THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

IN

NAIROBI

BY

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A B S T R A C T

There is mounting research on the general process of urbanization in the Third World. However, little attention has been paid to the internal structure of the city in the Third World. Research on the internal structure of cities has been conducted almost entirely on the Western industrial cities. Many generalizations pertaining to the internal organisation of these cities are too often adapted uncritically as a planning and analytical framework for the Third World cities.

This study sets out to investigate the spatial structure of the residential areas of Nairobi. Firstly, using a multivariate technique of common factor analysis, an attempt is made to identify the main factors (dimensions) of residential differentiation in Nairobi. Secondly, the spatial patterns of residential variation are analyzed using the technique of two-way analysis of variance. Thirdly, the extent to which the internal structure of Nairobi approximates or deviates from the general models of residential structure based on Western cities is examined.

The analysis of the relationship between the various measures of residential differentiation reveals that the expected high association between measures of social rank and accessibility to city centre in the developed cities is missing in Nairobi.

Analysis of diverse attributes of residential differentiation reveals that there are five main dimensions or sources of residential differentiation in

Nairobi: Socio-economic status, centrality, ethnic segregation, demographic - labour force, and public housing. Two of the dimensions hypothesized by Shevky and Bell, socio-economic status and ethnicity, are relevant to Nairobi. Their family status dimension is not isolated in Nairobi.

Further analysis shows that spatial patterns of the three most important dimensions of residential differentiation replicate the three classical models of the structure of the Western city of Burgess (Concentric zones), Hoyt (sectors), and of Harris and Ullman (multiple nuclei). The Socio-economic dimension varies significantly by sectors, centrality exhibits significant variation by zones while ethnic segregation tends to form clusters.

Finally the findings of the study are considered in the light of planning policy and residential problems in Nairobi.

Given the wide socio-economic inequalities in Nairobi, it is clear that distribution and allocation policies are faulty. They serve the interests of a small high-income class of the society and neglect the majority who are low-income. What the planning policies need is to incorporate principles of social justice in the allocation and distribution of social benefits such as housing, wages and other services to ensure that the prospects of the least fortunate are as high as possible.

The existing spatial organisation of the city places the least advantaged members of the society in the least desirable parts of the city. Hence it has a regressive

distributive effect on the real income and job
opportunites of the low income. To reduce territorial
inequalities and thereby cut-down social costs (crime
and vice) just allocation principles are required
whereby considerations of need, contribution to common
good and merit override those of free competition.