

## **Informalising a planned neighbourhood in Nairobi**

### **Abstract:**

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<sup>2</sup>, which has expanded from 3.84 km<sup>2</sup> 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)