

Community and social responses to land use transformations in the Nairobi rural-urban fringe, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The process of urbanization is one of the most important dimensions of economic, social and physical changes. It is almost a truism that the planet's future is an urban one and that the largest and fastest growing cities are in developing countries. Approximately 25 percent of Africa's population lived in towns and cities in 1975. By the year 2000, due to rural-urban migration and rapid rates of natural increase, 38 percent of the continent's population lived in urban areas. The proportion is expected to increase to 47 percent by 2015 and to double by 2025, Kenya is not an exception.

Rapid urban population growth means an increasing demand for urban land. This land is not available within the city, but in the rural-urban fringe, for various reasons. This is partly due to low land prices, high rents at the core of the cities and legal flexibility in land use planning in the rural-urban fringe. Urban growth is already engulfing the surrounding agricultural lands and small villages. The conversion of agricultural land to residential uses is leading to the rapid transformations in the agricultural production, spatial structure, social structure, land ownership and land market in these areas.

This chapter focuses on the responses/actions of the communities within Nairobi rural-urban fringe and how they manoeuvre through the consequences of changes occasioned by land conversions. It used Town council of Karuri as a case study. The chapter is based on qualitative research approaches presents evidence on how subaltern' actions plays an important role in creating order in an otherwise chaotic situation as a result of 'poorly planned' residential development. The subalterns' actions, as evidenced by their agency, are manifested in community's contribution and participation in provision of infrastructure and services within the Nairobi's rural-urban fringe due to inability of formal provision by planning authorities