

CHALLENGES TO URBAN HOUSING POLICIES IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS: THE CASE OF NAIROBI, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya has experienced rapid population growth since the arrival of Kenya-Uganda Railway in 1899. The central location of Nairobi on the railway route between Uganda and Malindi and its subsequent naming as the capital of Kenya in 1907, led to the settlement of the British and the Indian railway construction workers around Nairobi. The arrival of Africans from rural parts of Kenya to Nairobi looking for opportunities further led to population growth in Nairobi. Nairobi city, therefore, has rapidly urbanized with its boundary expanding from 18 km² to 25 km² and 688 km² in 1900, 1920 and 1963 respectively. Population growth has caused the demand for housing to surpass the supply thus causing a housing crisis in the city. The housing demand is particularly a problem for the middle and low-income groups who have a 95% housing deficit. The high-income group, on the other hand, has a surplus of 60%. The housing crisis in Nairobi, therefore, manifests itself in the form of many slums and informal settlements emerging in and around the city. For instance, Kibera in Nairobi is Africa's biggest slum and one of the world's biggest. At least 60% of Nairobi residents live in the slum and informal settlements which make up only 5% of the total residential land of Nairobi. This paper examines the formation process of informal settlements in Nairobi before and after independence. This research also seeks to determine the policy and legal efforts put forward to address the housing problem in Nairobi before and after independence. Finally, the research seeks to establish the social, economic and spatial impacts of the intervention measures applied to address the housing crisis in Nairobi. To understand the historical context of the informal settlements and slums formation in Nairobi, the research relies on secondary materials and historical data like academic journals, post-graduate theses, conference papers, government, and institutional research reports. The research then examines the policy and legal documents containing interventions by the government to

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address the housing crisis. The research establishes that despite efforts by the government to address the housing problem, housing problems persist with many more slums forming. This is attributed to high-interest rates, lack of citizen participation, the duplicity of policies, lack of land-tenure security among other reasons.

Keywords: Citizens participation, Demand, Housing, Interest rates, Informal settlements

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