



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
HOUSING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT

P.O. BOX 30197 NAIROBI KENYA TELEPHONE 27441 EXT. 212 TELEGRAMS VARSITY

Institutional Constraints  
in The Development of Informal Housing Areas.

MARJA C. HOEK-SMIT, M.A. SOC.ANTR.  
Associate Research Fellow

Housing Research and Development Unit, University of Nairobi  
Director - K.B. Andersen, M.A.A.  
P.O. Box 30197, Nairobi, Tel 27441 EXT 212

## Section One Introduction

A large proportion of the urban population in almost all developing countries lives in sub-standard housing, in areas which have been termed squatter settlements, slums, spontaneous or unauthorised settlements. These terms describe a variety of different conditions with respect to standards of housing and services, lay-out, legal status and historical background. In this paper the term 'informal housing areas' will be used in order to include all those urban areas that do not comply with one or more of the existing legal regulations on planning or development of residential areas.

Recent years have seen a considerable change in official and semi-official attitudes towards the phenomenon of urban informal housing. There is increasing awareness that the growth of these housing areas may be expected to continue for some time to come (the reasons for this have been considered extensively elsewhere) <sup>(1)</sup> and that attempts to curb this development by demolition policies only, seem to make matters worse. Moreover, a large number of studies on squatter areas and other informal housing areas have emphasized their positive features. <sup>(2)</sup>

1. e.g.: Uche, U.U. 1976. The Law, Policies and Rural Urban Migration in Kenya.  
Dwyer, D.J. 1975. People and Housing in Third World Cities, Perspectives on the problem of spontaneous settlements, Longman, London.
2. e.g.: Clinard, M.B. 1966. Slums and Community Development. Experiments in Self-help, The Free Press, New York.  
Improvement of slums and Uncontrolled Settlements. United Nations, 1971. ST/TAO/SER. C/124.  
Etherton, D. 1971. Mathare Valley. A case study of uncontrolled settlement in Nairobi. H.R.D.U.  
Hoek-Smit, M.C. 1976. The Future Planning of a Majengo, Swahili Village-Masaku. H.R.D.U. All further references to the Masaku Majengo are taken from this study. Majengo is the name for traditional informal urban housing areas founded by moslem people from the coast at the beginning of this century. References to Majengo in general are derived from research at present undertaken by the author, in the Majengo of Murang'a, Kericho, Kakamega. The research is funded by a grant from the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO).