LAND USE: IMPACT OF A NEW ROAD IN KIKUYU DIVISION

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of urban areas into the countryside and, therefore, consequent consumption of rich agricultural hinterlands is an issue that is more and more beginning to attract the attention of physical planners as well as that of other private and public bodies. This indicates an awareness of the grave danger posed by urban expansion and sprawl onto agricultural areas that provide the urban cores with, among other things, food and, in particular market-gardening products which, due to their perishable nature, are most appropriately grown in the immediate surroundings of the city.

Physical planning is concerned with the issue of urban expansion as it has been noted that the physical boundaries delineating the extent of the urban areas do not effectively aid in controlling the physical expansion of these same urban areas. This thesis is an attempt to explore the possible causes and factors responsible for urban expansion as well as possible
courses of action that can be taken in order to contain urban sprawl. In doing this, the author selected to look at the changing patterns of land use within a rural, administrative division viz. Kikuyu, which is contiguous to a fast growing metropolitan area viz. Nairobi city.

It is recognised that land use, including the development of roads in the division, is greatly affected by programmes, strategies and policies pursued and adopted by the Nairobi metropolitan area. The location of various activities and facilities within Nairobi is definitely bound to have impacts and repercussions on the surrounding hinterlands. Hence an understanding of the process of urban growth is necessary if only for purposes of identifying the initiators of that growth as well as the possible actions to be effected within the urban-rural areas to prevent mass consumption of fertile and valuable agricultural enclaves. In fact the author takes the stand that there must be positive governmental and local authority guidelines and policies on the developments that can
be carried out in areas surrounding the city. This is imperative if the problem posed by a dynamic, expanding urban core onto rich agricultural hinterlands is to be contained.

In chapter I the area of study, and the significance of the problem of Nairobi's expansion into the countryside, and in particular to Kikuyu division is considered. It is noted that the whole country has got only a limited amount of good agricultural land. It follows that if part of this agricultural area is situated within Kikuyu division, then there is an imperative duty to preferentially preserve this fertile area.

Chapter II considers the possible factors responsible for accelerating the urban sprawl and the problems encountered. The chapter goes further and lays down a demand model for site locations in the peripheral areas of the city of Nairobi, with particular reference to Kikuyu division. In doing this, the chapter reviews
past literature on the problems of urban sprawl and attempts to control it in different parts of the world.

In chapter III an analysis of land uses within the division is considered. Agricultural use is found to be the largest user of land within Kikuyu division, taking well over 76% of the total land use. However, urban-oriented forms of development are found to be putting up stiff competition against the agricultural user. In order to decrease this competition, thereby increasing incomes and volume of production to farmers and at the same time leaving the division primarily an agricultural enclave, intensification of market-gardening activities in the division is proposed. Such intensified market-gardening is expected to raise land values in the division and therefore effectively reduce the demand for land in the area.

Chapter IV examines the impact of the new Dagoretti-Ndenderu road. It attempts to indicate how road development, as a particularly good initiator of economic growth and development, can make the division more attractive for urban
development. Thus improved accessibility to areas surrounding the city must be critically analysed if urban sprawl is not to be speeded up because of inefficient misallocation of resources.

The last chapter considers a number of alternative solutions to be taken in the division in order to make it remain primarily agricultural. It has gone further and summarised the principal findings.

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