

# The spatial impress of Town Planning Practice in East Africa

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An international tender, for the review of the Dodoma master plan has recently been floated (Daily News, March 14, 1987 p. 6). This tender system is resorted to every time master plans in East Africa call for their revision. Though master plan review exercises in East Africa are contemplated by Government, they are assisted by foreign funds and are expected to be completed by foreign town planning consulting firms from the developed countries. The terms of reference for this exercise cover an overall city planning concept: policies and standards in relation to housing in general and densities in particular; land allocation for commercial utilities, offices industrial and public service infrastructural activities and strategies for achieving of the above.

Despite several similar exercises in earlier years, the structure of large cities in East Africa has not had any positive improvement. This can be accounted for by a deep rooted conspiracy between indigenous and international instruments of neo-colonialism aimed at preserving and furthering a status quo urban environment in East Africa. Using one of the terms of reference in urban planning policies and standards of housing in general and densities in particular, this paper attempts to unveil the evolution, determinants and spatial impress of town planning practice in East Africa. Some recurring urban residential land use problems are, thereby, elucidated.

## Theoretical Roots of Intra-Urban Residential Land Use Differentiation

In the 1920's, hypotheses did arise contending that similarities existed between cities, especially, with regard to their internal structures. These similarities created fertile ground for formulating general concepts and models of urban land use patterns. Four models: zonal; sectoral; multiple nuclei, and additive, have had a greater contribution to modern urban land use planning practice.

The zonal model developed by E. Burgess in the 1920's contend that a tendency exists for urban residential districts, resting on a dominant Central Business District (CBD), to expand radially outward defining certain concentric zones through land use succession and invasion. The genesis of the zonal model has, however, been traced back to earlier theories of urban expansion. Hurd had outlined a general theory of urban land expansion stressing the principles of central area and axial growth (Hurd, 1903, p. 280). The zonal model borrowed heavily from the principle of central area growth. The dynamic efficiencies of this model dictated that the dominance of the CBD and the control mechanisms by the gradient of land values outward towards the city's outskirts, determined the urban residential land use zonation.

Based on a block by block analysis of 142 cities in the USA, Hoyt, H. proposed that although a city's urban land use growth may rest on one dominant CBD, its residential land use pattern tend to be organised not into zones but sectors. The different residential districts, it was argued, tended to grow outward along rather distinct radii defining what could be called a sector model of urban residential land use (Hoyt, 1939, p. 114). Like the zonal model, this also borrowed heavily from Hurd's principle of axial growth.

A challenge to the zonal and sectoral models was sounded by Ullman, especially with regard to the rationale of conceiving a dominance of a single CBD, as a nucleus upon which all other land uses developed. Ullman suggested that more than one CBD should be imagined around which zones and/or sectors of residential land uses could

develop.

After revisiting the theoretical premises and examples provided by the three preceding models, Berry observed that the general pattern of urban land use was organised according to the zonal model. Then he went on to add that in reality the specific arrangement of intra-urban residential differentiation was organised along the sectoral fashion in an additive manner. These ideas crystallised into the additive model of urban residential land use pattern.

Discussions of theoretical roots underlying the four models have, generally, focused on the zonal and sectoral models. The two, concerned with an urban population differentiating process, predicted particular patterns of residential districts and lent themselves to empirical test. The other two, lacking in an own theoretical identity, were in fact derived from elements prevalent in both the zonal and sectoral ones.

Critics have indicated that both the zonal and sectoral models of urban growth and resulting structure were derived from two main disciplines, namely, land economics and animal and plant ecology. The principles of central area and axial growth provided the general framework for describing the pattern of growth and the forces behind areal spread for different land uses. The ecological principles of impersonal competition, natural selection, succession and invasion provided the panacea for determining the specific location of one land use as against another.

The two models would like us to believe that the process leading to urban residential land use differentiation divides the urban population into a series of more or less distinct urban sub-communities. The characteristics of these sub-communities - physical, economic and cultural - are the result of unplanned operation of ecological and social processes. As a result of selection, segregation and contagious character of cultural patterns, people living in same areas and subject to same social conditions, tend to display same characteristics. Guided by evolution found in plant and animal communities, the two classical ecologists saw a similarity with urban human community structure and developmental history. The physical separation of the urban population into neighbourhoods along social lines, as derived from animal and plant ecology, seemed an inevitable concomitant of urbanism as a way of life. The extent to which these models influence space forming processes can be unveiled by tracing the historical and contemporary role of three determinants of town planning practice in East Africa.

### **Determinants of Town Planning Practice in East Africa**

The determinants of town planning practice in East Africa may be said to be threefold. First is the influence derived from developments in natural and social sciences to town planning theory and its justifications. Second is the role of expatriate town planning personnel, as international instruments at the service of the international capitalist system, and thirdly, one may also include the role of a politico-administrative and technocratic stratum as indigenous instruments, first at their own, but also at the service of the international capitalist system.

### **Developments in Natural and Social Sciences and the Town Planning Framework.**

Influences from developments in natural and social sciences on the town planning theory and its justifications have been demonstrated by the way the town planners training has influenced their planning methodology. Within a capitalist educational milieu, town planners regard master planning as a technical exercise devoid of policy and objectives. There is, deliberately, nothing in the planner's training which demands a questioning of the suitability of policies, goals or terms of reference, of the plan, as an integral part of the planning exercise. In this endeavour, planning education inculcates a value free methodology designed to achieve already stated goals and objectives. The above conception is a direct reflection of the nature of developments in natural and social sciences

as revealed by contributions from the human ecologists in the 1920's and as has been furthered by the factor ecologists and the modern town planning consultants in more recent times (Berry and Horton, 1971; Marshall Macklin Monaghan Ltd, 1979). With reference to the ecological studies, residential differentiation was correlated with socio-economic status, ethnicity and stage in life cycle, in such a way, that social structure and spatial structure were mechanistically juxtaposed. This deliberate mechanistic, empiricist and abstracted mode of analysis has been transferred, *grosso modo*, from the context of natural sciences first to social sciences and then straight to the physical planning framework itself. This transfer has enabled town planning to accept social differentiation and inequalities in urban areas as the normal state of affairs. Planning recommendations perpetuating social segregation in the urban residential structure thereby managed to be internalised and escaped unquestioned.

Yet, in reality, to plan for anything but the most superficial changes in a capitalist society is to risk bankruptcy and to go out of business. The education system ensures that it imbues a *Status quo* ideology in its educational system for the survival of the capitalist system and society. As a consequence, graduates from this educational system are rendered ineffective when questions of principle, against furthering human inequality in access to resources in urban areas, are involved.

#### **International Instruments of Town Planning Practice in East Africa.**

The connection between international instruments of town planning practice and the town planning framework should be sought from a symbiotic relationship between international funding agencies and foreign town planning consulting firms in preserving a class based urban environment in East Africa. International capital has managed to maintain a strong grip on the internal morphology of East African urban centres and societies through technical and management agreements and funding of various development programmes, the master plan being just one of them. The contribution of foreign capitalist town planning consulting firms in practically shaping the internal morphology of the urban centres in East Africa must be seen in the context of a direct international apparatus influencing space forming processes. Master plans are formulated in such a way that they quickly become pregnant with implementation constraints and call for their revision frequently enough to keep the consultants in business. Rather than assist a country progress forward, by solving basic problems in the urban environment, foreign planning consultants regard their role merely as carrying out projects as some popular trademarks show. The implemmentability of the master plans' content and the spatial impress therefrom is none of their concern.

#### **Indigenous Instruments of Town Planning Practice in East Africa**

The tender system for awarding contracts to town planners and the implementation of the recommended proposals are in the hands of an indigenous East African politico-administrative - technocratic stratum. In the process of occupying important Government offices, this stratum has managed to acquire both power and privileges, one of them being to live in pleasant residential districts separated from the general mass of urbanites. This stratum would have everything to loose by carrying out a thorough going revolutionary change in the urban environment. As indigenous instruments of neo-colonialism, this stratum cannot be interested in fundamental revolutionary changes because these would erode away the foundations of privilege in society. The privileged position in society can best be adequately safeguarded by the existing neo-colonial relations obtaining in East Africa. In the context of town planning, the type of planning which perpetuates the *Status quo* is, not only approved, but is also embraced.

It may therefore be concluded that the ideological stances of the town planner's educational milieu, foreign capitalist town planning consulting firms and the indigenous

East African politico-administrative - technocratic stratum, not only coincide, but are mutually supporting. Though a great deal of money and man-hours may have been invested in planning the urban environment in East Africa, the outcome has always been more cosmetic than substantive. This is demonstrated in this paper by presenting the evolution of urban land use configuration in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya over the last nine decades.

### **The Spatial Impress of Residential Land Use in Dar es Salaam Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya.**

Dar es Salaam and Nairobi have been selected for detailed treatment because they are among the largest cities in East Africa. Although urban land use dynamics are still in spate, significant mosaics of already created land uses have already crystallised. The two examples serve to show that, despite the difference in official political philosophy guiding socio-economic development in each of the two countries, the spatial impress of their largest cities have been and are essentially similar. It is particularly in the area of residential land use structure where the cosmetic nature of town planning has been more clearly revealed.

#### **Residential Differentiation in Dar es Salaam**

The spatial structure of residential districts in Dar es Salaam was initiated in the 1940's. Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, contracted to plan Dar es Salaam in 1948 recommended that the growth of Dar es Salaam should take the need of the different dominant races into consideration (Gibb and Partners, 1949, p. 9). This 1949 master plan designed the European, Asian and African residential districts for the three dominant races represented, thus initiating the congruence between racial and spatial structure in Dar es Salaam.

Subsequent formulation of a Dar es Salaam Master Plan in 1968 dropped the "racial" factor and substituted it with the "standard" factor. The differential pattern in infrastructural development and investment pattern initiated in the 1940's for different social groups in different residential districts, was furthered by the 1968 plan. Similar to its predecessor, it was completed by a foreign town planning consulting firm Project Planning Associates, 1968.

The more recent 1979 Dar es Salaam master plan did not hesitate to substitute the "standard" factor by a more neutral "density" factor. The recommendations therefrom were the high, medium and low density planned residential districts (Fig. 1). Although Dar es Salaam has experienced three master plans and change in planning terminology, nothing has substantially changed in terms of spatial content and forms of land categories initiated since the 1940's.

The three master plans exhibit an explicitly physical planning approach, essentially conforming to the traditions of the western architect - planner, primarily concerned with the spatial form of urban areas. Issues of direction of urban expansion, road network and street layout pattern and distribution of different land use zones are the predominant concerns alongside a continuing strong interest in urban design and city image, in other words the appearance rather than functioning of the city. The 1949 master plan for Dar es Salaam introduced the neighbourhood unit of modern town planning, developed for USA sub-urban expansion in the 1930's to guide land allocation for different races represented in Dar es Salaam (Gibb and Partners, 1949). The neighbourhood unit reappears in the 1968 and 1979 plans, slightly modified, but still aimed at furthering the differential access to resources by the different urban communities.

The low density neighbourhood units, represented by Oyster Bay, Msasani and recently Tegeta, are characterised by access to more spacious land and other high quality

infrastructural facilities than the rest of the urban community. Studies have shown that the politically and economically stronger in Dar es Salaam reside in these areas. This group enjoy paved roads, lighting on all streets, water and power supply to each home and a linkage of each home to the central sewerage system.

The medium density residential neighbourhood units, represented by Upanga, Kurasi-ni, Regent Estate and recently Mbezi Beach, enjoy paved roads, lighting on collector roads, water and power supply to each flat and septic tanks.

The high density planned residential neighbourhood units, represented by Magomeni, Ilala, Buguruni, Kinondoni, Mwananyamala and recently Kijitonyama and Sinza enjoy lighting on collector roads only, communal water stands and pit latrines (Doherty, 1975 p. 90).

Beyond these three exist the high density unplanned squatter settlements, as evidenced by Manzese, Mabibo, Chang'ombe, Mtoni and more recently Tabata and Mbaga-la. These zone enjoy no social facilities and have accurately been associated with a culture of the urban poor. Since squatter areas are regarded as dens of vice and a menace to public health, and therefore a threat to orderly growth of urban design, they have been a target of harrassment by urban authorities. This harrassment is characterised by moving people about, getting people out of some localities into others and stopping migration. The structure has therefore not emerged out of chance but it is a deliberate creation by city authorities. Similar observations can be cited for Nairobi.

## **Residential Differentiation in Nairobi City**

It can be argued that the pattern of residential differentiation in Nairobi emerged through imposed planning, chance and choice of inhabitants (Halliman and Morgan, 1967) The *Laissez-Faire* Policy which operated in Nairobi since 1897 when it was founded, led to large tracts of land being either leased or sold as private property to individuals with little regard to future development needs of the city. Freed from the controls in European and Asia, for the immigrant community, and from the controls of traditional land tenure system, for the wealthy influential Kenyans, people acquired land and did whatever they wanted with it. Practises, ideas and life styles characteristic of the European cultures were imported and effected in Nairobi. The spatial forms therefrom became a mosaic of the European, Asian and African cultures.

The earliest major review of the town's culture was made by a local Government Commission led by Justice Feetham in 1928. It proposed boundary changes which absorbed within the new municipality most of the previous autonomous housing areas and also defined a peri-urban area under separate Government administration called Nairobi Extra Provincial District (NEPD). Neither the municipal boundary nor the overall disposition of the zones established within it was altered in the "Master Plan for a Colonial Capital" prepared by a team of South African Planners in 1947.

The authors of the plan argued that the city would "develop naturally out of the present land usage and particularly the present land values" (Kimani, 1972). Consequently, what were described in the plan as "Residential zones" indicated areas of European and Asian housing while "official housing" referred to housing for Africans situated next to the area designated for industrial expansion. Roads, roundabouts, public open space, neighbourhood units and a spectacular civil centre were the ingredients of a plan which seemed to offer an ideal opportunity to create a "Garden City" in East Africa.

During the next 15 years, Nairobi developed more or less along the lines of this master plan but the employment opportunities which were expected in the city as result of independence in 1962 swelled the population to 266,800 (Obudho, 1984). One of the

first tasks of the Government was to review the city's potential for expansion with the result that the 1927 boundary enclosed 30 sq. miles in 1963. Expansion of the city was supposed to take place within the built up areas where 50% remained undeveloped, but mainly on 20 sq. miles of "black cotton" sisal and ranching land to the east. In 1963, it was estimated that 50% of Nairobi's total population (70% of African population) lived in Eastlands, which at that time accounted for only 10% of the total housing area.

Today, each of the residential areas is distinguishable by its density, the quality of its environment and by the economic level of its population. The low density residential district (Upper Nairobi) encompasses the Hill, Muthaiga and sub-urban estates to the west and is approximately 1678.8 m above sea level. Most of the district consists of ridges separated by deeply cut wooded valleys and fertile red soil. This environment permits attractive gardens to be developed ensuring a pleasant environment. The housing type is one family detached houses, built of stone, with a separate servants's quarters. There is on the average one housing unit per acre each accommodating a maximum of 3 - 4 people (Halliman and Morgan, 1967 p. 108). The population comprises wealthy Europeans, heads of diplomatic missions, representatives of large foreign businesses, wealthy Indians; wealthy Africans and their housing servants. Many new housing estates and flats have been built in the area during the last five years, since it is relatively close to the city and supplied with main water. Muthaiga is still the most exclusive housing area in Nairobi, favoured by the officials of foreign embassies and international organizations.

The medium density residential district, covering Parklands-Eastleigh-Nairobi South and Central is substantially different from the previous zone. The majority of the residents here are of Asiatic origin. Housing for the Asians has been separated into more clearly defined income groups. Parklands remains at the upper end of the scale whereas many plots and houses in Eastleigh, formerly occupied by by poorer Asians, have been bought by African landlords. Nairobi South and West were built before independence for more prosperous Asian artisan living close to their work in the Industrial Area. A much higher proportion of Africans are now living in both neighbourhoods.

Despite the dominance of public commercial functions in the central area, many people, especially Asians, also still live there. The houses are multi-purpose, the ground floor serving as business and the upper and or back, serving residential purposes.

The high density residential district, Eastlands, has a predominantly African population. There are on average, thirty houses per acre, each accommodating at least 5 or more people. The development of "low-cost" municipal housing here has been extensive. In 1963, there were 12 distinct "neighbourhoods" each with its own shops, community centre, church and bars serving an average population of 8,000. From the air, Eastlands presents a patchwork of experimental housing layouts built either by the NCC or the GOK or by such large organizations. Until 1955, the housing was single, storeyed with communal services. From then until independence, the new estates began to take on the appearance of the early post-war English "New towns", two storey terraced and semi-detached houses with rendered block walls and filled double-pitched roofs, all with individual services.

It can be appreciated that the three residential districts in Nairobi, differ substantially in forms of type of people, lifestyles, density, occupations, quality type of dwelling and physical appearances. These differences have changed very little despite the 1947 and 1968 Master Plan Exercises. The residential areas cover over 84% of the city and the largest is Upper Nairobi which is best (Fig. 2)

### **Common Characteristics of Residential Differentiation in East Africa**

Although Dar es Salaam and Nairobi are found in two countries whose develop-

ment is guided by different political philosophies, their internal morphologies demonstrate several similarities. Firstly, the internal morphology of each has been influenced by practices and ideas foreign to East Africa. Of great significance have been the European and Asian cultures whose influences initiated the creation of low and medium density residential districts in both cities. The European cultural influences were instrumental in creating the low density residential districts. The Asian cultural influences were significant in creating the middle density residential districts, in both cities. Secondly, though the master plan exercises in East Africa are contemplated and approved finally by the respective Governments, they are usually funded by Donor Agencies and completed by foreign town planning consulting firms. Thirdly, the two cities demonstrate other similarities running from central area dominance to segregative residential districts. These similarities demonstrate, in a basic way, the inherent planning ideology, principles and practices of foreign capitalist planning consulting firms, as have been transplanted into the East Africa planning framework. These guiding planning principles can best be demonstrated by the kind of social and technical infrastructural content recommended for each of the three types of residential district.

The low density residential zones are designed to be very spacious. The housing type is one unit, built of stone, on each acre of land. There is also provision for a detached servants quarter. On the average, only 3-4 people are expected to occupy each acre of land in this zone. Further characteristics include paved roads, lighting on all streets, water and power supply to each home and a linkage of each home to the central city sewerage system.

The medium density residential districts, occupied predominantly by the Asian community, are characterised by medium cost flats. There are, on the average, four flats on every acre of land. Each acre accommodates, on the average 30 - 40 people. Further facilities include paved local and collector roads, power and water connections to each flat and septic tanks.

The high density residential zones are characterised by low cost multi-family occupancy houses each accommodating, on the average, eight people. Other facilities include unpaved roads, lighting on collector roads only, communal water stands and pit latrines.

Despite the fact that the present ethnic structure in the different residential districts is heterogeneous, accessibility to each district has been and is still very selective. With the exodus of the European administrative staff, after independence, the African political and administrative functionaries did not only replace them in offices, but also filtered into the hitherto European preserve residential zones. This process was relatively easy because most, if not all, housing units in this zone were Government quarters. The wealthy and most powerful allocated these quarters to themselves. Movement into the medium density residential areas wasn't as smooth. Most of the housing units in this zone were privately constructed by members of the Asian community. This community, relatively closely knit in East Africa, resisted infiltration into their zone. In Tanzania, the Government had to nationalise all buildings of a value equal or more than Tshs. 100,000.00 in 1971 in order to have access to this zone (U.R.T. Acquisition of Building Act, 1971. p. 54). The Government of Tanzania could afford to effect this policy because all land was made public property after independence. In Kenya, where private ownership of land was vehemently protected even after independence, such changes could not be effected. After losing the opportunity in 1963, effective changes in land management have remained largely elusive. The African poor, segregated against by the planning mechanism since the 1940s were and are still, not only regarded as illegal urbanites, but are also regarded as undesirable. A closed city policy of moving people about, getting them out of some localities into others, squatter demolition, non-compensation for

property destroyed by bulldozers, campaigns against the urban unemployed, stopping immigration and other forms of harassment have continued to be recommended and implemented.

The process of residential segregation initiated in the 1940's has, not only been institutionalised, but has also become spatially crystallised. Notwithstanding the fact that Kenya and Tanzania are guided by different philosophies, the internal morphology of their largest cities is strikingly similar. Political rhetoric is therefore a rather unfruitful area to look for explanations of spatial changes. The processes involved in either actual ownership and or control of the use of the resources in the two cities would be more suggestive. The rich and politically stronger have, using active support from international forces and their hold on state machine, determined the pattern of residential land use in East Africa, irrespective of differences in "official" political orientations.

### **Some Residential Land Use Planning Problems in East Africa**

The existence of three planned types of residential districts, in urban areas in East Africa, poses special planning problems. The three districts are, in fact, a meeting place of three cultures. The low density zone bears a mark of European influence: the medium density zone bears a mark of Asian culture; and the high density residential zones shows a confusion of standards. Beyond the high density residential zone exists the unplanned squatter settlements. These bear a breakdown of the base for decent living in the urban environment.

Within the low density residential zone, a process of infrastructural delapidation has been set in motion. Faced by an uncompromisingly rising cost of living, resting on a stagnant and or declining income base, the residents in this zone in Dar es Salaam have resorted to informal activities running from poultry keeping to animal husbandry. This is affecting the human and physical environment very negatively.

Population pressure in the medium density residential zone has forced the residents to undertake extensions to their flats secretly. This process is eating up all the open space in this zone.

A process of unguided city renewal in the high density residential district has been effected. Evidence of mushrooming tall buildings amidst a sea of lowlying poorly constructed buildings is abound. As a consequence streets and pavements in the high density residential zone are being sealed off and blocked.

Outside the high density residential district are developing the unplanned squatter settlements. A confusion of buildings standards and designs is characteristic in this zone. Though currently outside the proper boundaries of the cities, these settlements are expected to comprise the city land use with the outward expansion of the two cities. It is in this zone that land speculation is rife.

Between the squatter settlements and low density residential neighbourhoods are open spaces and children playing grounds. These zones have recently been invaded by private land developers in Dar es Salaam and are threatening to choke the city to death.

### **Conclusion**

A fresh look at the planning mechanisms and development control for the good and needs of a wider East African urban community is long overdue. Any attempt in this endeavour, however, must come to terms with the class basis of the determinants of town planning practice in East Africa.



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