

DEVELOPMENT OF URBANIZATION IN KENYA:  
A SPATIAL ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATION  
FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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All countries of the world can be conveniently classified into industrial countries and developing countries because of the international dualism in science and technology which characterizes most of the economic landscape. Intra-polarization (dualism within a country) of development is also a phenomenon where the spatial system has been dichotomized between growth centers and the lagging regions. This dichotomy has been prevalent among the central places of the African countries where it has been portrayed in the form of modern urban centers versus traditional periodic markets. Until recently these two sub-systems of central places have been relating, but not interacting, with each other.

This study has analyzed the problem of dualism within the urban system using central-place theory and has also shown how dualism can be reduced by well-organized spatial and regional planning. In order to study the evolution, problems, and prospects of dualism of development, we used Kenya as a case study.

Except for some traditional periodic markets, most



of the central places in Kenya were introduced during the colonial period. Because of the colonial heritage in which a dual economic system was encouraged as a means of exploiting the country, the spatial system was divided between the developed modern urban place and the underdeveloped traditional market place. The central places of these two sub-systems were spatially organized according to the Christalian hierarchical administrative principle. During the national era these two sub-systems have slowly started to consolidate into one due to the removal of the socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers which were imposed by the colonial authorities. As the urbanization process continued in Kenya, the periodic market changed to a daily market system which later moved in closer accord with the central places of the urban-place sub-system. We have therefore concluded that periodic markets, daily markets, and trading posts form three stages in the urbanization process of Kenya where the central places of the market-place sub-system still play an important part in the lives of the inhabitants.

Since the central places of the market-place sub-system play a significant role in bringing social change to the rural dwellers of Kenya, we feel that any spatial and regional planning can be done within the market-place sub-system. The central places of the market-place sub-system are the interface between the rural and urban systems. Since Kenya is an agricultural country, developing the

linkage between the rural and urban areas is a very important and meaningful planning strategy. It is hoped this approach to spatial and regional planning will help in reorienting the central places of Kenya from mere export enclaves to more generative areas. It is also hoped that such a development strategy will expedite the urbanization process of the country and, at the same time, help in the improvement of the badly needed infrastructure services in the rural areas. Taking advantage of and building upon this existing structure of "grassroot" level centers would help to induce development in the hinterland, increase local participation, ease the pains of transition, and reduce the gap between the rural hinterland and the export enclaves.