940, will be demonstrated in the following account.

The Development of Pumwani: After the early construction of the railway from Mombasa many people settled in Kariokor, Kileleshwa, Mombasa, Pangani, Marikini and Kaburini. The history of the early development of urban squatting is uncertain as the records are poor and because people were moved so frequently memories have faded. After the initial development of Kariokor as a squatter's settlement, it became the carrier corps camp in 1914, under official supervision. Mombasa, Marikini and Kaburini were destroyed in 1921 when the people were moved to Pumwani. The Municipal Council had attempted to control urban squatter villages as early as 1901 when a bye law had been passed which allowed the Municipality to remove unauthorised people from the area. Pumwani, literally a 'place of rest', or a 'place to breath or relax', is an indication of the harassment that would seem to have been part of the early development of these settlements. It is interesting that a recent report noted that Pumwani inhabitants were concerned to "get all of these encroaches off their back, to be free, and to be left alone!".⁵³

By 1917 the Municipality had decided to remove all the ad hoc African villages and to develop just one special location. The municipal authority looked towards the South African urban experience for a model and was guided by a long memorandum prepared for them by a Colonel Watkins in 1917 or 1918. He had been in charge of the Carrier Corp during the war and put forward his proposals for establishing a model African location in Nairobi.⁵⁴ The characteristics of the proposed development were as follows:-

- (a) The houses were to be of wattle and daub, "owing to the lack of funds (heads?) of Nairobi families should be encouraged and assisted to build their own houses" but the "Municipality reserves to itself the right in five years time to demolish the house and erect on the spot a more suitable form of house".

53. Swailem Sidholm Analysis of an East African urban community, NCCK, 1966 p. 9.

54. Col. Watkins "Native Location Nairobi" N.D. lent to Rev. Hake by Mrs. J. Knowles, daughter of Watkins, Rev. Hake kindly showed me the manuscript.

- (b) That social amenities should be provided and controlled. There should be eating and beer houses, recreation grounds and a hall, churches and cinemas.
- (c) Lodging houses should be built by the Municipality, their size not to exceed six rooms per house - dormitories were acknowledged to be unpopular, though a few were erected in the twenties along Quarry Road.

Watkins realised that there would be difficulties encountered in moving people, but he emphasised that "they must..... be turned out" and not allowed on unoccupied plots within the town or in Kileleshwa or just outside the town. "These bolt holes will have to be stopped". Watkins was clearly aware of the existing periurban development, and recommended that a Municipal Native Affairs Officer should be appointed as in Durban to supervise the move. His final suggestion was that the Municipality should be empowered to register those occupying the location and carry out evictions where these were deemed necessary. "It may be necessary to apply township bye-laws for the control of natives to areas beyond the Municipality area in order to prevent the congregation of undesirables on the outskirts of the town."

Watkin's paper provided the blueprint with which the colonial authorities hoped to solve their "Native urban problem", through the control of all Africans who entered the city, making it obligatory for all except domestic servants to live in Pumwani location. His suggestions were followed through to a certain extent. The wattle and daub houses he advocated were allowed to become permanent, but there was no security of land tenure for their occupants, so that the East African Royal Commission of 1955 could argue that permanency of land tenure was "the key to much of the urban problem".⁵⁵ That his proposals failed to be implemented with sufficient vigour to deal with the problem of periurban development is highlighted by the continuity of the problem to the present.⁵⁶ Watkin's suggestion in 1917/18 of a full-time Officer for housing was not implemented until the 1927 Feetham Commission also put forward this proposal.

55. E.A. Royal Commission op.cit.p.

56. In 1968, for instance, huts were being burned at Kaburini and their occupiers took refuge in Mathare Valley. Two and a half years later, new huts were being built on the old sites.

By 1919, two years after the initial decision to set up Pumwani had been taken, there had still been no official move made by the Municipality to destroy the ad hoc African villages, although there was much European concern displayed over the "hundreds of boys" in Pangani apparently "intentionally idle and unemployed". A Labour Inspector argued that their problem was lack of accommodation and reported that there were actual deaths from exposure occurring in this area.⁵⁷ Part of the problem was that the Administration was incompetent and partly that it was unwilling to spend sufficient cash on dealing with African problems. The laggardly nature of the Municipality's approach was revealed by Northey in an official despatch sent to London in 1919

"The campaign for a Native Location was first started in 1905 when a site was selected and approved - 5,097 pounds was spent on a drainage system, but due to the wish of the Municipal Committee endorsed by the sanitary commission and Prof. Simpson the site was abandoned. A new site was chosen south of the Nairobi river - it was estimated that 115,000 pounds was required to be spent on the site to buy the land and buildings but only 20,000 pounds was afforded by the Municipal council. This was spent on water main and was finished in 1911. A Sub Committee was appointed to consider the means to carry through the native location scheme, but the committee decided the site was unsuitable. Nothing was done until March 1917 when the African population had increased and Plague occurred for several months. The Municipal Committee exhaustively examined the whole problem again and another site was proposed and agreed to by all the interested parties. The problem was that a large sum was required for sanitation."⁵⁸

Northey argued that the problem of African housing in Nairobi had become more acute, "the Native population is increasing yearly", partly because of the encampment of the Kings African Rifles and pointed to "cases of theft and housebreaking" and, what was of far greater significance to the paranoid and racially conscious whites, an increasing number of "assaults upon Europeans, especially women." Northey urged the need for a pass law, backed up by the provision of a native location, since a pass law would have been ineffective without it, stating that these were the necessary preliminaries to urban control. As a result, the Municipal Corporation Law of 1909 was

57. McVicar op.cit., 21; E.As 28.1.1919, article "The Town Native" and 9.5.1919 letter from J. Ainsworth.

58. Co P.R. O. Co 533.209 Northey to S. of S. 24.4.1919.

modified in 1922 to allow the Municipality to declare any area habitable solely by Africans. Eventually, eighteen years after the project had first been mooted, African occupation of the new location was achieved.⁵⁹

The three African villages of Kaburini, Maskini and Mombasa Village were destroyed in 1923 and their inhabitants were moved into Pumwani. However, due to incompetence and lack of cash the move from Pangani was not achieved until 1938. In 1923 it was noted by a Kenya Weekly Observer reporter that the only Municipal provision that had been made on the site was "a few drains".⁶⁰ A private report from F.B. Hoskings to Governor Coryndon in the same year noted that Pumwani was a "model village" by comparison to Pangani, but that it was already "overcrowded" and that the "Latrines cannot cope with the pressure of business and that the only water came from three pipes and sold at 2 cents for 4 gallons".⁶¹

As previously stated, the purpose behind the establishment of Pumwani in the early twenties had been to provide a "model village" to house all the Africans in Nairobi and deal with the health hazard presented by the ad hoc development of African homes. Yet after the forcible destruction of Mombasa Village, Kaburini and Maskini in 1923, the Medical Officer of Health for Nairobi argued that

"the casual labourers in the commercial areas are not being touched. The people from the destroyed villages 'had never been particularly badly housed. It was primarily the situation of their housing, not the class of housing which was open to objection. The natives with whom we are really concerned do not at present command any housing of their own worth the name, and are never likely to be able to provide much for themselves'".⁶²

The Medical Officer of Health was concerned to eradicate plague from the city and therefore pressed the Municipality to build brick houses instead of mud and wattle, which attracted a rat population who were potential plague carriers. He thought that Pumwani could solve the town's health problems, but that it would be expensive.

59. The Official Gazette 26.4.1922 and 30.12.1922, pp. 796 - 815; Parker, op.cit. pp. 189-194; Kenya Observer 21.4.1923.

60. 7.4.1923.

61. Rhodes House Library. Mss Afr s 633 Coryndon papers 5/1. "Memorandum on the Native Location of Nairobi". 1923.

62. The Kenya Observer 21.4.1923 "Housing in Nairobi".

Five years later the medical authorities again tried to put pressure on the municipality through the medium of their annual report. They argued that with the passage

"of the years the situation with regard to private employers has not improved; on the contrary it has become worse since the labour force in the town has grown with the town and no new system of dealing with the question of housing has been adopted."⁶³

The report reiterated quite correctly that adequate housing could only, "be met in one way and one way only which is the provision of permanent housing on a large scale either by the State or by the local authority".⁶⁴

These protestations fell on deaf ears as by 1930 Pangani still stood. In yet another dawn raid of that year it was found that 2226 people were living in 335 houses. The report reemphasized the need for demolition as they had found people "sleeping on floors and in passages as well as several on one bed".⁶⁵ How many of these people were permanent and how many were temporary lodgers is hard to tell as the Municipal authorities emotional and moralistic approach to the problem tended to hide rather more than it clarified. However, it was clear that there was an endemic and chronic lack of housing for the people of Nairobi. The Municipality had erected 60 dormitories and 160 cubicles in Quarry road, but even in these the actual number of people was twice the number officials had laid down earlier. Likewise Pumwani had only been in operation ten years, but no attention had been paid to the original buildings; even the flush latrines had ceased to work.⁶⁶ The answer to the problem was, according to Hoskings, an efficient pass system and more housing.⁶⁷

Once more, in 1930, the Nairobi Council decided to destroy Pangani. But to do so they would have to pay for new houses for the residents, since they could not afford to erect new dwellings and many of them had no homes in the reserves to which they might return. To prove this point, the Municipal Native Affairs Officer sent a list of householders to the Town Clerk and, of 318 names, 238 had been in Nairobi for more than five years.⁶⁸

63. Annual Medical Report, 1928, Govn printer, under 'Urban areas'.

64. Loc cit: see also the 1929 Annual Medical Report pp 23-26.

65. Nairobi City Archives, file 'Native Statistics'; see also 'Report of the General Purposes Committee 1929-32'.

66. N.C.A. File 'Native Housing' Report Native location and Housing 1929 by B. Hoskings.

67. N.C.A. Native Housing. Memo 'Native Housing in Nairobi. 11. 1930.

68. N.C.A. File 'Native Location'. memo dated 28.5.1932.

In 1930, because there was no labour shortage, the Municipality considered the possibility of creating a "native village under Municipal control five miles from Nairobi.... where old native residents and others in genuine employment might be allowed to reside with special permission". Such a solution was attractive to the council from several points of view, cheapness was an obvious one and it also answered the Municipality's problem of what to do with people who (a) apparently had no paid work (b) had no land in the reserve and (c) were therefore a nuisance to the Administration.

A number of people in Pangani could have been defined in these terms, as could people living at Kibera, a military reserve originally allocated to Sudanese members of the Kenya African Rifles with twelve years service. Speaking of this group, the Commissioner for Lands and Settlement commented that

"The old Nubian is a man to whom the colony owes much, but the second generation and the hybrids arising from mixed unions are degenerate".

He claimed that there existed

"all over Nairobi a race of detribalised natives... who cannot be sent home as they do not know to what reserve they belong, or have lost all desire and even the means to live in the reserve to which their fathers belonged."

The Commissioner asserted that most of these people had been born to prostitutes in Nairobi, claimed to be Muslim, lived in Pangani and took in lodgers. He felt that the new Pumwani "had no place for these parasites" and that new housing outside Nairobi would provide a solution for the problem of what to do with them.⁶⁹

These opinions reflected not simply the racial attitudes and prejudice of one man but also serve to illustrate how urban segregation could be used not just to keep the races apart but also to discriminate against those people whom the Administration did not want within the town.⁷⁰ The scheme does not appear to have ever been put into operation, however, in the main because the Pangani householders vociferously demanded compensation for the destruction of their homes. The legal position was that

69. K.N.A.K. CP. 9.15.3 D.C. Hosking to Commissioner for Lands and Settlements. 13.5.1931.

70. It should be noted that probably a number of lodging house keepers were keeping brothels, for instance see the evidence given by "W Wa R" on p.12 of Pumwani: "Analysis of an East African Urban community" by Swailem Sidholm N.C.C.K. 1966.

all African residents in Pangani held monthly leases from the Municipality - this was the best tenurial arrangement open to non-Europeans - and so could be moved without undue difficulty. Their removal had, however, been repeatedly postponed over the past ten years because of compensation demands and during this time houses had been bought and sold for up to fifty or sixty pounds. The Municipality was unwilling to pay the kind of compensation demanded by the lodging house keepers, although the District Commissioner in authority at the time, R.W. Lambert, accepted the justice of their claim. It was decided that each householder should receive five pounds compensation plus a loan of thirty five pounds at 4% per annum if they wanted to erect a new house in Pumwani. The brewery fund and not the Municipality was to finance these loans.⁷¹

The brewery fund was a useful mechanism whereby the Municipality avoided expenditure on urban African affairs. A "native brewery" had been set up as a European monopoly in 1921, in order to sell beer to urban African males over the age of 18. This beer was "pure and of low alcoholic content" and was regarded as a kind of safety valve, to deter natives from brewing their own beer. It was argued that it was an alternative to the consumption of methylated spirit or Nubian gin. The profit from the brewery in 1923 reached two thousand pounds which was to be spent on the "social amelioration of the native population". The Europeans were planning to build three public baths, a venereal disease clinic, a small sports stadium, a memorial hall and cinema from the profit accrued from the brewery fund.⁷² It was this fund that was now to pay householder's compensation.

The following statistics show the breakdown for some of the main facts about lodging house keepers.⁷³

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- 71. KNA. PC. CP. 9.15.3: DC Nairobi to PC Nyeri 24.12.1931; R.W. Lambert to Com. for Local Govn. 13.8.1932.
 - 72. Memorandum on the Native Location 1923, of it The Official Gazette 23.3.1921 pp. 229-232. The new "Native Liquor Ordinance" repealed the old ones of 1907, 1908 and 1915.
 - 73. K.N.A. PC. CP. 9.15.3. Memorandum on removal of Pangani. 1932.

<u>Total No. of houses</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Tribe</u>	<u>Length of Residence</u>
312, owned by 293 householders	Moslem 247	Kikuyu 141	Over
		Nandi 25	10 years. 146.
	Christian 12	Masai 12	5 to 9
		Other	years. 72.
	Pagan 34	Kenyans 37	0 to 4
		Tanganyika 45	years. 75
		Others 33	
TOTALS 293	293	293	293

The Municipal Council were at last making a serious attempt to close down Pangani, but there was to be yet another deferment. In November 1933 it was decided to postpone any evacuation of Pangani until the Carter Land Commission had been published.⁷⁴ The major memorandum on the subject justified the location policy of segregation on these grounds:

"It can be said that the native is still under tutelage; his mode of living is not up to the same standard as that of the Europeans and though in the fullness of time it is hoped that he will reach this standard it cannot be for many years to come. When the ultimate aim is reached there will be no need to discriminate between natives and other races but it is obvious that this is in the very far distant future".

The Commission recommended that only those employed in the town who could afford to live in the location should do so and that retired askaris or soldiers from the Kenya African Rifles, ex-employees and others with no reserves to return to should be returned either to a reserve or, failing that, to a reserve township.⁷⁵ The urban location was to be reserved for able bodied labour and the Commission accepted that Pangani should be closed down. Here was the beginning of a policy which was consciously designed to use segregation in the town as a means to obtain cheap labour.

In April 1935 the Native Affairs Committee reopened the question of the removal of Pangani and claims for compensation were considered. In July 1936 the Town Clerk was able to report that notices to vacate huts had

74. N.C.A. Native Affairs Committee Minutes. 14.11.1933.

75. Loc. cit.

been served and that others would follow gradually. But by October of that year the policy decision had been reversed and it had been decided not to move people who had no other accommodation to go to, either in their reserve or in Pumwani.⁷⁶ This policy alteration was brought about by a report which had reached the Colonial Office in London that the council were throwing an average of twenty men and women upon the streets daily and that "the majority ... are sleeping in the open under bitterly cold, threatening weather." The Government had replied that those evicted had been people with less than six years residence in the town and that "it was highly undesirable that these families should remain in Nairobi where they have little or no genuine occupation or business and where they tend to swell the population of workless, thriftless and criminal classes."⁷⁷ The Governor justified the action of the Municipality on the grounds that there were a large number of people in the town

"who live by their wits and on their fellows. Retired prostitutes have set up lodging houses which are also brothels and refuges for the criminal classes... not all (recent) inhabitants are criminals but nearly all are undesirable in Nairobi.... they are either detribalised (sic) or completely deruralised (sic): they prefer the amenities of the town."⁷⁸

He argued that most of these people could be reabsorbed into the rural areas, or else could be removed to a rural location five miles from the city centre, as had been planned in 1930/31. It is fair comment to suggest that the grounds offered for justification of this were spurious and that the imputations of criminality were based on surmise. The whole purpose of the location policy was to keep sufficient able bodied people for the labour needs of the city; but this type of selection could not be achieved if policy had to be continuously justified to London.

Kenya had been the recipient of so much adverse publicity since 1918, that the Colonial Office tended to be extremely sensitive to criticism and were scrupulous about staying within the letter of the law. Thus in 1937 when Pumwani was reported to be overcrowded the Municipal Affairs Officer recommended that no further demolition should take place in Pangani.

76. N.C.A. op. cit. 10.4.35. 27.5.35 24.7.36. 6.10.36.

77. CO.533. 462. 38005/B Telegram from Deputy Gov. to CO 11.8.36, followed by a fuller letter 20.8.36 de Wade to Ormsby Gore giving details of natives who live by their wits etc. whom he wanted returned to the reserve.

78. ibid. de Wade to Ormsby Gore 20.8.1936.

Not until June 1938 were the final 50 notices to quit served on Pangani house holders and meantime 50 alternative houses had been erected in Pumwani to house their owners.⁷⁹

At last, in 1938, the Native Affairs Department report was able to state that "the demolition of the old Pangani Native village, begun in 1931, was finally complete in October," In all, nineteen years had elapsed between the decision to create Pumwani as a planned location, peopled with the residents of the unplanned villages, and the completion of the plan. The report noted that only 47 Pangani householders out of the original 293 in 1932 had availed themselves of the 175 new stone built houses erected by the Municipality in Pumwani. The report described Pumwani as "a model village spaciouly laid out" but a separate paragraph on the same page noted that there were approximately 3,000 employed Africans in Nairobi and that the accommodation available was hopelessly inadequate. It was noted that the bye-laws prohibiting Africans from living outside a "Nairobi location" in the town were unenforceable and that only further housing schemes could solve this problem.⁸⁰

An adequate African location policy, which meant the provision of adequate housing, was the prerequisite to a satisfactory system of urban apartheid. By 1937/38 it seems as if the housing authority was as far away from providing these conditions as ever although it was clear from the minutes of the appropriate committees that officials had become aware of the conditions. For instance a count was made of the number of people in the available accommodation in 1937. It showed the following figures:

	<u>No. of People</u>
Municipal Housing, Quarry Road, Dormitories and Cubicles	1220
Accommodation for domestic servants	7550
333 Houses in Pumwani at a conservative estimate	4300
217 Houses in Pangani at 19 people per house	4100
Railway accommodation	5000
Quarters in Racecourse Road	250
	<u>22370</u> ⁸¹

79. N.C.A. Native Affairs Committee minutes 4.6.37; 9.7.37; 8.4.38; 10.6.38.

80. N.A.D. 1938 p. 90/1.

81. KNA Labour, 9.1051, Memorandum "Native Housing at Pumwani", 25.5.37, and "Native accommodation in Nairobi".

It was thought by the Municipality that there was at least 31,000 Africans in Nairobi and that the 8000 odd people who could not be housed according to the figures produced above just lived in any corner they could find. As a result of these findings, a subcommittee of the Native Affairs Committee was appointed in 1938 in order to try and solve the housing problem. This committee immediately asserted that the Municipality should make adequate provision for housing their employees, just as the railway had done; other employers they argued should provide adequate wages in lieu of housing; finally the committee argued that the 300 odd people who were in the town looking for work should be housed by the Municipality. This subcommittee pointed to "the acute conditions of overcrowding", and that 12000 people had been convicted over the last five years, under the Municipal bye-laws, for being on premises without the owners permission. They felt that, "those looking for work join the others, and exaggerate the fantastic conditions prevailing", it was then concluded "manifestly absurd to order a native to reside in a Native location if there is no accommodation available for him therein".⁸² At last it seemed that the authority had at least intellectually grasped the slum problem.

Conclusion

Up to 1939 the "African question" in Nairobi had been understood and discussed in terms of social segregation. After the war, there was a retreat from certain aspects of the earlier Colonial system and the "Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial Capital" conceded that it had now been accepted "by the competent medical authorities, that as a sanitation measure, segregation of Europeans and Asiatics is not absolutely essential for the preservation of the community" although they pointed out, almost in justification for the past, "it may well prove in practice the different races will by natural affinity, keep together in separate quarters, but to effect separation by legislative enactment except on the strongest sanitary grounds would not, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government be justified".⁸³

82. N.C.A. Native Affairs Committee Report 1938.

83. L.W. Thornton White "Nairobi master plan for a Colonial Capital H.M.S.O. 1948 p. 15.

Once again London had overruled Kenya's Colonial Government, but even these few ponderous statements give a clear insight into the measure of lack of understanding arising when culturally diverse peoples are kept apart through legislation. In an urban environment people will tend to segregate their housing along class and ethnic lines, with class tending to be the determinant of wealth in a free market economy. The barriers between classes tend to create styles of life based upon the different social and economic requirements of the classes concerned; these class barriers are strengthened if within or between class groups people have different religions or belong to different ethnic groups. In "modern" urban environments, given time and the goodwill of the government, each group can, while preserving the customs which it holds sacred, develop a shared culture in the workplace, through formal education and eventually through intermarriage. Government may also work against this process, making no provision for shared activity in the public sector thus helping to foster the growth of tension at points of group contact and giving an environment in which ideologies stressing racial or inborn difference will thrive. When this occurs there is a complete breakdown of communication between peoples except at the most limited levels of relationship. People of different race or religion feel uncertain in each others company and each group tends to develop a stereotyped view of the other. This provides an explanation for much apparently bizarre behaviour on the part of the other groups. Eventual legislative enforcement is only the formal acceptance of this complete breakdown in human social behaviour and effectively precludes any creative dynamism which might arise from untrammelled contact between culturally diverse peoples.

NAIROBI PASS LAWS.

The correlate of urban segregation was the use of pass laws. The pass laws were closely connected to the question of African locations, housing and sanitation, wages and the whole labour question. It was realised by the Municipal authorities that the costs of producing sanitation and housing were too high for them to be a profit on their production of the existing wage rates. But if there were a large number of unemployed people in the town the costs of housing and sanitation would be prohibitive to the local authority. So pass laws had to be used to control the influx of people to the town.

The principle which governed the use of the urban pass laws was articulated by Douglas Brummage, one of the most observant of the Kenya District Officers, in 1933.

"It seems only right that it should be understood that the town is a nonnative area in which there is no place for the redundant native, who neither works nor serves his or her people, but forms the class from which professional agitators, the slum landlords, the liquor sellers, and other undesirable classes spring. The exclusion of these redundant natives is in the interests of natives and nonnatives alike.

The conditions under which Natives are living in Pangani and Pumwani villages are highly unsatisfactory; at the former place they are deplorable. Overcrowding filth and stench are the order (sic)..... Similiar conditions prevail in several other parts of Nairobi. Add to unhealthy living conditions, lack of proper control over thousands of people, most of them no longer under various systems of tribal authority, and you have as a result, indiscipline, vice and agitation."

Only those Africans who were gainfully occupied were to be allowed to remain in the town, any one else could be expelled. The African locations in Nairobi were intended by the Municipal authority to house only those people who had regular employment.⁸⁴ *

The Municipal authority attempted to apply the principle of the urban area as a "nonnative area" every now and again when it was felt there was a need to clean up the town. Such a time occurred at the end of the 1914-18 when there was a large influx of people into Nairobi. Pass rules were issued in July 1918 in order to control the influx. Employers were authorised to issue day and night passes, which had to be reissued monthly; a casual labourer could obtain a daily pass, while visitors could obtain a 24 hour pass.⁸⁵ These rules were issued with the support of Colonel Ainsworth.⁸⁶

84. Nairobi Municipality Archives, File headed "Native Location" Memorandum on "Native Affairs" by B Brummage, Municipal Native Affairs-Officer ND about 1930.

85. KNA. Labour .9. 1051 Pass Rules 8.7.1918.

86. ibid 2.8.1918 Ainsworth to Nairobi Town Clerk.

During the first part of 1919 these pass rules became inoperative due to the fact the town was critically short of labour.⁸⁷ The pass system was designed to keep people out of the town and employers were unlikely to cooperate when labour was in short supply. Then the labour situation changed again as the evidence points to an over supply of labour by the middle 1920s. This time the council decided to issue 48 hour passes for labourers who had no work at the time they entered the town. It was decided to use the vagrancy ordinance to remove people who had no paid work and to allow the Municipality to licence workers, issue badges and to control the rate of wages. Ainsworth thought that there were about 20,000 Africans in Nairobi, most of whom had no work.⁸⁸ Ainsworth was clearly guessing both with regard to the numbers and to the level of unemployment, but there is no better information.

On the basis of the above estimate, Township rules were enacted, under the Municipal Corporations Ordinance of 1909. The amendments of 1920 stipulated that casual labour (labour employed for less than 24 hours at a time) was to be registered by the town clerk, this registration to be valid for a period of one month and to be signified by a badge worn on the left arm.⁸⁹ At the same time the stringency of the vagrancy ordinance was increased. For the purpose of the ordinance, a vagrant was anyone.

"wandering about or without leave of the owner.....
lodging in any verandah, outhouse or shed, or unoccupied
building or in any cart, vehicle or other receptacle and
not having any visible means of subsistence."⁹⁰

This law gave the police wide powers, particularly as they were entitled to make arrests without a warrant. Vagrants could be put to any work available, with the sanction of imprisonment if the work was not accepted, or else could be returned to the reserve if no work could be found for them. In simple terms, the vagrancy ordinance was a measure intended to control the inflow of people to the city⁹¹ and ensure that Africans in Nairobi were there only as labourers. Concrete evidence as to how these new laws operated in practice is extremely difficult to obtain, but there is every indication that they were unsuccessful in achieving their objectives. In May 1922, a meeting of Provincial Commissioners was pressing for the vagrancy ordinance to be rigorously enforced, for unemployed Africans to be returned to their reserves and for a special location to

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87. NMA, Minutes of the General Purposes Committee, 15.1.19.19, 1.4.1919, 24.4.1919, and 6.5.1919.
88. ibid 7th 10 and 21st/12/1920 and 15/5/1920 also see E.A.S. 22/5/1920
89. The Official Gazette. 22/12/1920 p. 1158.
90. ibid 19/2/1920 p. 98.
91. Loc cit.

be created for those without anywhere to go.⁹² At the same time, the Superintendent of Police was advocating a 9.30 p.m. curfew in the African locations.⁹³

Although it is not clear what the intermediate stages influencing the administration towards change were, their existence is suggested by the fact that by 1926, three years later, the Town Clerk and the Commissioner of Police approved a new set of municipal rules, not entirely to the satisfaction of the police, who wanted the onus of proof of employment to rest upon the accused. Under section 3 (2) (a) a person had to have permission to reside in almost any place which was privately owned, even wandering or loitering in a roadway "without valid excuse" during the night was an offence, as was being in any part of the municipality for longer than seven days without being able to furnish proof of employment. Anyone infringing these rules could be arrested without a warrant, imprisoned or ordered back to the reserve. As regards enforcement of the law, a European officer was entitled to enter any building upon suspicion, to check that the regulations were being carried out.⁹⁴ It was apparent that while rural capitalists were experiencing a labour shortage, the urban areas were being swamped with a surplus which had been responsible for the breakdown of the previous regulations. The police, for instance, welcomed the new regulations, arguing that there was a large proportion of detribalised natives..... manywithout work" who had formed" a conspicuous feature of the population of Nairobi for many years." They hoped that the new bye-laws would greatly strengthen their powers.⁹⁵

The next development occurred in the following year, when the report of a Local Government Commission on urban reform was published. The Commission was headed by a Mr. Justice Feetham, a South African who had been Town Clerk of Johannesburg. He recommended that the provisions of the "Native (Urban Areas) Act, 1923 of the Union of South Africa" should be included in Kenya local government legislation. Feetham also pointed out that

"the South African Act, while imposing upon local authorities responsibility for making adequate provision for accommodation of natives within their areas, also makes provision for controlling the entry of natives into these areas, and excluding undesirable characters. There is a necessary connection between the two sets of provisions."⁹⁶

92. K.N.A. Labour 9.105, Copy of minute No. 28. P.C.'s meeting May 1922.

93. Kenya Observer. 1923.

94. The Official Gazette. 27.10.1926. pp 1197 to 8

95. Kenya Police Annual Report 1926 p. 42.

96. Report to the Local Government Commission Vol. 1. London 1927 Chapter VIII esp. p. 155 and 156 to 8.

In effect, Feetham was recommending the rationalisation of the existing procedures, pointing out that segregation without an adequate pass law, or a pass law without the provision of an adequate African location could not be operated successfully by the Municipality. For the Administration, the problems of dealing with the African population in the Municipality had become so acute that Feetham's advice fell on willing ears. A major amendment to the Municipal Government Ordinance was passed in the following year. The major section, previously 43, which deal with location and urban passes was unchanged, but the powers of the Municipality to make bye-laws regulating African housing, the registration of labourers, the inspection of locations and the issuing of passes were increased. In April 1930, for instance, the Municipality gave itself the power to remove any African who "shall wander or loiter in any street or public place within the Municipality of Nairobi between the hours of 6.30 p.m. and 6.30 a.m. In the following month it was enacted that every African would have to have a permit to stay in the town for longer than thirty-six hours without employment.⁹⁷

These further rulings would tend to suggest that, despite Feetham's recommendations, the pass laws had become ineffective, probably largely because of the difficulties of establishing whether or not a man had really been in the town for more than seven days. In 1930, the Municipal Affairs Officer expressed an opinion that many men were without work and that "the housing scheme would be greatly simplified if such natives were evacuated." An attempt to achieve this objective underlay the new regulations, according to which the burden of proof of employment rested with the man concerned and under which, moreover, visitors to Nairobi were obliged to obtain a seven days visitor's permit.⁹⁸

By June 1930, 750 monthly permits had been issued to people looking for work, although it appears that few were successful in their search. Hoskings recommended to the Municipality that if man could not find work in one month, "that we should order home our surplus requirements". The policy was aimed at reducing wages as Hoskings was only too well aware.

"by reducing the time limit in which a boy must find work or go home, the tendency will be for the boy to accept lower wages in order to obtain work and to remain in the municipality."⁹⁹

- 97. NCA, File Native Employment Bureau, Memo "Native employment Bureau scheme, 8.1.1930. & 28.1.1930.
- 98. KNA. Labour. 9.1109. DC Nairobi to Chief Registrar 19.5.1930 and minutes of the 2nd meeting on Native Laws 28.7.1931.
- 99. NCA. Municipal Council Minutes - Report of the Native Affairs Committee "Memorandum on the working of Bye law 557 7.7.1930 by R.B. Hosking.

Hoskings wanted to reduce the time limit of the initial permits by making them available only for 7 days for unskilled and for 30 days for skilled men.

One of the main purposes of the pass law in Nairobi was to enforce segregation but its effectiveness was limited so long as there was an housing or labour shortage. On the other hand so long as there was a sufficient supply of labour as was apparent in 1930 the pass law could be used to reduce the bargaining power of labour. It was a weapon which the Europeans were only just beginning to learn to use in 1930.

Passes were obtainable from the Municipal Native Affairs Officer, who had the authority both to withhold these and to withdraw them from those he considered undesirable. By mid 1931, pass clerks were being stationed at six main entrance points to check passes and a complicated system of differentiated permits had arisen. A red pass was issued to a ten day visitor, while yellow permits giving permission for a thirty day stay were granted to those coming from a great distance. Blue passes were for traders and permanent inhabitants, green ones were for juveniles and a man permitted to be outside his location after 10 p.m. would be issued with a white night pass. A black list of unwanted people was also in existence and was circulated to the various police posts.¹⁰⁰ It was clear that over the next few years, a sustained effort was being made by the Police and the Native Authorities to control the influx of population into Nairobi and to supervise their employment. The 1930 police Annual Report recorded that cognizable crime had been reduced, despite an increase in population, thanks, they argued, to constant police patrols and to their freedom to "repatriate" unemployed Africans who had been in the town for more than thirty-six hours without a permit.¹⁰¹

Hoskings was concerned about the "race of detribalised natives" in the town who could not be returned to the rural areas. Most of these people were, he argued, "born to prostitutes" and the new location Pumwani had "no place for these parasites." These frighteningly inhumanitarian sentiments give an example of the kind of conceptualisation of the situation which would have sanctioned the outright removal from Nairobi of the people whom he described.¹⁰²

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- 100. KNA Labour 9.1109. D.C. Nairobi to Chief Registrar, 19.5.1930 and minutes of the second meeting on Nairobi Pass Laws. 28.7.1931.
 - 101. 1930 p. 31
 - 102. KNA PC CP 9.15.3 Hosking to Commissioner for Lands and Settlement, 13.5.31.

In the first six months of 1933, 1947 Africans were convicted in Nairobi of being on premises without the permission of the owner, being in Nairobi without a permit, living in a European or Asiatic area, or of loitering at night. Hoskings, the Municipal Native Affairs Officer and the police were clearly attempting both to reduce the numbers of Africans in Nairobi outright and to push those who remained into the African locations.¹⁰³ The Provincial Commissioner of the Central Province noted in 1934 that "the unnecessary harrying of innocuous natives under bye-law 557 constitutes a distinct grievance in the minds of natives in the Reserves."

Yet despite the new rigour of the authorities, complaints continued to be received about vagrancy; in particular about "the very large number of natives residing in Eastleigh and other parts of the Municipality"¹⁰⁴ Eastleigh had always been an area noted for urban squatting, despite constant police patrols. Similar complaints about illegal residence continued to be received throughout 1935 and 1936¹⁰⁵ from most parts of the town and it would appear as if the enforcement of segregation was proving ineffective. The reason for the continued infringement was almost certainly the lure of the economic opportunity available in Nairobi, coupled with the lack of cheap accommodation in the locations. By 1938, the spectre of a large number of unemployed Africans in Nairobi had again appeared, despite the simultaneous acute labour shortage in the rural areas.¹⁰⁶

Hoskings, at this time, admitted that there had been a failure to control the influx of African to the town and stated that he was considering new methods of control.¹⁰⁷ By the end of the year, a new sub-committee had submitted yet another report on the control of Africans in Nairobi. It argued, as had Feetham in 1927, that the first priority was to house the employed and their visitors. Only then could the police successfully "eliminate undesirables".¹⁰⁸ Their conclusion was that the police could only be authorised to take strong action to eradicate illegal slum housing once a scheme to provide legitimate African homes had been carried out. They were in fact restating the perennial circular argument, that the abuses could only be dealt with once some attempt had been made to accommodate the urban employed African.

103. Nairobi City Archives Report of the Native Affairs Committee 25.8.1933 12.9.1933 and 9.1.1934.
104. KNA 9 1707 70 257. *ibid* 13.12.1934
105. Native Affairs Committee op. cit. 12.3.1935. 10.4.1935. 10.9.1936
106. Minutes of the Municipal Council 14.1.1938 and 8.7.1938.
- 107.. Legislative Council Debates 1938 27.4.1938 pp. 77.8.
108. Nairobi City Archives, Sub Committee of the Native Affairs Committee 2.12.1938.

That the basic problem continued unsolved was revealed as late as 1955 by the report of the East Africa Royal Commission.¹⁰⁹ They commented at length upon the problems of urbanisation in the area and it was quite manifest from their findings that the problems outlined in this paper had been in no way mitigated in the intervening years. The lack of housing and bedspace, the ill health and infectious disease, the lack of urban family life, the low wages in comparison to the high costs of urban living, the high rents and the general poverty and instability of urban life were still constant factors of the African urban experience. The Commission even brought out a new point, which had been ignored in the earlier period, namely that land tenure opportunities for Africans in the urban area were very poor. There was no security of tenure, with the result that entrepreneurs were unwilling to invest in housing. The most favourable conditions available offered a lease for only twelve months, with the natural result of a high incidence of urban squatting in and around the new town.

The Commission also resembled all the previous ones in being unable to offer any solution. The problem of the urban development of Nairobi was intimately connected with the problems of the overall development of the capitalist system in Kenya as a whole. Prior to 1945, the European had been developing a deeply segregated society on an economic base of large scale farming. As I have shown elsewhere, this base was inadequate for the development of the community - only by manipulating the economy through the agency of the Colonial Administration were the settler farmers able to direct much of the surplus economic resource of the community towards themselves.¹¹⁰ The rural segregation which was part of the development of the settler farms was not solely a product of racial theory, but the theory itself arose out of the need of the settlers to exploit the production and the labour of the peasantry. The urban segregation was a correlate of the rural, but it broke down because of the insufficiency of cheap housing. Men cannot be successfully restricted to areas where there are not the basic facilities for daily life - or, at least not without the exercise of greater force and ingenuity than was available to the Municipal authorities at the time. The responsibility for the provision of housing rested with the Municipality, but although such responsibility was recognised in principle, the reality at various times fell far short of what was required.

109. HMSO p.

110. R. van Zwanenberg, "Primitive Colonial Accumulation" D. Phil. Sussex, 1971. Pässeim.

Nairobi grew from its very early stages much more rapidly than did the population as a whole. This was probably due to its role as the Administrative centre and to the concentration of wealth there, with a consequent higher level of wages and greater economic opportunity than was offered in the rural areas. Except for a short period in 1919 there was never a problem of labour shortage in the town, although labour shortage was endemic in the rural areas throughout the period, (with the exception of the years 1919-20 and 1930-35). The difference was almost certainly due to the higher wage levels offered in the town. The result of this population pressure was an almost constant urban crisis. The Municipality could never build enough cheap housing to keep pace with the increasing demand. In fact, the authority never knew the real scale of the problem with which they were expected to deal. They knew that they wanted to achieve segregation of the "races" and that they did not want to spend their scarce resources upon Africans. At each period when the problem was investigated, much the same type of answer was put forward for dealing with the recurrent problems. It was understood that the only real solution was to build more housing and to back this up with employment control. Yet even if the Municipality had been prepared to direct sufficient funds towards housing to deal with the problem, they did not in fact know the extent of population growth in the town, so could only react in an ad hoc manner, producing palliatives which did not prevent the eventual recurrence of the problem.

In the final analysis the problem was not the inflow of people to the town at all, but the imbalance between town and country. Even if vast quantities of housing had been built, it would merely have served to render urban life yet more attractive by contrast to conditions in the rural areas. The main problem was the continuous growth of the European sector and its burgeoning demand for labour. The form of rural European capitalism which was being developed required a large infrastructure of services, banks, entertainment, servants, transport and government administration. The more the settler economy developed, the more likely it was that the concentration in the urban sector would increase at a similar rate. The urban problems of the past could not in fact ever have been settled because of the lack of cognition of the needs of rural development.