



Cities to be tamed? Standards and alternatives
in the transformation of the urban South
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Rational Utopias/ Irrational Dystopias? Sites and Services in Eastlands, Nairobi

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The history of public housing provision in Nairobi is synonymous with the history of urban development in Nairobi's Eastlands. The mid 1920s saw the start of an exceptional six decade period during which a series of large scale public housing projects, including Nairobi's sites and services, were constructed in the east of the city. Sites and services attempted to master the city by determining the terms of incorporation into the city for the disenfranchised urban dweller, with the attainment of 'urban order' as the ultimate utopian goal. They represent a singular convergence between pragmatism and idealism in that they engage with the contextual realities of need and yet impose an ideology of what the city should be. Today, these projects have been extensively transformed from their original plans. By using the notions of 'Framing' and 'Reframing' to analyse the planning and transformation of three former sites and services in Eastlands, the paper reflects upon the role of 'the state apparatus' in intervening in a context where 'informality' is the mode of producing urban space.

Keywords: Sites and Services, Nairobi, Eastlands, Urbanism, Reframing

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Introduction

With respect to the provision of housing and infrastructure, the occupation of Nairobi's Eastlands² from the city's inception at the end of the 19th century to date may be conceptualised in three phases. Prior 1920, there was no official attempt to provide housing for locals³ in Nairobi. However, from the mid 1920s and intensifying in 1940, more attention was paid to the 'African housing problem' and many public housing projects were built in Eastlands. This continued after independence in 1963 to the mid 1980s when the big projects all but stopped. The first and the last phase are here termed 'the private construction of Eastlands' and are defined by the virtual absence of welfare driven intervention in the construction of housing east of the central business district (CBD). In between these two periods an exceptional six decade period occurred during which a series of large scale housing projects were constructed in Eastlands mainly by the government or the council responsible for Nairobi.

This city making project had a colossal ambition: to determine the terms of incorporation into the city for the disenfranchised urban dweller by leveraging control over housing and infrastructure. The establishment of 'urban order' was its ultimate utopian goal (Myers 2003). This quest to rationalise the city partially employed the notion of 'aided self help', the quintessential example of which was the sites and service project. Each of the three sites and services projects discussed here represents a singular attempt at mastering or establishing control over the city under specific geopolitical circumstances. All three are underpinned by a similar extractive capitalistic imperative: the need to stabilise the supply of urban labour.

The Quest for Urban Order: Aided Self Help

The link between housing and the stabilisation of the urban labour force has often been made: 'In many contexts during the late colonial period the promotion of housing for African urban residents was intended, both by improving conditions and promoting 'self-help' and homeownership, to secure social stability and order and strengthen an emerging urban middle class in the face of unrest and political mobilisation' (Gruffydd-Jones 2012: 30 after Rakodi 1995). Elaborating the evolution of housing policy in Kenya, Richard Stren confirms that unrest among urban workers played no small part in the advancement of housing conditions for locals in colonial Nairobi and Mombasa (Stren 1970).

From 1939 onwards, self-help increasingly became the method of choice in housing urban workers, gaining greater influence in the early 1970s when the World Bank began actively supporting urban housing in 'developing countries' (Harris 1970: 165-166). To overcome 'the unplanned and uncontrolled growth of slum and squatter communities', the World Bank threw its weight behind 'site and services' and 'squatter upgrading' projects (Laquian 1977: 291-292). According to Robert Ayres however, the Bank made no pretence of attempting to solve the housing problem; rather its housing related goals were designed to fit within its overall goal of 'modernising the international economy in its capitalist variant for the sake of its long term preservation' (Ayers 1983: 11 quoted in van der Linden 1986: 19). With respect to housing, these overall goals may be broken down into three as follows: one, to counter the political threat posed by massive urban poverty (McNamara 1975: 20 quoted in van der Linden 1986: 26); two, the use of housing as a tool of macroeconomic development by increasing the productivity of the poor and three, to enhance

² During the colonial period, Nairobi was primarily occupied by people of African, European or Asian origin. Eastlands was almost exclusively occupied by 'natives'; that is people whose origin was neither European nor Asian. Eastleigh which from the 1930s was occupied by the 'poorer Asians' was an exception to the rule (Nevanlinna 1996: 175). In the post-colonial period, Eastlands has been the reserve of low-income housing (see Huchzermeyer 2011).

³ The term 'locals' is henceforth substituted for the term 'natives' throughout the paper.



the development of economical housing patterns as orderly, more efficient alternatives to squatter invasions' (TUE 1982: 4 quoted in van der Linden 1986: 26).

The Quest for Urban Order: The Segmenting Plan

This quest for 'urban order' embodied in colonial and post-colonial urban policies is spatialised in *Verandahs of Power*, Garth Myers' reflection on colonial urbanism in Africa. Myers builds upon Timothy Mitchell's "enframing" as a means of articulating how British colonialism and then its inheritor states worked on the physical form of cities to reshape societies' (Myers 2003: xii). For Mitchell, 'enframing is a method of dividing up and containing, as in the construction of barracks or the rebuilding of villages, which begins by conjuring up a neutral surface...called space' (Mitchell 1988: 44). Mitchell identifies three strategies of enframing space. The first is transforming African 'orders without frameworks' in settlement design to an order reducible to a segmented plan. Second is creating a fixed distinction between inside and outside and thus extending the segmentation strategy to the micro scale. And third, abstracting and objectifying the build environment by providing a space from which the individual could observe or survey the city (Myers 2003: 8-9).

The segmenting plan⁴, Myers suggests, was a means for the (colonial and post-colonial) state to achieve its three central tasks: accumulation – securing the conditions for extraction commodities, legitimation – securing stable political order over the indigenous population with their consent and domination – instilling security, order and control (see Berman 1990 and Holmes 1997). The segmenting plan was a means to normalise the elite's notions of urban culture (Myers 2003: 13). These three goals coincide with those of the World Bank described above. Myers sets this imperative by 'the state apparatus' to rationalise the city through policies and plans (Scott 1998) against the inevitable 'reframing' or the responses of the (disenfranchised) urban dweller. The result is the emergence of an urban culture that bears little resemblance to that envisioned in the 'framing' policies and plans.

The interaction between 'framing' and 'reframing' forms the background to this discussion of the three sites and services cases in Eastlands. It is used as a platform to reflect upon the role of 'the state apparatus' and specifically the planning and development control department in intervening in a context where 'informality' is the mode of producing urban space.

Eastlands: A Strategy of Containment

Nairobi is a colonial city that started life in the late 19th century as a provisioning post for imperial British enterprise in East Africa to secure the Nile's headwaters. This enterprise was to be greatly aided by the construction of a railway linking Mombasa at the coast to Lake Victoria in Uganda, which was then thought to be the source of the Nile. The urban nucleus that has grown into today's teeming metropolis of 3.2 million inhabitants⁵ was initially a railway camp born of this Uganda Railway project (Owuor and Mbatia 2007: 120). Right from the beginning, as urban settlements are wont to do, the nascent settlement threatened to grow wild (King'oriah 1980: 99 – 101). In anticipation, the team of railway engineers responsible for the embryonic railway camp prepared the 'Plan of Survey at Foot of Hill and Edge of Plains' in 1898 before the railhead arrived at the site one year later.

Early descriptions of the site clue us in onto the nature of this boundary between the foot of the hill and the edge of the plain. The site was located at the junction where the flat, grass-covered Athi plains meet

⁴ Myers uses the term 'segmented plan' which I understand to mean a plan that is used to divide and contain space. I find the term 'segmenting' more appropriate to express this notion and have therefore used it instead.

⁵ 2009 census figures



the first rise leading up to the heights of the Aberdare Mountain range. The contrast between the two is captured in a description of the site by railway engineer of the Kenya Uganda Railway and Harbours (K.U.R&H), R. O. Preston as ‘a bleak, swampy stretch of sappy landscape, windswept, devoid of human habitation of any sort, the resort of thousands of wild animals...the present Parklands area [*on the higher ground*] was one magnificent stretch of impenetrable forest...the flat land on which Nairobi itself stands did not boast one single tree’.⁶ A lot of work would be needed to convert this ‘bare plain three hundred and twenty seven miles away from the nearest place where even a nail could be purchased, into a busy railway centre’.⁷ Work to tame both the site and the nascent settlement began in earnest.

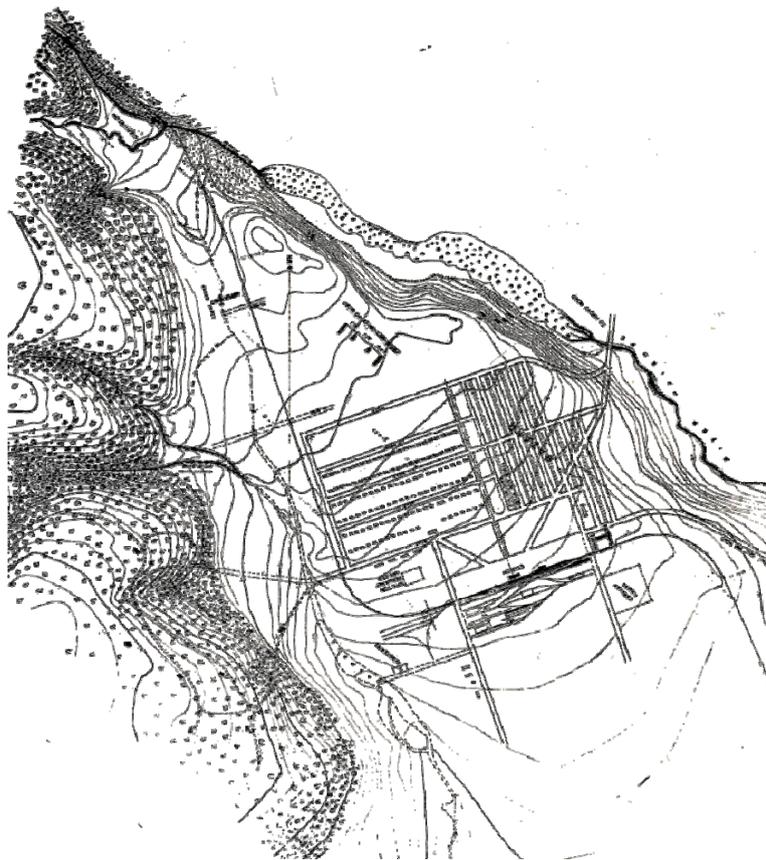


Figure 1. Plan of Survey at Foot of Hill and Edge of Plains, 1898. Emig and Ismail 1980: 13.

The ‘Plan of Survey at Foot of Hill and Edge of Plains’ represents one of the earliest efforts to tame site and settlement. It outlines a layout for the embryonic railway camp nestled in triangular formation between the higher ground in the west and the swampy Nairobi River running from north to east. In addition to the natural features, the plan indicates seven buildings on the high ground, a barrack-like development on the plain, a commercial area next to the river and the railway yard in the south. A second plan, the ‘Uganda Railways General Plan of Nairobi’ dated 1901, elaborates the features of the incipient urban nucleus. In this plan, the development on the high ground is marked as the protectorate officers’

⁶ R.O. Preston (Kenya Graphic, 1922) quoted in Huxley (1968: 61)

⁷ Patterson 1907 (1934 edition: 295f.) quoted in Hill 1949: 191.

quarters and railway officers' quarters on the higher ground in the west and the military officers' quarters on the higher ground in the north across the river. The barrack-like development on the flat ground in the earlier plan is described as (railway) subordinates' quarters. At the extreme east of the railway town are located the labourers' quarters. Thus, even at this early stage, the boundary between the hills and the plains appeared to take on a rather unholy significance.

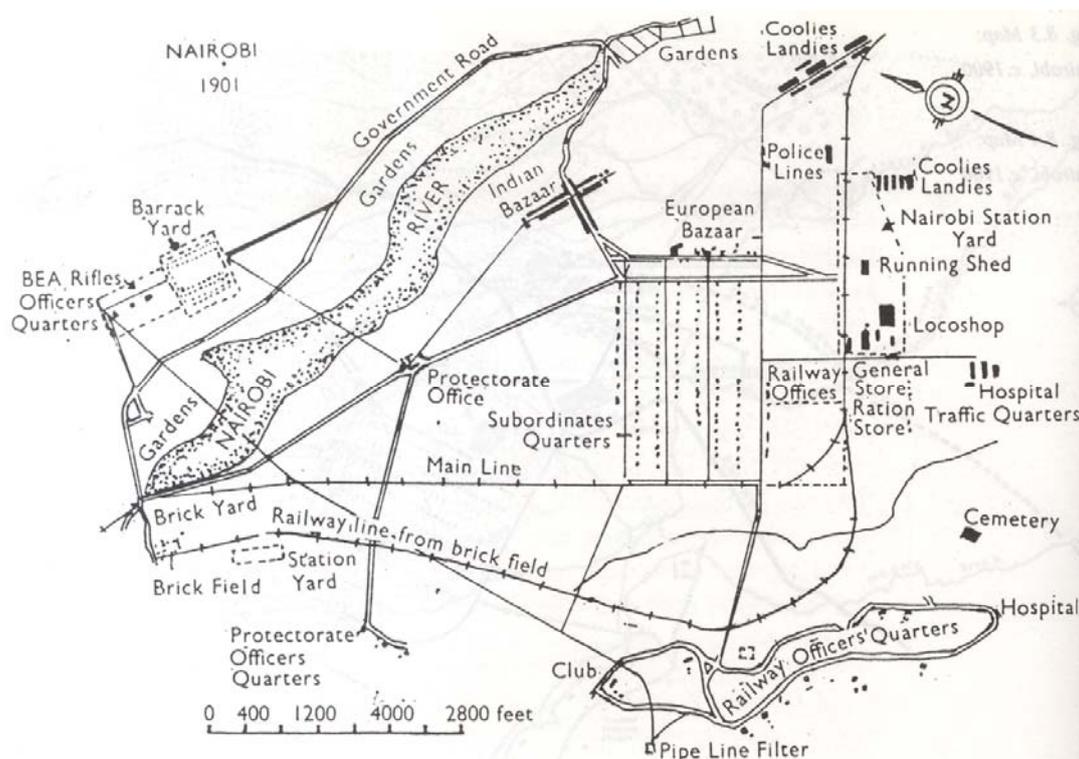


Figure 2. Uganda Railways General Plan of Nairobi, 1901. Nevanlinna 1996: 100.

Accommodating the higher socio-economic class on the higher ground quickly became an enduring pattern in Nairobi's socio-spatial structure.⁸ As Nairobi approached its Golden Jubilee, a South African team was appointed to prepare a vision to guide the city's development for the next twenty five years. Among other proposals, this *Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial Capital* classified the city's residential space into two. Extensive territories from north east to west were envisioned as 'areas for economic residential development' while the south and east were designated as 'official housing zones'. The areas for economic residential development were allocated twice as much space as the official housing zones and were to be developed at half the density; resulting in a nearly equivalent target population in both zones. The official housing zones were meant for workers' housing 'erected by the Municipality, the Government, the K.U.R&H., [railway company] and any similar schemes which may be erected in the future by the private enterprise of commercial and industrial firms to accommodate their own workers'. The location of these zones was 'strategic with respect to the location of the envisioned workplaces of this working class (Thornton-White et.al 1948: 64-65).

⁸ That this was the plan and intention right from the very first survey of the site is captured in Sir Guildford Molesworth's inspection report of the proposed railway route and camp. See Hill 1949: 184.



Figure 3. Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial Capital, 1948. Thornton-White et.al, 1948: 100.

In contrast, as Emig and Ismail claim, the economic residential areas ‘were intended only for people who could afford to buy plots and build their own houses or those who could afford to rent houses or apartments (Emig and Ismail 1980: 40). These proposed new economic residential areas were to be an extension of and modelled upon the existing residential areas (Thornton-White et.al 1948: 64). Geographer W.T.W Morgan reports that speculation was rife in these pre-existing residential areas. ‘Large tracts of land were acquired by speculators... Occasionally houses were built on these and as a result dwellings were scattered over an area of several square miles in and around the town. There was also a lack of land use control and a vehement respect for the rights of land owners’ (Morgan 1967: 104). In this plan, in contrast to the largesse of provision in the economic residential areas, the workers’ housing areas are isolated and contained with the intention of determining precisely how the worker would dwell. Summarising Nairobi’s socio-spatial structure a few years later, Morgan says that ‘the pattern has persisted that the better residential areas are on the elevated ground, [*in the west and north*] well drained and formerly wooded and with friable red soils. Cheaper housing is confined to the extremely level plain in the eastern side with its intractable black clay soil. Here are the main municipal estates and housing provided for factory and other workers’ (Morgan 1973: 315-316). This pattern survived largely unchanged into the post-colonial period and has become the enduring identity of Eastlands (Wachira 2006: 187).

‘Enframing’ Eastlands: Nairobi Sites and Services

The question of housing for locals in Nairobi remained undecided for the first two decades of the city's existence. For the local, legitimate presence in the urban area depended on his being employed and it was generally assumed that employers of local labour would provide accommodation for their employees. The deficiency of this approach was clearly seen in presence of a large ‘floating population’ of undocumented locals in Nairobi before the First World War (King’oriah 1980: 207-210).

The colonial state, keen to regulate the presence of these ‘others’ in the municipality, resorted to arresting and repatriating those who were ‘illegally’ present. The post-WWI influx of locals into Nairobi exacerbated the problem and arrests intensified. As a result, an indigenous political movement began to gather momentum resulting in greater instability in the urban labour force (Myers 2003: 39). This instability finally forced a decision and in 1920, the governor ordered the immediate occupation of a site approximately 2 km north east of the railway station (King'oriah 1980: 210).

Pumwani Sites and Services, 1922

This site, Pumwani meaning ‘breathing spell’ in Swahili, was both Nairobi’s first ‘native location’ and Nairobi’s first site and services scheme. A precedent was thus set. Legislation limiting local presence in Nairobi was enacted. Locals were compelled to live only in ‘native locations’ and directly related to this, several of their squatter camps were demolished between 1920 and 1930. Unemployed locals were repatriated to their tribal homelands; those ‘who had jobs’ were compelled to live in Pumwani’ (ibid: 211). Myers goes on to demonstrate what is now generally accepted about cities of the global south: the use of planning and building control to combat the persistence of disorder is rarely a successful enterprise (cf. Anyamba 2008).

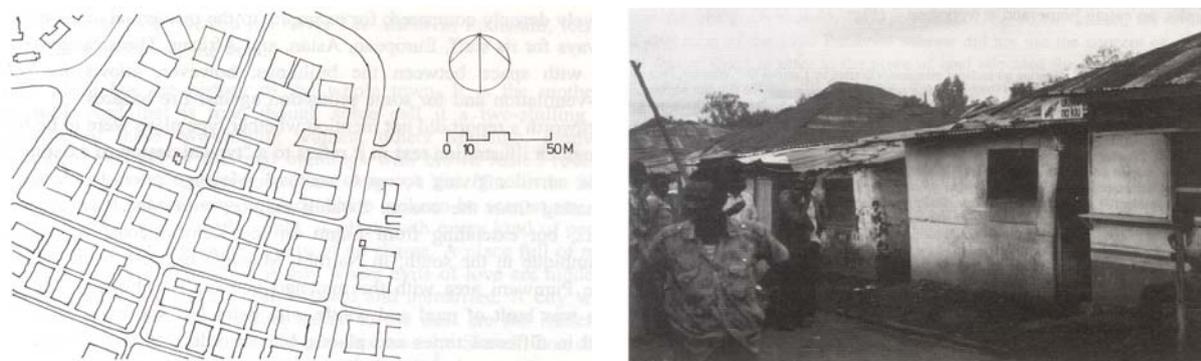


Figure 4. Self-built residential area, Pumwani partial site plan and image of dwellings. Nevanlinna, 1996: 278.

Reporting on the ‘first urban attempt [in Nairobi] to explicitly make a segmented plan from an order without framework’, he says ‘[Pumwani’s location] was aimed at increasing the spatial efficiency of the [indigenous] labour force while at the same time protecting European areas from racial or health-related “contamination”’. Squatters from all over Nairobi were forcibly relocated to the Pumwani’s regular, rectangular grid. The project was located across the Nairobi River marking it off from the town centre, with limited access from the urban road (ibid: 50). The new inhabitants had to build their own homes ‘according to the guidelines of the newly introduced municipal building codes. In practice, few of the codes were ever followed or enforced (ibid: 51). Almost all the houses exceeded the maximum sizes [originally allowed] ensuring plot coverages of 80-90% instead of the 50% stipulated and most sub-let rooms while sub-letting was technically illegal (McVicar 1968: 108 quoted in Myers 2003: 51).

Inter-War Municipal Housing, 1928-1939

Besides Pumwani, several other developments impacted the housing of locals in Nairobi. One was the economic boom in Nairobi between 1927 and 1929 (White 1990: 73). In addition, changes in British colonial policy with respect to indigenous populations resulted in the encouragement of local labour ‘...as

wage earners outside the reserves' from 1922 on (Stichter 1975: 28).⁹ These factors together stimulated a housing program for locals and in 1928, the Nairobi Municipality built Kariokor the first housing estate for its workers not far from Pumwani, followed a few months later by a similar one (Starehe) built by the government. Despite the economic slump of the 1930s, a third estate, Shauri Moyo, was built by the municipality and occupied in 1938 and a fourth, (Makongeni) in 1939 by the K.U.R&H. (King'oriah 1980: 212-214). All this housing for workers comprised either of dormitories or 4 – 6 person cubicles and was based on the 'bachelor bed space' concept (Hake 1977: 64). No accommodation was foreseen for female partners; rather this was housing for a (transitory) male labour force provided solely to ensure its stable supply.

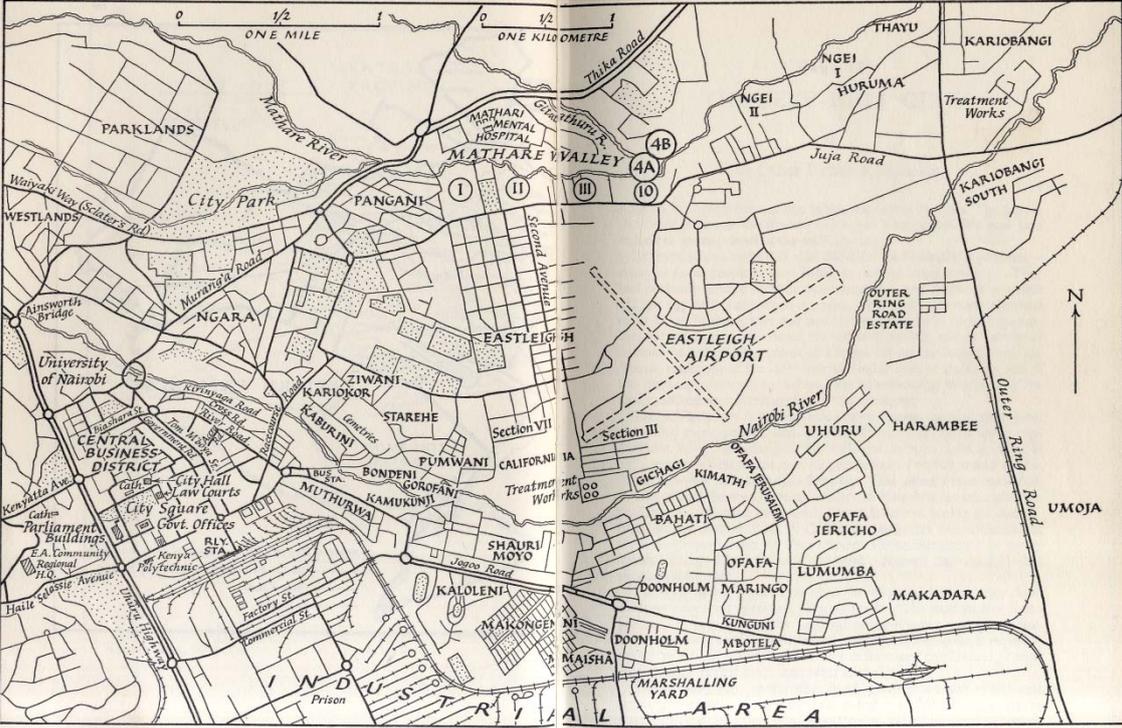


Figure 5. Eastlands in Colonial Nairobi. Hake, 1977: 90-91.

Post-War Municipal Housing, 1940-1970

From 1940 on, the geo-political upheavals resulting from the War forced more drastic changes in British imperial policy in Kenya (King'oriah 1980: 225). Once again there was an economic boom driven by the war-time demand for agricultural produce which was intensified by the shrinking of sea-borne trade (ibid: 229). The policy of keeping Kenya peripheral to British economy was partially abandoned. Instead, a policy of promoting development by encouraging primary production came into place.

⁹ Debate on the future of the Kenya Colony reached high levels in the Empire resulting in among other things, the 1923 Devonshire White Paper. This paper declared 'African Paramountcy' the prevailing policy of governance in the Kenya Colony: 'Primarily, Kenya is an African territory, and His Majesty's Government think it necessary definitely to record their considered opinion that the interests of the African natives [sic] must be paramount, and that if and when, those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail' (H.M.S.O 1929: 37).

The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 instituted the legal mechanism for financially aiding this project. The result was a complete turnaround from the previous notion that locals had no place in the city. The ever increasing need to provide a stable population of local labourers in the city became paramount (Anderson 2002: 145). Naturally, this was reflected in Nairobi's housing policy which under the then prevailing conditions of prosperity again focussed on social provision (Hake 1977: 62). Over the next two decades, eleven housing schemes added an additional 30.000 bed spaces to Eastlands, seventy five percent of which were employer controlled (ibid: 65).



Figure 6. Workers Housing in Eastlands, Mbotela Estate, 1950s. Hake, 1977: 108.

Between 1952 and 1960, Kenya was under a state of emergency declared in an effort to suppress the indigenous resistance to colonialism. By 1954, the instability caused by this violent repression had brought an end to the economic boom (cf. Anderson 2002: 139). The apparent inevitability of indigenous self-rule kicked off a period of capital flight from the country which did not end until 1964 (King'oriah 1980: 295-296). By the time the Mau Mau War ended in 1960, Kenya was in the throes of a deep depression and by the end of formal colonialism in 1963, the housing program had ground to a halt (Hake 1977: 83). To solve the economic crisis, the new government bent over backwards to make and present Kenya as an attractive destination for private investment (King'oriah 1980: 316-320). As a result, the economy improved and within a five year period beginning in 1966, six housing estates containing an additional 3.800 houses were added to the housing stock in Eastlands (Hake 1977: 85).

This provision of housing by the Nairobi City Council continued until around 1970 at which time, the ideas John Turner and Charles Abrams began to erode the ‘provider approach’ to housing in Nairobi.

Kariobangi Sites and Services, 1964

Upon arrival on his famed mission to Nairobi in 1964, Charles Abrams found ‘a grave situation of overcrowding’ in Nairobi. The state of emergency had ended on 12 January 1960 and with it the most stringent restrictions on access by locals to the city had been formally lifted. The rapidly increasing political wherewithal resulted in an eighty percent increase in the average wage for locals. A flood of new comers half of whom settled in Eastlands ensued and the conventional housing schemes were no longer adequate to cater for the housing needs of the population in Eastlands (Hake 1977: 80-81). The resulting explosion of squatter settlements in Eastlands was a visible threat to urban social order.

In response, the Nairobi City Council (NCC) implemented Kariobangi, Eastlands’ second sites and services project in 1964. Intended as a squatter resettlement scheme, this social experiment was located well away from any other housing area to minimise the risk of depreciating existing municipal housing. An observer present at the relocation of squatters to Pumwani by the colonial Nairobi council forty years earlier, would have experienced an eerie sense of *déjà vu* at the re-housing of squatters in Kariobangi by the post-colonial Nairobi council. The establishment of urban order (securing safety and control) was top of the list of priorities. Reporting in 1927, the ‘chief native commissioner’ opined:

‘I consider that it is important, in the interests of natives generally, as well as of other communities, that the ingress of natives into towns and their residence therein should be strictly controlled. Land for the occupation of native tribes has already been set aside by Government [Pumwani], and natives should not be encouraged to come into towns except for the legitimate purposes of employment or trade...It is unfortunate that among those to whom a town offers attractions are idle, vicious or criminal natives, who seek to avoid...any control...[and]...who come to town...to “live on their wits,” which generally means either begging or stealing and they become...a menace to public security...’¹⁰

In 1964, at a meeting attended by those responsible for planning Kariobangi, the district commissioner for Nairobi area reported that:

‘an increasingly dangerous security situation was being created in Nairobi by the continuous migration of work seekers into the city...Immigrants...are continuously rebuilding their illegal houses as fast as they are demolished...the construction of Kariobangi has not even started and the Police and city council staff are faced with an increasingly difficult and unpleasant task.’¹¹

The construction of Kariobangi was part of an overall plan to deal with the anticipated long term rural-urban migration and the attendant squatter problem (Weisner 1976: 80).

¹⁰ G.V.Maxwell, Memorandum on Natives in Urban Areas in vol.1 of the Report of the Local Government Commission 1927, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, p157-158.

¹¹ Minutes of the working party on illegal squatting in Nairobi held on the 15th January 1964. Mimeographed, Nairobi City Council. Quoted in Weisner T.S (1976) *Kariobangi: The Case History of a Squatter Resettlement Scheme in Kenya* p80.



Figure 7. Kariobangi site layout 1964 and 2003. Caminos and Goethert 1978/Survey of Kenya 2003.

Each Kariobangi plot measured 188 square meters (13,7m by 13,7m) and was served with its own toilet and sewer line (ibid: 81). The new homes were to be laid out in an orderly fashion, shops and community facilities were to be provided in a separate location. The rules were strict: allottees had six weeks to build a structure of acceptable standard in temporary materials and 10 years afterwards to complete the conversion from temporary to permanent materials. The NCC retained the right to repossess the plot if the house was or became sub-standard. The structure erected could only be used ‘as a private dwelling for the owner and his/her family’ With the Town Clerk’s written permission, lodger’s accommodation could also be constructed but this was ‘restricted to a maximum of two rooms...[permission to sublet] may be refused if in [the Town Clerk’s] opinion such provision would cause overcrowding’. No shops, trade or cottage industry was permitted outside the designated area (ibid: 82).

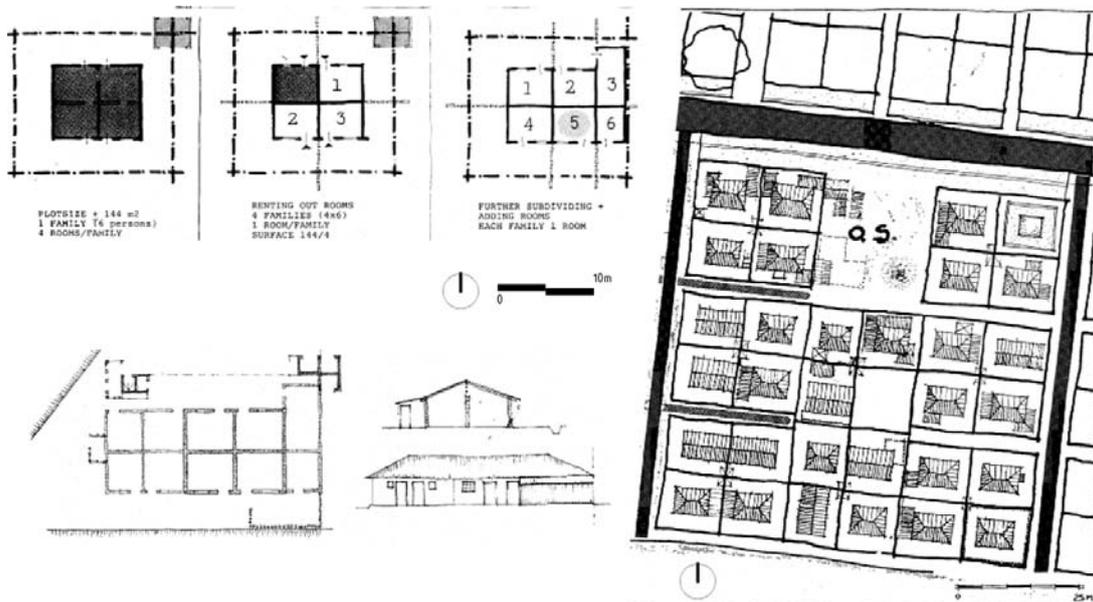


Figure 8. Kariobangi’s uncompromising functionalism, negation and disconnection. Loeckx and Wouters p15.

Like Pumwani before it, a post-occupation evaluation conducted of Kariobangi in 1970 revealed that the original intentions of the planners had been altered in almost every aspect. To mention just four: 60-70% of the plots had been transferred to non-squatters through ‘illegal’ sales, the density was twice what had been anticipated, incidence of squatting had increased and of the three hundred and forty five shops counted, two hundred and ninety five were located within the residential fabric outside the designated market area (Weisner 1976: 85-87). Disappointed by their ‘failure’, planning officials advocated greater controls in future projects: ‘the Chief Architect would design the lowest standard of two and three bedroom houses...acceptable in an urban setting, loans...would be made available to allottees, the council would purchase all materials in bulk and set up...supervision, casual labour to be recruited from allottees and 50% of allottees wages to be kept back and used as deposit for the house’.¹²

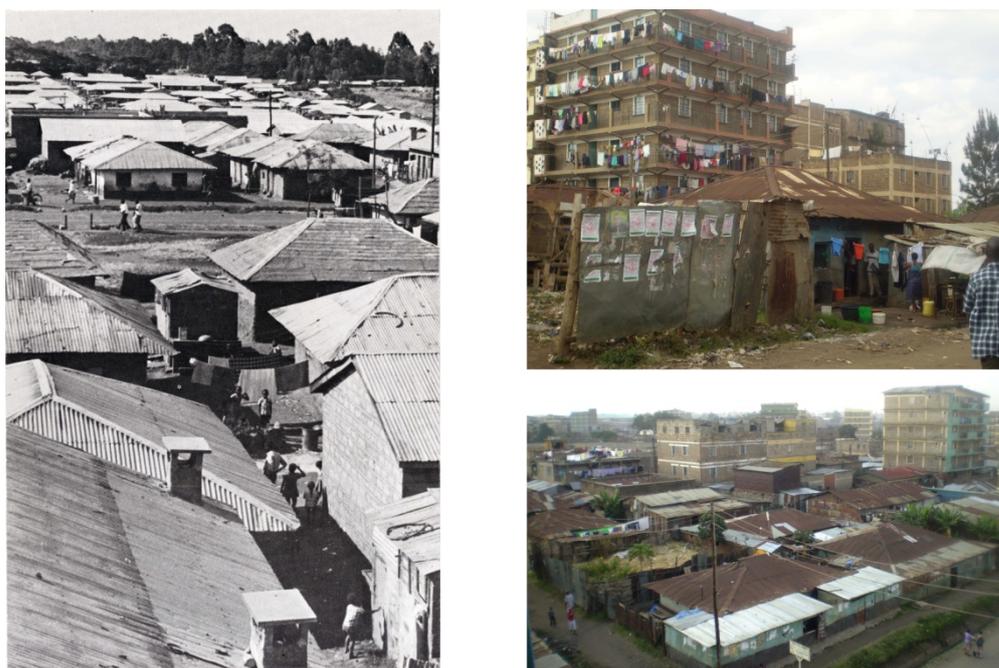


Figure 9. Kariobangi 1964 and 2010. Caminos and Goethert 1978/Maina Njeru.

Kayole Sites and Services, 1979-1985

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, it had become generally accepted that a change in international housing policy was needed. During the colonial period, the approach to housing was driven by the need to mediate between the pragmatics of economic extraction which required proximity between coloniser and colonised, with the maintenance of social order which demanded the physical demonstration of the colonisers’ racial supremacy through separation (Gruffydd-Jones 2012; cf. Myers 2003). Two years after the end of formal colonialism, the new government issued the 1965 Sessional Paper No. 10, *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. A key point of the policy outlook presented in this document was the equality of all races.

¹² Nairobi City Council Minutes of Committees and Sub-committees 1964 – 1968 quoted in Weisner T.S. (1976: 92).

'The sharp class divisions that once existed in Europe have no place in African Socialism and no parallel in African society. No class problem arose in the traditional African society and none exists today among Africans...Kenya has the special problem of eliminating classes that have arisen largely on the basis of race' (Republic of Kenya 1965: 12-13).

But this policy paper like the Devonshire White Paper before it was in part simply lip service politics.¹³ As the events of the next two decades would reveal, the role of Eastlands in taming the city for financial and economic ends was not to change. The new circumstances however dictated that a new less explicit means of doing so be found.

Post 1970 housing development in Eastlands occurred east of Outer Ring Road, the eastern boundary of the colonial city. This 'eastern extension' was framed within the 1973 *Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy*. This 'strategic plan' was prepared by the Nairobi Urban Study Group and emerged out of early 1970s World Bank 'concern' at the proliferation of squatting in Nairobi (NUSG 1973a: introduction). The plan's preparation was funded by the World Bank and received technical support from the United Nations Technical Assistance Program 'to ensure a pre-investment approach' (ibid). The Nairobi Urban Study Group itself comprised of local and foreign technocrats backed up by NCC staff. In the plan, the Eastern sector was reserved for low and middle income households (ibid: par 106).

Consequently, between 1970 and 1985, five more projects were built following the same model of opening up new tracts of urbanised land and turning it into serviced plots. These sites and services projects would be funded by the World Bank or the USAID. Among this was Kayole, the apotheosis of sites and services in Nairobi (Loeckx and Githua 2010: 87).

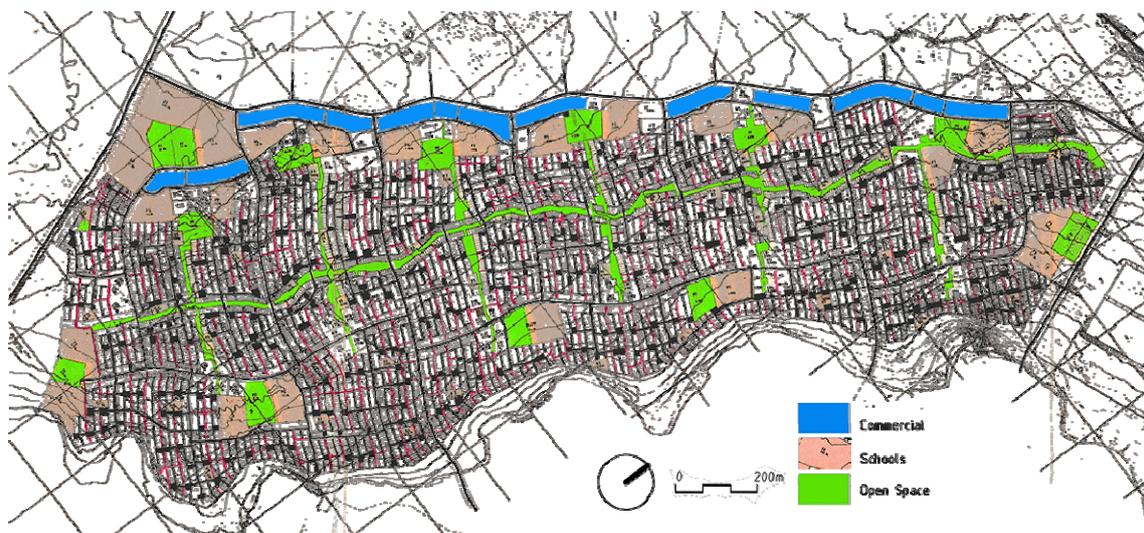


Figure 10. Kayole segmenting plan. Mutiso Menezes International (MMI).

¹³ By way of clarification, perhaps needlessly, the background to this assertion is the neo-colonialism thesis (Nkrumah 1965). In his article 'Whose Dictator is Gaddafi?', Yash Tandon equates the neo-colonial government with the Empire: 'the neo-colony is ruled by the Empire...indirectly through its agents...these are two sides of the same coin; they are the same phenomenon' (Tandon 2011). Kenya has been labelled a neo-colonial state (Ochieng' and Maxon 1992: 259; cf. Leys 1975). Myers (2003: 4) also claims that colonial legacy is an enduring cornerstone for the analysis of contemporary African urban culture.

Kayole sites and service was developed on freehold NCC land located 9km east of Nairobi's CBD. Its design revealed several features that set it apart from its predecessors. Chief among this was the attempt to integrate it into the landscape and into the urban transport frame. Careful attention to scale was paid including the provision for the development of an urban scale facade on the linking Spine Road. Like Pumwani and Kariobangi, Kayole employed a segmenting plan that clearly defined and located each function albeit with public facilities evenly distributed within the scheme. Nearly identical type plans with little room for manoeuvre were stipulated for each allotment. The dwelling had to be designed and signed by a registered architect and was not to exceed two floors. The plan comprised of a double loaded corridor down the middle of the plot with single rooms on either side opening into it; a wet core was to be located at the rear end. No provision was made for shops within the residential development, however incremental development and sub-letting was foreseen.

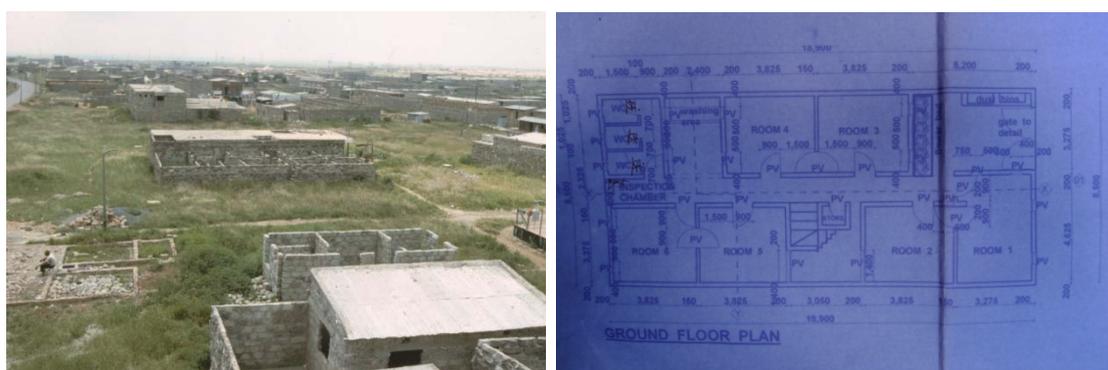


Figure 11. Early development in Kayole / Type plan. Photo courtesy of Loeckx A./Plan Site study 2010/2011

With respect to economic aspects, Kayole sites and services tried to ‘correct’ Kariobangi’s ‘mistakes’.¹⁴ Of the 6,400 plots made available, 2,500 were meant to resettle squatters and a third of the remaining were market plots to be sold to and developed by the man of means at market rates (Nzainga 1991: 7). At the end of the day, the financing provided by the World Bank was to be fully recovered from the Kenyan tax payer. Eventually, only the southern half of the site available was developed into sites and services. The northern half was developed into middle class mortgage housing financed by the Commonwealth Development Cooperation.

Fieldwork conducted on site by the author in 2010 and 2011 revealed that Kayole today is vastly altered from the vision outlined of its segmenting plan and building codes of the 1980s. Vestiges of the original urban structure remain, however many designated public spaces have been irregularly developed into housing and those that remain are very poorly designed and often house squatters. The most actively used public space is the street which is lined on both sides with small scale informal activity. Several plots originally assigned a residential function have been converted to other uses (schools, churches, commerce) and many of those that retain their original residential function have been developed at more than twice the ‘permitted’ density.

¹⁴ Observing that ‘practically all the original allottees [at Kariobangi] had defaulted’ on their loans, the Director of Social Services and Housing described sites and services as a ‘solution for the man who had money and the desire to build’. Weisner goes on to recommend the mixing aided allottees with men of means. (Nairobi City Council Minutes of Committees and Sub-committees 1964 – 1968 quoted in Weisner T.S. (1976: 93).

Integration of the development into the landscape has not been successful: the river spaces are without exception neglected backyards. The squatter settlement is confined to the extreme southern tip of the site, suggesting that their integration falls short of expectations.



Figure 12. School on residential plot, street market, unintended mixed use & multiplied density.
Fieldwork 2010.

‘Reframing’ Eastlands

Anthony O’Connor has argued that ‘the physical form of cities [in Africa] is being influenced to a very large extent by the planning decisions of a few foreign firms and thousands of local individuals and families rather than by the decisions of any town planning department’ (O’Connor 1983 quoted in Myers 2003: 14). Branwen Gruffydd-Jones has argued that international housing and urban development policy represents a form of Western intervention in Africa whose aim is to construct the market: ‘...policy must assume a more interventionist form in order to actively construct, assemble and cultivate the appropriate environment for the competitive market to flourish and expand’ (Gruffydd-Jones 2012: 24; cf. Foucault 2008:120-121). In this scenario where notions of urban culture originating at the supra-national level interact with the ‘reframing’ activity of the ‘urban majority’ in co-producing the city, the ‘state’ appears to be left out. Even where the imperative originates from the local state, the emergent urban form through time reveals the state’s inability to compel compliance with the plan.

An Impotent State?

This picture however, needs to be refined. Studying tenements¹⁵ in Nairobi’s Eastlands, Marie Huchzermeyer has recorded the complicity of the NCC’s development control department in perverting the intentions of the segmenting plan (Huchzermeyer 2011: 170). In addition, Omenya has revealed that personal networks (including networks of political patronage) through which resources flow are crucial in the production of tenements in Nairobi (Omenya 2006: 175 in Huchzermeyer 2011: 171). This appears to coincide with King’s earlier notion of Nairobi as a *Jua Kali*¹⁶ city (King 1996: 50) and to support Anyamba’s assertion that informality is Nairobi’s urban spatial process (Anyamba 2008).

The three cases presented, have traced the evolution of the guise under which the segmenting plan was produced in Nairobi’s Eastlands. In each of the three cases, the production and transformation of urban space is aided (not constrained) by the segmenting plan.

¹⁵ These tenements have emerged largely out of dweller initiated transformation of former sites and services projects.

¹⁶ During the 1980s the term *jua kali* (Kiswahili for ‘hot sun’) came to refer to anybody working in self-employment in Kenya.

The rational utopian space of the segmenting plan makes possible the acting out of the spatial and socio-economic practices that generate urban form in Eastlands even though this form differs from that envisioned in the plan (cf. De Meulder and Heynen 2006). Most of these practices are underpinned by a pragmatic economic logic that bears little resemblance to the assumptions of the project brief (Anyamba 2008: 235). Due to the massive extent of “reframing”, many of these practices have arguably been little impacted by influences from the international stage.¹⁷ Rather they have emerged from locally based power customs and ideologies. The unique urbanism of Eastlands has resulted from the interaction between the ‘framing’ of the segmenting plan and the ‘reframing’ local practices. And as Huchzermeyer points out, this is partially enabled by the ‘state apparatus’.

Conclusion: Activating the Agency of the Segmenting Plan

It is clear that the ‘state apparatus’ in Nairobi often acts in ways that contradict its official role as guardian of a high modernist ‘urban order’. Certain representatives of the state play a pivotal role in perverting the intentions of the segmenting plan. They must, because at the end of the day, in spite of the pragmatism embodied within the notion of sites and services, the attempt to engage with local realities succeeds only to a limited extent. The vision of the plan (like every plan, but more so here) is in many ways a rational utopia imposing an external (perhaps even elitist) notion of urban culture. In a city that is transforming as rapidly as Nairobi is, a flexible means to cater for these rapidly changing needs is required. By turning a blind eye to or actively aiding the perversion of the plan, the ‘state apparatus’ has not been an impotent bystander, rather it has been actively involved in making the plan flexible. This allows the plan to transcend its constraining characteristics and become a stage upon which a local urban culture can evolve. Finally, the sites and services projects are among the very few instances in Nairobi where the ‘state apparatus’ managed to deliver and install infrastructure before development occurred. The greatest power that the state has in shaping the form of the city lies in its near monopoly over large scale infrastructure provision. The state should focus on this potential by designing and installing infrastructure services that allow and support the flourishing local notions of urban culture.

¹⁷ Diaspora remittances contribute significantly to financing the production of the city but these are considered to be an extension of local spatial practices.

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