NAIROBI

8 Nairobi

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Nairobi is in many ways an archetype of the African colonial city, having purely colonial origins, which shaped its structure and management at the time of Kenya's transition to independence. In fact, Nairobi was born of a European colonial project, the Kenya-Uganda railway line, to access newly colonised land (Blevin & Bouczo 1997). Like other African cities after independence, Nairobi experienced a rapid increase in rural-to-urban migration. This influx brought unserviced and unauthorised housing, a proliferation of small-scale trade and petty-commodity production (Lee-Smith 1989).

The city of Nairobi is situated at the southern end of the agricultural heartland of Kenya. The present administrative boundary covers an area of 696 km^2, which has expanded from 3.84 km^2 in 1910. Other official physical expansions to the city occurred in 1921, 1926 and 1964. Nairobi is still by far the smallest administrative province in Kenya, but the most important in terms of the activities and functions it performs. Besides being the capital city of Kenya, it is also the country's largest urban centre, and one of the largest in Africa. Currently, there are eight administrative divisions in Nairobi – Central, Makadara, Kasarani, Embakasi, Pumwani, Westlands, Dagoretti and Kibera (see Figure 8.1).

Urban geology of Nairobi

Pre-colonial patterns of urbanism and ruralism

During the pre-mercantile period, the caravan route which linked the East African interior to the Indian Ocean passed to the eastern side of Nairobi through the present-day Kariokor (Anyamba 2004). At this time, there was a thriving trade in ivory, beeswax and hides and skins, among other commodities. The exploitation of resources by various communities through time and space led to local trade, initially involving small-scale exchanges within and among neighbouring interior settlements. In the case of Nairobi, the resources were water and pasture. In fact, Nairobi is derived from a Maasai word, *Enkare*, meaning a place of cold waters. Because of its resources, Nairobi was used by the Kikuyu and Maasai to water and graze their livestock. As the two tribes exploited the natural resources in the region, they interacted in other ways, especially to trade grain, copper (jewellery), pottery and iron products.

Thus, Nairobi did not start as an African village (Hirst 1994). Most of the region appears to have had no permanent settlements, although the nomadic Maasai built their *manyatta* (cow-dung huts) on the higher ground from time to time (Emig & Ismail 1980). Nairobi's pre-colonial urbanism was not in the Western pattern of

towns, but as a location where the functions of a town, such as barter trade, were carried out, with few – if any – permanent structures. Therefore, on the basis of economic and sociocultural functions performed spatially and temporally, there was pre-colonial urbanism in the region.

In the colonial period, the transfer of the provincial offices from Machakos to Nairobi, and later the protectorate headquarters from Mombasa to Nairobi, contributed to the change of Nairobi from a railway town to an administrative and commercial centre within the British protectorate. It was then that urban culture began to emerge for the first time. Even so, after the initial burst, urban growth tended to be somewhat slow and the African communities remained overwhelmingly rural in orientation (Nevanlinna 1996).

Urban origins and the European colonial legacy[1]

Nairobi was first established as a transportation centre, which later grew to become an administrative centre. The site was chosen by the Kenya-Uganda Railway (KUR) constructors in June 1899 (when the railway line reached Nairobi) because it offered a suitable stopping place between Mombasa and Kisumu. There was an adequate water supply from the nearby Nairobi and Mbagathi Rivers; ample level land for railway tracts, sidings and quarters; an elevated, cooler area to the west suitable for residential purposes; an apparently deserted land offering freedom for land appropriation; and the area was free from tropical diseases (Blevin & Bouczo 1997; Boedecker 1936; Foran 1950; Owuor & Obudho 1997; Walmsley 1957).

This marked the beginning of Nairobi's growth into an administrative and transportation centre (Achola 2002; Morgan 1967). Once the railway depot was established, certain spatial patterns began to emerge – the railway station, a shopping centre, housing quarters and the Indian bazaar (Obudho & Owuor 1991). This layout basically followed the 1898 Plan for a Railway Town and the 1899 Plan for Railway Staff Quarters (Nevanlinna 1996). Nairobi was going to be a railway town for Europeans with mixed European and Asian trading posts. This design laid the foundation of the physical appearance of Nairobi as it still is today, and provided the basis for the segregation of the town's functions, as well as its segregation by class and race (Emig & Ismail 1980).

The city was first incorporated in 1900 as the township of Nairobi. This marked the birth of local government in the town (Tiwari 1981). By this time, the city had already become a large, flourishing area with settlements consisting mainly of the KUR buildings, separate residential areas for Europeans and Indians, and a small African settlement in Eastlands (Owuor & Obudho 1997). In 1905, Nairobi was confirmed as the capital of the country (Nairobi Urban Study Group 1973) with seven distinct zones: the railway centre, Indian bazaar, European business and administrative centre, railway quarters, dhobi or washerman's quarters, European residential suburbs and the military barracks outside the town (Tiwari 1981). The zoning of the city was a result of the Plan for a Settler Capital, which further enhanced segregation, enclaves and spatial limits to the advantage of European settlers.

By 1906, the original KUR depot and camp had grown to an urban centre of 11 000 people with particular land-use zones, but no spatial planning. After the completion of the KUR and the influx of more non-African settlers, the city expanded rapidly, both in size and population (Odada & Otieno 1990). By 1909, much of the internal structure of Nairobi, especially the road network in the central business district (CBD), was already established (Obudho & Owuor 1991). In 1919, a municipal council with corporate rights was appointed, thus making Nairobi a municipality (Lee-Smith 1989).

In these early years, the growth of the town had been controlled only by economic forces, with no coordination of development other than by the layout of a gridiron street pattern in the CBD. In an attempt to order the situation, a town-planning consultant was appointed in 1926 to make recommendations on zoning arrangements (Nairobi Urban Study Group 1973). However, little was done to curb land speculation, and development proceeded in an uncontrolled manner. Then, in 1928, the powers and responsibilities of the Municipal Council of Nairobi were considerably extended by a new municipal ordinance.

The first comprehensive plan of the city (the Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial City) was commissioned in 1948, but was never adopted fully. The plan laid down guidelines for Nairobi's future development, earmarked land for major uses and made important proposals for extensions to the road network. Using the concept of functionalism, the plan created a modern national city to cater for industrial expansion and the growing numbers of African wage earners working in the industries. The plan also used the garden-city concept to divide residential areas into neighbourhood units.

Like others before, this plan was to some extent responsible for the present layout of the built-up area of Nairobi. In March 1950, Nairobi became a city by the Royal Charter of Incorporation, but Nairobi was not free from rapid-urbanisation problems, which have persisted to date. Some of the earliest documented urbanisation problems in Nairobi included transport (Hake 1977), housing (Blevin & Bouczo 1997; Obudho 1987), drainage and sanitation (Tiwari 1981), water and sewerage (Nairobi City Council 1974), overcrowding, poor sanitation and unhealthy living conditions (Achola 2002).

Nairobi's districts still demonstrate the racial segregation that was created in the early stages of the city's development. Europeans resided to the north and west of the railway. These areas were located at higher altitude with richer, volcanic red soils. Africans and Indians were mostly confined to the plains east and south of the railway line where non-porous black cotton soils prevail. These areas were unhealthy as a consequence of frequent flooding, high incidence of malaria and neglect of municipal services, such as refuse and sewage collection (Achola 2002). This resulted in a city organised as a social patchwork with very high territorial segregation (Rodriguez-Torres 1998).

Urban planning efforts of the independent Kenya

At the time of Kenya's independence in 1963, the new nation inherited the existing resources and infrastructure, as well as certain challenges. In Nairobi, one of the challenges demanding immediate action was the city's explosive growth. Just before and immediately after independence, there was a large influx of the African population into the city following the relaxation of the colonial rule of restricting Africans' access to the city. Between 1962 and 1969, the population of Nairobi increased at a very high rate (12.2%), further complicating the problems and challenges of the city (Agwanda et al. 2004).

Faced with a series of sectoral pressures in 1967, a number of ad hoc study groups were set up to deal with the specific consequences of Nairobi's population growth. There was a need for planning, housing, transport, business and integration of urban residents into one developing city, as opposed to the segregated colonial city. As a result of these sectoral pressures, the Nairobi Urban Study Group was formed in 1973 to develop the 1973 Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy to guide the growth and development of the city to the year 2000 (Nairobi Urban Study Group 1973). However, very little was achieved in terms of implementing the recommendations given by the Nairobi Urban Study Group. The 1973 Nairobi Metropolitan Growth Strategy recommended, among others, decentralisation and development of alternative service centres; modification, upgrading and extension of the road network; formulation of realistic housing programmes; and extension of the city boundary to the west and north-east as and when required, as well as encouraging the growth of satellite towns surrounding the city, that is, Thika, Athi River and Machakos.

The second notable urban effort of the independent state was the 1984–1988 Nairobi City Commission Development Plan, which outlined the development needs of all sectors: housing, health and environment, sewerage, social services, transport and public works, workforce development and financial management (Nairobi City Commission 1985). Again, nothing much was achieved as regards the plan's implementation.

In 1993, the Nairobi City Council organised a stakeholders' open forum (called the Nairobi City Convention), comprising stakeholders, professionals and ordinary citizens, to map out strategies and practical solutions for a better Nairobi, an initiative known as 'The Nairobi We Want'. The recommendations of this convention were broadly organised around four areas: issues dealing with the use of space and the physical environment; problems pertaining to the provision of services; issues relating to the social sector; and administrative, legal and political issues (Karuga 1993). Again, many of these ideas were not taken into account in the planning of the city.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, most local authorities in Kenya, including Nairobi, were faced with increasing unresolved debts, reliance on the central government for capital investments, poor leadership and economic governance and poor

service delivery. To address these problems, the Kenya Local Government Reform Programme embarked on policy and legal changes aimed at decentralisation and local empowerment. The Local Authorities Transfer Fund, introduced in 1999/2000 through an act of the Kenyan parliament, is a grant from the central government to equip local authorities with means to provide their citizens with basic services. The key objectives of the Local Authorities Transfer Fund are, firstly, to enable local authorities to improve and extend service delivery; secondly, resolve municipal debts; and, thirdly, improve local revenue mobilisation, accountability and financial management (Owuor et al. 2006). Within the same reform framework, in 2001, the government introduced the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan, which is a participatory planning and budgeting tool for identifying priority needs in the local authorities.

As the city grows in size and population, the provision of urban services has not been, and will not be, able to keep pace with the demand, despite the numerous policies, plans and strategies that have been adopted to date. Faced with the problems of poor services – or lack of services in some areas – city residents have resorted to self-help efforts and community-led management initiatives as a means of accessing such services as sanitation, water supply, refuse collection and security in their neighbourhoods. Participation and partnerships of all kinds have emerged to improve the urban environment – more often than not leading to new forms of urban governance. Nairobi City Council is, therefore, encouraging public-private partnerships in urban management and provision of urban services to its residents. Examples of such public-private partnership initiatives in Nairobi include the Nairobi Central Business District Association, neighbourhood associations and community policing.

Most recently, in 2008, the (coalition) government of Kenya created a Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development charged with the development issues of the Nairobi Metropolitan Region, and aiming at area-wide governance interventions. Specifically, this ministry is in charge of roads, bus and rail infrastructure; creating an efficient transport system; replacing slums with affordable low-cost and rental housing; enforcing planning and zoning regulations; facilitating efficient water supply and waste management infrastructures; and promoting, developing and investing in adequate public utilities, public services and infrastructure.

Vision for a world-class metropolis: Nairobi Metro 2030

Responding to urban-growth projections and in an attempt to address the current and future challenges of the Nairobi Metropolitan Region (NMR), the government of Kenya is preparing an ambitious Nairobi Metro 2030 vision to spatially redefine the NMR and create a world-class city region envisaged to generate sustainable wealth and quality of life for its residents, investors and visitors.[2] The plan's elaboration and implementation fall under the responsibilities of the newly established Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development. The vision of the NMR is to create the best-managed metropolis in Africa, providing a dynamic, internationally competitive

and inclusive economy supported by world-class infrastructure and a skilled labour force. Based on the core values of innovation, enterprise, sustainability, co-responsibility, self-help and excellence, the strategy is to optimise the role of the NMR in national development by building on existing strengths, including Nairobi's hub function in air transportation, the large number of regional and international bodies already present and its educational and research institutions. Nairobi Metro 2030 seeks to brand and promote Nairobi as East Africa's key gateway city by creating a framework for comprehensively addressing a broad range of policy areas, including the economy, trunk and social infrastructures, transportation, slums and housing, safety and security, and financing. The proposed NMR covers the 3 000 km^2 that depend on Nairobi's regional core functions for employment and social facilities. Planning will initially involve a 40-km radius, despite Nairobi's functional outreach covering 100 km or more. Apart from the Nairobi municipality itself, the NMR vision embraces 14 other adjacent independent local authorities.

Urban manifestations of nationalism in the built environment

Contemporary Nairobi contains fragments of colonial Nairobi. In Nairobi, the expression of nationalism in the built environment has mostly been in the form of naming and renaming important buildings, popular streets, roads and parks, and replacing English colonial names with names of nationalists, freedom fighters and words that signify principles of nationalism.

Buildings as manifestations of nationalism

Several of the city's landmark buildings have become manifestations of nationalism. Examples are the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) (see Figure 8.2), the parliament building, the law courts, Nyayo House and Harambee House, among others. For example, the KICC became a landmark of the city after independence, not only because of its location and easily identifiable form, but because it was perceived as an expression of the new international role of Nairobi and Kenya, the meeting point of people from all over the world with common global, regional and national concerns.

Monuments as manifestations of nationalism

Public monuments have been used to shape the symbolic landscape of Nairobi since colonial times. With the attainment of independence, the removal of some of the colonial monuments from the landscape of the city marked a shift in the nature of Nairobi's iconography. Postcolonial monuments differ greatly in form from those erected during the colonial period and represent a transformation of Nairobi's symbolic space. The city is now dotted with public monuments that celebrate the achievement of independence and the Kenyan nation state.

Public monuments are commonly erected in squares, gardens and recreational parks in and around the city. The monument to Kenya's first president (Mzee Jomo

Kenyatta) (see Figure 8.3) is strategically located in the KICC compound. Uhuru Monument, signifying self-governance and nationalism, stands in Uhuru Gardens on Langata Road. The Nyayo Monument, celebrating several years of President Moi's rule, is located in Uhuru Park in the city centre. The Dedan Kimathi Monument, which was erected in 2007 in honour of his contribution as a freedom fighter, is located in a street named after him – Kimathi Street.

Street and place names as manifestations of nationalism

As a sign of nationalism, many streets and places in Nairobi were renamed after independence. The colonial names were replaced with Kiswahili names or the names of Kenyan nationals who fought for independence (see Table 8.1).

Some streets have also been named or renamed after admired nationalists of neighbouring countries: Nyerere Road (after President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania) and Haile Selassie Avenue (after Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia). In addition, several residential estates in the city, especially those in Eastlands, where the majority of Africans lived during the colonial period (now occupied by the middle-to-low income groups), have acquired symbolic names, most of them expressing nationalism (see Table 8.2).

Table 8.1 Colonial and nationalistic place and street names

Colonial name	Nationalistic name
Dalemere Avenue	Kenyatta[1] Avenue
Donholm Road	Jogoo[2] Road
King George's Hospital	Kenyatta National Hospital
Princess Elizabeth Highway	Uhuru[3] Highway
Victoria Street	Tom Mboya[4] Street
Government Road	Moi[4] Avenue
Government House	Jogoo House
Louis Leakey Memorial Museum	National Museums of Kenya
Royal Technical College	University of Nairobi

Notes: 1 The first president of the Republic of Kenya
      2 A Kiswahili word for cockerel, an image on the then ruling party's (KANU) flag
      3 A Kiswahili word for independence
      4 Notable personalities who fought for independence

Table 8.2 Meanings of some residential estate names in Nairobi

Estate name	Meaning
Umoja Estate	A Kiswahili word for unity
Buru Buru Estate	A Kiswahili connotation for bullets, used by the colonialists against freedom fighters
Harambee Estate	A Kiswahili word for 'pulling together' or 'working together' to build the nation
Kimathi Estate	Named after Dedan Kimathi, a freedom fighter
Madaraka	A Kiswahili word for freedom, self-rule or independence

Influence of international donors on the urban landscape

The contribution of international donors to the urban landscape of Nairobi is evident in housing and infrastructural development. Donors involved in development aid and cooperation programmes in the 1960s and 1970s saw Nairobi as an urban conglomeration in a developing country that needed intervention, financial resources and expertise (Nevanlinna 1996). For example, the period after independence witnessed a massive shortage of housing due to the rapid influx of African people into the city. The Kenyan government, the National Housing Corporation, Nairobi City Council and funding organisations, such as the Housing Finance Corporation of Kenya, with financial support from development partners and donors, such as the Commonwealth Development Corporation, the United States Agency for International Development, the World Bank and the International Development Agency, devised development funding plans whereby families with middle-range incomes could gain ownership of a house (Ochieng 2007).

Within this framework, a large number of housing schemes were built in Nairobi, among them Kibera, Umoja, Buru Buru, Dandora and Kayole – all specially planned and complete with related infrastructural facilities (Nevanlinna 1996). Kibera, currently one of the largest informal settlements in Africa, has also witnessed a number of interventions in terms of slum-upgrading programmes from UN-HABITAT and national and international NGOs. In another example, the Chinese government is currently involved in resurfacing and redesigning the road linking Jomo Kenyatta International Airport and the UN Environment Programme headquarters.

The impact of globalisation

Cities are traditionally engines of social modernisation and economic growth, and at the same time the theatres in which globalisation stages its scenarios. Whereas some countries and their cities are incorporated into the global world, sometimes at huge social cost, others are not. For Africa, globalisation has fuelled the already unprecedented urban growth phenomenon and increased the challenges that go with it.

As in other African cities (UN-HABITAT 2005), globalisation has created significant economic, social, political, spatial and demographic stresses in Nairobi. On the economic front, advances in communication and information technologies, improved transport and deregulation of capital markets (but not labour markets) have enabled private investors to take advantage of national differences in tax rates, labour costs and environmental restrictions to maximise financial returns by moving development, production and marketing functions to the most profitable locations. It has also been observed that globalisation reinforces urban primacy, thereby increasing the scale of urban growth.

The global recession and economic reforms (under structural adjustment programmes) in the last two decades have affected the city of Nairobi in several ways.

Standards of living have deteriorated and urban poverty appears to be increasing as life in the city has become more expensive. Unemployment in the formal sector has risen and many residents have turned to self-employment or informal employment, while real wages have not kept up with price increases.

Further consequences of globalisation occur through spatial segregation and unequal access to urban services, infrastructure and housing. At the societal level, such inequality has not only affected political and social stability, but also productivity and poverty levels. Although segregation dates from the colonial period, globalisation has enhanced the segregation and polarisation of Nairobi. Segregation is most evident in the gated communities of the middle- and higher-income neighbourhoods of Nairobi. The gap between rich and poor has continued to increase, and increased incomes (for the rich) have led to changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns for a minority of city dwellers.

The rich have been the beneficiaries of facilities such as the malls located in strategic, high-income areas of the city. Examples of such malls are Village Market, Yaya Centre, Nakumat Junction, Nakumat Westgate and Sarit Centre, among others. These shopping complexes stock competitively priced and relatively expensive goods, as well as cheap imports from multinational and transnational suppliers, at the expense of local products. Therefore, the local urban economy of Nairobi suffers from the effects of liberalisation and globalisation.

In the political realm, the most significant impact of globalisation on Nairobi has been the weakening of national and local public institutions relative to external private economic power. The privatisation of public services in many cities is one outcome of this process, in which investors pick the more profitable services, further eroding urban revenue which must cope with the poorly performing services.

At the metropolitan level, important changes can also be seen. Nairobi has expanded well beyond its boundaries. These changes have institutional and economic dimensions. One of the most visible aspects of recent metropolitan development has been the city's spatial expansion, spilling over into adjacent jurisdictions and incorporating them into the larger municipality of the central city. Decentralisation of jobs in the manufacturing sector is an important part of this process, in many places leading to polycentric forms, with economic activities clustered around transport nodes.

In the institutional realm, spatial expansion has been accompanied by a proliferation of administrative entities with responsibilities for different aspects of metropolitan government, including a metropolitan planning authority and the newly created Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development.

Structure of the housing delivery system

According to Ochieng (2007), there are several housing delivery systems which have been used or are in use in Nairobi. These include provision of housing by the employer, national government or the city council; tenant-purchase, site and service

schemes and self-help housing; private tenement housing; and conventional and non-conventional housing delivery systems. Due to the lack of affordable housing, especially for the populous urban poor, non-conventional housing is becoming an important housing delivery system in Nairobi. Acknowledging this, the government recently started supporting this type of housing delivery system.

The government increasingly supports housing delivery by encouraging the creation of relevant housing institutions, developing relevant by-laws and regulations and putting in place an appropriate framework for housing delivery. After more than 40 years without such a framework, the government has recently formulated one. Among other things, it is concerned with nurturing an environment that would prompt potential investors to engage in housing delivery. This includes facilitating the private sector by enacting relevant acts of parliament on housing and finance to promote housing development for both the low- and middle-income populations.

In other words, the government has changed its role to that of an enabler, facilitator and catalyst in the housing delivery system (Ochieng 2007). Furthermore, the government has embarked on upgrading slums and urban informal settlements under the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP), currently in its first phase in the Kibera slum of Nairobi.

Provision of housing by the employer, government and Nairobi City Council

Urbanisation policy during the colonial period was racially discriminatory, restrictive and control-oriented. The Employment Ordinance Act required Africans to have passes and salaried employment before they could be permitted to reside in the city. This policy not only discouraged the stabilisation of the African migrant labour force in the city, but also discriminated against African men who wished to bring their wives and children to live with them in the city (Macoloo 1998). Employers were required to provide suitable housing for their employees at all times and where housing was not provided, a housing allowance was to be given in lieu. Employers provided accommodation suitable only for single men – which came to be popularly known as bachelors' quarters.

Despite the growing demand for housing, the colonial administration was intolerant of attempts by Africans to provide shelter for themselves, and residential structures built from temporary materials were violently demolished. To house the residents of the demolished structures and to maintain control and surveillance over the African urban population, the colonial administration constructed the first public housing for Africans in Nairobi in 1939 at Shauri Moyo (Macoloo 1998). This was to be the start of the exclusively African residential areas. Other housing schemes that followed during this period were Ziwani (1940), Bondeni (1942), Kaloleni (1945), Bahati (1950), Gorofani (1952), Makadara (1954), Mbotela and Maringo (1955), Jerusalem (1958) and Jericho Lumunba (1962). These were planned in a neighbourhood concept, with common sanitary facilities, shops, schools, hospitals, social halls and open spaces. All of these residential areas are now part of Nairobi City Council.

With Kenya's independence in 1963, restrictive colonial policies were relaxed, resulting in a rapid influx of people into Nairobi. This situation aggravated the housing problem, especially in Nairobi, in terms of supply and demand, resulting in overcrowding and the proliferation of informal settlements. The government and major employers in Nairobi (e.g. Kenya Railways, Kenya Post and Telecommunications and the University of Nairobi) continued to provide housing for their employees. However, this could not be sustained and, therefore, these employers were forced to provide allowances in lieu of houses that they could not provide. On the other hand, Nairobi City Council built a few more estates for its citizens where subsidised rents were charged. This method of housing delivery was not sustainable and was subsequently scrapped. The last city council rental houses were built in 1978.

Tenant-purchase and site and service schemes

During the 1970s, the government changed the housing delivery strategy and adopted tenant-purchased and site and service schemes for housing provision, especially for the low-income groups. However, this delivery system could not satisfy the demand, as the resources invested were inadequate. Furthermore, the low-income target group was not able to access this type of housing. With time, these houses were taken over by the middle-income group. Consequently, the low-income groups were pushed out of the formal system into the informal realm. Examples of site and service schemes are the Dandora and Ayany estates.

Private tenement housing

Houses for rent are delivered largely by private developers (individuals or companies). Depending on economic ability, one has a choice of rental units ranging from single rooms with shared facilities to three-bedroom self-contained units. In Nairobi, private tenancy is common in the middle- and low-income neighbourhoods, where the large majority of citizens reside. Most of these rental units are in high-rise flats to maximise both land space and profits for the landlords. Even those that started as low-rise buildings have been transformed into high-rise flats (Anyamba 2004).

Although private tenement housing provides a substantial portion of reasonably affordable housing stock to poor city residents, some of the units are clearly substandard, in breach of city housing by-laws and regulations, ageing, congested, poorly lit and ventilated, lacking in basic services – and yet the rents are relatively high. Densification is the order of the day, and demand has taken control of the process, with no space left to accommodate and facilitate necessary development and services (Ochieng 2007). Examples of residential estates in Nairobi where this housing delivery system is common include Tena, Zimmermann, Mathare North and Umoja I Innercore. Although housing delivery by the private sector has helped improve the housing supply for both the poor and the middle-income groups, it needs regulation and standards.

Conventional housing delivery system

After independence, a number of financial housing institutions were licensed by the government under the Building Societies Act to facilitate the purchase and/or construction of houses. Except for the East African Building Society and Housing Finance of Kenya, none of these still exist. Some collapsed, whereas others, such as the Equity Building Society and the Family Finance Building Society, have since become established and allowed to trade as banks. Financial institutions (both private and public) are also increasingly playing an important role in facilitating individual house ownership for those who are willing. Commercial banks, such as Barclays Bank of Kenya, Kenya Commercial Bank, Stanbic Bank and Standard Chartered Bank, have since embarked on housing mortgage schemes for interested borrowers, mainly targeting the middle- and upper-income groups. These financial institutions offer various mortgage conditions to their customers, most of which cannot be met by poor residents (Ochieng 2007).

Non-conventional housing delivery system

A number of organisations, such as the National Cooperative Housing Union, the National Christian Council of Kenya and Pamoja Trust, are involved in housing delivery especially for socio-economically disadvantaged groups, whether they work in formal or informal employment. To achieve their aim, these non-profit organisations undertake negotiations on behalf of their clients with the relevant authorities for lending conditions that favour housing. They also source funding from various categories of national and international donors, as well as assisting with land acquisition and technical support. Through such efforts, affordable, low-income housing has been delivered to urban groups. Such non-conventional housing delivery is mainly concentrated in the slum and informal-settlement areas (Ochieng 2007).

Slums/informal settlements

Many people in Nairobi have no access to cheap conventional housing. The lack of access to affordable housing has driven the majority of low- to very-low-income earners to seek rentals in the Nairobi slums. While the public and formal sectors cannot build enough houses to cater for the need arising from an increasing urban population, the private sector has for a long period mainly targeted the middle and upper classes. Therefore, the only opportunity for the majority of the low- to very-low-income population has been the unregulated and unplanned slum settlements, where rents are relatively affordable (Agwanda et al. 2004).

Although dwellings in the slum settlements are supposedly cheaper, during the past few years, Nairobi has witnessed demonstrations by slum dwellers who maintain that the rents currently charged are still high, given the conditions they are living in, and that they are being exploited by wealthy and well-connected landlords and landowners. This has mainly occurred in Kibera, Kariobangi and Mathare, the main slum locations in Nairobi (Agwanda et al. 2004). Based on UN-HABITAT's shelter

deprivation factors, 38.5% of the households in Nairobi can be considered slum households. Out of these slum households, 26.9% experience at least one shelter deprivation.[3] Although official figures are lacking, it is estimated that over 60% of Nairobi's population live in slum settlements (UN-HABITAT 2006).

Upgrading initiatives, such as KENSUP and Kenya Slum Upgrading and Low-cost Housing Infrastructure Trust Fund (KENSUF), are currently taking place in Nairobi. KENSUP (partly funded by UN-HABITAT) has started with Kibera in Nairobi. The objective is to improve the overall livelihood of the people living and working in slums through targeted interventions to address shelter, infrastructure services, land tenure, employment issues and the impact of HIV/AIDS in these settlements. KENSUF is a central depository of all mobilised financial resources for slum upgrading, and draws its funds from donors, community-based organisations, the private sector and government budgetary allocations. The fund is meant to pool resources from all potential donors to an amount sufficient to carry out significant slum-upgrading activities.

Nairobi in the national fabric

Ethnic history, composition and socio-economic indicators

The citizens of early Nairobi came from different parts of the world. During the colonial period, Nairobi consisted mainly of Europeans (colonial administrative officers, railway workers, etc.) and Asians (railway workers, masons, leather workers, tailors, dukawalas [shop owners], etc.). At that time, the few Africans were mainly labourers, domestic servants or shop assistants (Nevanlinna 1996). In 1962, just before independence, the African population had increased to 59% of the total Nairobi population. Asians formed 33% and Europeans 8% of the population.

Owing to rural-to-urban migration after independence, in 1970, the European population dropped to 4%, the Asian population to 14% and the African population increased to 83%.[4] The African population is currently made up of a mix of Kenyan ethnic groups. Most immigrants in Nairobi come from the Central, Nyanza and Eastern Provinces of Kenya. Wars in the neighbouring countries of Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi also increased the population of these country's citizens in the city.

Nairobi is a cosmopolitan city, with foreigners working in various international organisations located in the city. It is composed of Europeans, Asians, Somalis and Nubians, who are citizens of Kenya; citizens of various African countries; and Kenyans from all parts of the country. Despite this cosmopolitan nature, it is interesting to find residential neighbourhoods dominated by certain ethnic groups, especially in the low-income areas. For example, Kibera and Kariobangi are dominated by Luos; Kawangware and Kangemi by Luhyas; Embakasi, Ongata Rongai, Ngong and Ruai by Kisiis; Mathare, Githurai and Zimmerman by Kikuyus; and Eastleigh by Somalis.

Socio-economically, Nairobi employs 25% of the country's workforce and 43% of the country's urban workers, and generates more than 45% of national GDP (UN-HABITAT 2006). However, socio-economic conditions are deteriorating

quickly, especially in the last two and a half decades. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line increased dramatically, from 26% in 1992 to 50% in 1997. The dependency ratio[5] is 71.3% for the poor, 48.1% for the non-poor and 52.75% in Nairobi as a whole. The total fertility rate is 3.5% for the poor, 2.6% for the non-poor and 2.8% for Nairobi as a whole (Kenya 2008).

Dynamics of population growth and its influence on East Africa[6]

At the time of Kenya's first population census in 1948, there were 17 urban centres with an aggregate population of 285 000 (see Table 8.3). The urban population was proportionately small (5.2% of the total), but disproportionately concentrated in Nairobi and Mombasa (41.2% and 32.2% of the total urban population, respectively), with the majority of the urban dwellers being non-Africans. By 1962, the number of urban centres had doubled to 34 and the urban population had increased to 671 000, with Nairobi accounting for 33.8% of this population. Whereas the overall urban growth rate stood at 6.3% per year, Nairobi's growth rate was 4.6%.

The growth in the number of urban centres and their population accelerated after independence, when Africans were allowed to migrate to the urban areas without legal and administrative restrictions. The urban population rose to 1 million in 1969, growing at the rate of 7.1% per annum. This represented 9.9% of the total population, with Nairobi and Mombasa accounting for 67% of the total urban population (Nairobi, 47%; Mombasa, 20%). This period also saw Nairobi recording its highest growth rate of 12.2%.

By 1979, the overall level of urbanisation had risen to 15.1%, with 91 urban centres and an urban population of 2.3 million. Nairobi and Mombasa accounted for 51% of the total urban population (Nairobi, 35.7%; Mombasa, 15.3%). Although the urban population increased from 2.3 million in 1979 to 3.8 million in 1989, the growth rate was only 5.2%, compared with 7.7% in the previous decade. With 139 urban centres, the 1989 population results indicated that 18% of the population resided in the urban areas. Nairobi and Mombasa accounted for 46% of the total urban population (34.1% and 11.9%, respectively). In 1999, about 20% of the population

Table 8.3 Urbanisation trends in Kenya and Nairobi (1948–1999)

Year	Kenya population (000s)	No. of urban centres	Urban population (000s)	Urban population (%)	Urban growth rate (%)	Nairobi population (000s)	Nairobi growth rate (%)	Nairobi as % of total urban population
1948	5 406	17	285	5.2	–	119	–	41.7
1962	8 636	34	671	7.8	6.3	227	4.6	33.8
1969	10 943	47	1 076	9.9	7.1	506	12.2	47.0
1979	15 334	91	2 314	15.1	7.7	828	4.9	35.7
1989	21 444	139	3 864	18.0	5.2	1 325	4.7	34.1
1999	28 159	179	5 429	19.3	3.4	2 083	4.5	38.4

Source: Compiled from the 1948, 1962, 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1999 Kenya population census reports

lived in urban areas, of which more than half were in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru and Kisumu. The urban growth rate decreased further to 3.4%, but the number of urban centres increased to 179.

As a consequence, the urban primacy index[7] showed an upward trend between 1979 and 1999, indicating that most of the Kenyan urban population live in Nairobi. In other words, Nairobi continues to be a major urban centre for socio-economic and political activities in Kenya. Whereas, in the past, rural-to-urban migration was the major contributor to the urban growth of Nairobi, natural growth and *in situ* urbanisation (the absorption of adjacent settlements through the spatial growth of the city) are increasingly becoming important factors.

Nairobi plays an important role in the global, regional, national and local economy. It is the most populous and prominent city in East Africa. It is the home and headquarters to many regional and international companies and organisations. It is an established regional hub for transport, communications, business, trade, commerce, tourism and conferences. Nairobi's central location has also been a very significant factor in the growth of agriculture and the marketing of produce, as well as in highly concentrated manufacturing and agribusiness industries.

Character of national state and city governance[8]

Kenya became a multi-party democratic state in 1992, when the constitution was repealed to allow for many political parties. Kenya has an elected president who is both the head of state and head of government. However, following the disputed December 2007 presidential election results, post-election violence and the subsequent formation of a coalition government, the position of prime minister (with power and authority to coordinate and supervise government business) was created. Executive power is exercised by the government, while the legislative power is vested in both the government and the National Assembly, which comprises elected and nominated members of parliament. The judiciary is (supposedly) independent of the executive and the legislature.

Kenya has experienced three political regimes. From independence to 1978, Kenya was ruled by the founding father of the nation, Jomo Kenyatta, under one political party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU). The second president, Daniel arap Moi, ruled from 1978 to 2002 and continued KANU's one-party rule until 1992, when the constitution was repealed to allow for a multi-party system. In 2002, President Moi peacefully relinquished power to the current regime of President Mwai Kibaki of the NARC (which stands for the United Democratic Party of Kenya). Under President Kibaki, the government has laid down ambitious socio-economic development reforms that have had an impact on Nairobi – both directly and indirectly. In fact, Nairobi is slowly regaining its lost glory of the city under the sun.

The president, together with members of parliament and councillors, are elected every five years by the citizens of Kenya. Nairobi has eight electoral constituencies: Makadara, Kamukunji, Starehe, Langata, Dagoretti, Westlands, Kasarani and Embakasi. These constituencies are represented in the National Assembly by their

elected members of parliament, currently from two dominant political parties: the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Orange Democratic Party (ODM). Each constituency is further subdivided into electoral wards, represented by an elected councillor. A large majority of the councillors in Nairobi come from the two dominant parties, PNU and ODM.

Nairobi is governed by Nairobi City Council, which, like all other local authorities in Kenya, is composed of councillors (elected and nominated), chief officers and technical and support staff. The councillors are the policy-makers, whereas the executive arm, headed by the town clerk, oversees the operations of the council. The political leaders of the city or municipal council are the mayor and his or her deputy,[9] who are elected through a secret ballot by the councillors.

Like all other local authorities in Kenya, Nairobi City Council is governed in its operations by a variety of legal statutes and administrative decrees, mainly from the Ministry of Local Government. The Local Government Act, Chapter 265 of the Laws of Kenya, is the main legal statute that governs the operations of local authorities, including Nairobi City Council. In essence, Nairobi City Council is supervised by the central government through the Ministry of Local Government.

In executing its mandate, Nairobi City Council is divided into several operational departments, supervised by related standing committees made up of councillors. The city council provides a wide range of services through the various departments. In this role, the city council's efforts are augmented by a number of government ministries and agencies, private-sector organisations and multi-stakeholder partnerships. The partnerships involved in addressing urban problems, especially those concerning service delivery and urban management, have included the private and public sectors, civil society, business persons, city residents and donors.

The Local Government Act gives central government the power to oversee the running of local authorities in Kenya. For example, the minister must approve the sources of revenue of various local authorities, as well as any measures they take to access basic services. It can also dissolve a council and appoint a new commission if such a decision is called for. Even though the authorities are clamouring for more autonomy, they are not in a position to be completely independent of the ministry, since municipalities do not have the political, financial or human resources needed for proper provision and management of their services (Owuor et al. 2006).

For proper coordination of services to urban residents and implementation of national policies, local authorities work closely with relevant ministries and government departments. This is mainly in the areas of health, education, road construction, housing, physical planning and water. In other words, for every newly implemented project, local authorities must refer to the Ministry of Local Government and the relevant government technical ministries and departments. More recently, the newly created Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development is supposed to be coordinating its activities with the Ministry of Local Government and Nairobi City Council (Owuor et al. 2006). This calls for harmonisation of policy formulation and implementation.

The main national issue

Kenya was left with deep scars from the violence that erupted in the aftermath of the disputed presidential election of December 2007. In just a matter of weeks, Kenya was transformed from one of Africa's most stable democracies into chaos. More than a thousand people died in the post-election violence and over a quarter of a million people were forced to flee their homes due to the unprecedented levels of violence. A coalition government was formed, but national reconciliation and reconstruction is yet to be fully achieved.

The post-election violence brought into focus a number of national issues to be addressed, some of them historical in nature. Currently, these national issues include a constitutional review to address issues of equity, devolution of power and enhancement of the rule of law; land reforms; resettlement of internally displaced persons; forging national unity and cohesion, especially within the government of national unity; justice and the culture of impunity; and generally implementing the recommendations made by the various committees and commissions investigating post-election violence and related issues.

Sites of power and counter-power

Manifestations of power

At the governmental level, manifestation of power is situated in State House, Harambee House, Parliament Building and the Law Court. Except for State House, all are located within the CBD of Nairobi. State House is the official residence of the president, and often serves as an office for government meetings and business. Harambee House is the Office of the President. Although the three presidents of Kenya have rarely used it, it houses a number of governmental ministries and departments within the Office of the President. Parliament Building is where legislative business is conducted on behalf of the Kenyan constituents, Nairobi included, while the Law Court houses the judiciary. At the local level, Nairobi is governed from the City Hall, which is located within the CBD. The City Hall houses all the departments of Nairobi City Council. Political party headquarters are also situated in various parts of the city.

Channels of mobilisation and protests

Channels of mobilisation and protests in Nairobi are as varied as the problems they are supposed to solve and the types of groups involved. Political parties, NGOs, community-based organisations, religious organisations, civil society, trade unions, formal and informal organisations, neighbourhood (or estate) associations and educational institutions (tertiary colleges and universities) have been channels of mobilisation and protests in Nairobi since independence.

Locations of marches, rallies, riots and protests

Marches, rallies, riots and protests are not a new phenomenon in Nairobi. Rallies and protests occurred during the agitation for independence. At that time, the well-known Kamukunji[10] grounds in the eastern part of the city provided an open space for gathering, expression and agitation. Kamukunji grounds is rich in historical significance, as it is the site of Kenya's political mass actions. For example, the first multi-party mass rally, which degenerated into riots between pro-reform citizens and the police, was held there on 7 July 1990. This date is commemorated yearly as *saba saba*[11] day.

After the introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya, Uhuru Park became another popular place for political rallies owing to its central location. Major declarations affecting the political landscape in the country have taken place in this park. Riots and protests also occur in the streets of Nairobi, in neighbourhoods and universities.

Immediately after the December 2007 disputed presidential election results were announced,[12] protests, riots and violence erupted not only in Nairobi, but also in many other parts of the country. There were street protests, blocking of roads, burning of property, stoning of vehicles, looting, ethnic victimisation, rape and even killing. Furthermore, people were displaced from their homes. In Nairobi, the riots, protests and violence took place on the major streets and roads and in low-income neighbourhoods, especially Kibera, Mathare and Dandora. For a very long time, Uhuru Park was permanently guarded by the police to prevent a major protest which had been planned to take place there. In some instances, residents of Kibera, Mathare and Dandora were barred from going to the city centre for fear of further riots and violence.

The effect of the post-election protests, riots and violence was not only felt at the city level, but also nationally and regionally. At the city level, many residents were displaced from their homes due to ethnic tension. Most of the displaced persons took refuge in Jamuhri Park (the showground) and Huruma Chief's Camp, where they stayed for several months, relying on food donations and other forms of help from the Red Cross Society of Kenya and well-wishers. Others retreated to their rural homes.

In the low-income neighbourhoods, several properties were destroyed. There was looting in the surrounding areas and business premises were burnt. For example, Toi, a popular informal market in Kibera, was burnt to ashes. Surprisingly, the CBD was relatively calm, except for businesses being closed. Business came to a standstill, the school calendar was disrupted, livelihoods were lost and the supply of food and other commodities was cut, leading to shortages and high prices. The same situation was experienced at the national level in farming, tourism, trade and commerce, noticeably affecting the economy. For a couple of weeks, neighbouring landlocked countries like Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi were cut off from their normal supplies via road and rail because the roads were blocked by protesters, and part of the Kenya-Uganda railway line was uprooted.

Conclusion

Nairobi has purely colonial origins that have shaped its structure and management to date. Despite city planning and management efforts, Nairobi's population will continue to grow, bringing inherent challenges. Notably, service delivery has been and continues to be a major concern in Nairobi. As much as this situation arises from the inability of the local government and authority to cope with the increasing urban population, it is at the same time related to the perennial problem of mismanagement of city affairs by those entrusted with the responsibility. It is an unhidden fact that the demand for urban services is far higher than the available supply. Faced with the problems of poor services, or lack of them in some areas, city residents have resorted to self-help efforts as a means of accessing such services as sanitation, water supply, refuse collection and security in their neighbourhoods. Participation and partnerships of all kinds have emerged to improve the urban environment – more often than not leading to new forms of urban governance. The need for Nairobi to be an *inclusive* and *sustainable* city is, therefore, an urgent priority, given the fact that cities worldwide are the main driving force in the global, national and local economy. In fact, the major challenge of the 21st century will be how to make cities more inclusive and sustainable. The concept forms a bridge between vision and action in the challenging task of transforming our cities. To make Nairobi inclusive and sustainable, there is a need for a radical change of mindset, new strategies and, finally – but crucially – new governance structures to support development and foster a new generation of urban leadership.

Notes

1   This section is partly based on Bocquier et al. (2009: 2–4).

2   Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development, 2008. Nairobi Metro 2030: A vision for a world-class metropolis, first and foremost in Africa and the world.

3   Data from Global Urban Observatory, UN-HABITAT (2008). Accessed March 2011, http://www.unhabitat.org

4   The Kenyan population census reports no longer disaggregate population data by ethnic composition.

5   The dependency ratio is equal to the number of individuals aged below 15 or above 64 divided by the number of individuals aged 15 to 64, expressed as a percentage.

6   This section is partly based on Owuor (2006: 3–4).

7   The primacy index is the ratio of the population of the largest urban centre to the combined population of the next three largest urban centres.

8   This section is partly based on Mitullah (2003: 5–7).

9   In town, urban and county councils, the council chair takes charge.

10   Kamukunji is a Kiswahili connotation for an informal meeting. It is a widely used term in the universities and parliament when an informal meeting has to be called to address a pressing issue.

11   Kiswahili for 'seven seven' (meaning 7 July).

12   Both the PNU and ODM presidential candidates claimed that they had won the presidential elections.

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