EXAMINING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF URBAN RIVER CHANNELS IN NAIROBI: A CASE STUDY OF MBAGATHI RIVER, ONGATA RONGAI STRETCH

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ABSTRACT
The informal sector has become a major phenomenon in the urban landscape in most developing countries in the world. The sector has not only persisted but it has grown tremendously over time. It has however received mixed attention from various players. The sector has moved from obscurity, lack of recognition, neglect and finally to partial appreciation by governments and other key stakeholders. There has been no land use provision for the sector’s activities in the mainstream physical planning. Thus the sector has responded by encroaching on other designated land uses. This has led the sector to concentrate on areas such as, the commercial areas and residential neighborhoods. The main objective of this dissertation has been to examine the planning implications of the sector’s activities on a residential estate (Old Race Course Estate) in the Eastland’s of Nairobi.

The study has been carried out with an aim of achieving four objectives which are: to establish the types and distribution of the sector activities in the area; to find out factors that have attracted the proprietors into the residential estate; to examine land use implication of the sector’s activities in the area; and finally evolving a proposal mechanism of dealing with sector’s activities in residential areas.

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Multi stage and purposive sampling design techniques were used to select study samples. Research findings revealed that the main informal sector activities in the area were trade (42%) service 32%e and manufacture/light industrial (26%). These activities are mainly located on road reserves, open spaces (designated car parks), on undeveloped parcels land and on private residential properties. The study noted that about 72.4% of the respondents were attracted to the area due to the availability of market for business while 27.6% were attracted due to the available space for operating. The study revealed that the ISA in the area had negative land use implication which include; incidences of incompatible land uses, encroachment of road reserves, uncontrolled development, waste management problems, and creation of unaesthetic environment and landscape.

This study drew a conclusion that the sector played a critical role both to the operators and the residents; however it created numerous land use problems. Based on the premises; that physical planning as a discipline endeavors to manage human activities on space to ensure that such activities are carried out taking into consideration economy, safety, aesthetics, harmony in land use and environmental sustenance, and that the path to urban sustainability lies in greater realisms of building and managing more equally and equitable communities, this study has advocates integration of ISAs into the residential estate based on conditions, codes, rules and regulations.