

URBAN SLUMS AND INEQUALITY IN NAIROBI (KENYA): A  
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Slums,  
Capitalism,  
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The study investigates the relationship between slums and capitalism in Nairobi, Kenya. The paper introduces Harvey and Davis theoretical explanation to examination the continues existence of slums. However, the study does not offer a comprehensive examination of all the slum areas in Kenya but focuses on Nairobi, the capital city. The paper presents that despite the poor quality of life and service delivery in these areas urbanization continues at a high rate. The article offers critical insights on how capitalist liberal policies perpetuate the vicious cycle of poverty for those living in slums. This study further highlights the rights violations of those living in slums due to the unavailability of basic services and little government intervention.

NAIROBI'DE (KENYA) KENTSEL GECEKONDULAR VE EŞİTSİZLİK: KURAMSAL BİR  
PERSPEKTİF

ÖZ

Anahtar Kelimeler

Gecekondu  
Mahalleleri,  
Kapitalizm,  
Eşitsizlik,  
Nairobi Kenya

Çalışma Kenya, Nairobi'deki gecekondu mahalleleri ve kapitalizm arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırıyor. Makale, gecekondu mahallelerinin süregelen varlığını incelemek için Harvey ve Davis'in teorik açıklamasını sunuyor. Ancak çalışma, Kenya'daki tüm gecekondu bölgelerinin kapsamlı bir incelemesini sunmuyor, başkent Nairobi'ye odaklanıyor. Rapor, bu alanlardaki düşük yaşam kalitesine ve hizmet sunumuna rağmen kentleşmenin yüksek bir hızla devam ettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Makale, kapitalist liberal politikaların gecekondu mahallelerinde yaşayanlar için yoksulluğun kısır döngüsünü nasıl sürdürdüğüne dair eleştirel içgörüler sunuyor. Bu çalışma, temel hizmetlerin mevcut olmaması ve çok az devlet müdahalesi nedeniyle gecekondu mahallelerinde yaşayanların hak ihlallerini daha da vurgulamaktadır.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a global era in which human rights ideals have taken centre stage, both politically, socially, and economically. A substantial amount of political effort is devoted to promoting, protecting, and emphasising the importance of developmental rights for a better society. In recent decades, many countries have been rapidly urbanising, and above 90% of future urban growth is projected to occur in developing countries (Shifa & Leibbrandt, 2017). After all, we live in an era where the rights to private property and the interest rate dominate all other notions of rights. Historically, urbanisation has been linked to economic development and growth. However, in Kenya, the relationship between urbanisation and economic growth or development is hotly debated. Urbanisation in Kenya can be traced to urban agglomeration in the form of commercial hubs extending back to the 9th century AD (Mitullah, 2003). As many of the metropolitan centres in Kenya were used as administrative and political control centres by colonial authorities before independence. This has led to rapid urbanisation in Kenya and has continued for decades. Since 1948, the number of Kenyans living in cities has increased from 5.1 percent to 15.1% in 1979, 18.0 percent in 1989, and 34.8 percent in 2000. Nairobi presently accounts for 45 percent of the urban population, with 194 urban centres (Mitullah, 2003). During colonial administration, the Nairobi City Council was dominated by British professionals and merchants who got along well with officials from similar educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. These groups control most of the resources and the native Kenya serve mostly as a labor with little earning. Those who assumed power after independence lacked the experience and knowledge to confront the challenges faces in terms of service delivery or even comprehending the complicated organizational problems (Werlin, 2006). This, coupled with the growing demand for resources and infrastructure services in the city, has increased the urban population and informal settlement. This rise has put a strain on fundamental services including water, sanitation, security, housing, and transportation (Kimani-Murage, Mutoro, Zerfu, Wanjohi, & Anono, 2019). In Nairobi, for example, over half of the inhabitants live in slums, with limited access to healthy food, water, hygiene, and sanitation services. These difficulties have a substantial influence on the development and survival of those living in slums (Kimani-Murage, Mutoro, Zerfu, Wanjohi, & Anono, 2019). The paper therefore looks at the relationship between capitalism and slums. The study outlines the numerous human rights breaches that occur in slums, such as a lack of access to clean water,

sanitation, and healthcare. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that many slum residents cannot find permanent job or cheap housing owing to discrimination and other structural hurdles.

### **1.1 Background Of Study**

Located in East Africa, Kenya shares borders with South Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda. It might be referred to as the commercial gateway to and regional hub of East Africa. This is a result of the strategic significance of the coastal city of Mombasa, which is the busiest port on the East African coast. In addition, it has the largest and most sophisticated economy in East Africa. Kenya is among the fastest-growing countries in Africa, with annual growth rates exceeding 5 percent. Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, is the country's financial and business centre, and the government is working to develop it as a financial hub, bringing it on par with other financial centres across the world (Deloitte, 2016). Kenya has a total area of 582,650 square kilometres, including 13,400 square kilometres of water, primarily in Lake Turkana (Federal Research Division, 2007). As of 2022, the population of Kenya is estimated to be around 55,595,271 based on estimations from the latest United Nations data (World Population Review, 2022). Nairobi, Kenya's largest metropolis and the second-largest in the African Great Lakes region, has a population of more than 5 million people. Nairobi is also home to one of the world's largest slums. Nairobi has roughly 40 slum neighbourhoods, with low-income settlements housing nearly 60% of the city's 5 million inhabitants. The slum of Kibera is home to roughly 300,000 of the millions of slum dwellers in the city (World Population Review, 2022).

Despite this, Kenya's economy has been making considerable progress since the early 2000s, which is in line with reviving the African narrative and promoting economic development in the new century. Supported by the establishment of strong institutions and the rising support for political accountability. According to official World Bank figures, Kenya's GDP stands at 98.84 billion US dollars as of 2020. Kenya's GDP value equals 0.09 percent of the global economy (Economics, 2022). With Kenya categorised as a lower-middle-income nation, consumer expenditure is seen as a crucial economic engine. According to the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), total inflation fell to 7.35 percent in the first part of 2016 from 7.35 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015, owing mostly to lower food and fuel prices (Deloitte, 2016).

The Kenyan labour force is divided into three categories: the contemporary sector, the informal sector, and the small-scale agriculture or pastoralist sector. The Jua Kali, also known as the informal sector, now dominates and plays an important role in Kenya's labour market. Manufacturing, transportation, information communication, and technology have all been added to the industry over time. However, there has been much discussion over the quality of work in the informal economy. Comparing basic earnings and allowances between the private and government sectors in Kenya, studies have found that the public sector pays slightly more than the private sector. On the other hand, the private sector pays higher base salaries (KIMENYI, MWEGA, & NDUNG'U, 2016). The research also showed that there is a considerable vertical salary disparity between the lowest and highest cadres in both the public and private sectors. The wage differences between the public and private sectors indicate that there are barriers to cross-sector labour mobility and that the Kenyan labour market is inefficient in terms of labour allocation (KIMENYI, MWEGA, & NDUNG'U, 2016).

## **2.URBAN POVERTY IN KENYA**

Kenya's poverty picture is shifting, and the country is confronting a new urban problem. Nairobi is rapidly urbanising, but the disparity between affluent and poor is expanding, with 60% of citizens now living in slums with little or restricted access to even the most basic amenities (Oxfam GB, 2010). According to Oxfam, if urban poverty is not addressed rapidly, it will be Kenya's defining challenge during the next decade. The magnitude of urban poverty in Kenya is no longer something authorities can ignore. Poverty affects between one-third and half of the country's urban residents. The country is rapidly urbanising at a very high pace, with half of Kenya's poor people residing in cities. In this regard, there is little fear that poverty is quickly urbanising in Kenya (Oxfam GB, 2010). Furthermore, the share of urban residents falling into two categories of poor people ('food poor 1 and 'hardcore poor 2) is increasing, and the gap between rich and poor is widening. While some urban inhabitants' positions have improved because of recent outstanding levels of economic growth (Oxfam GB, 2010).

According to 2016 statistics, 35.5 percent of Kenya's population lives below the poverty line. This means that more than one-third of the population lives on less than \$1.90 a day (Merchan, 2020). However, massive achievements have been recorded in the fight against poverty. In 2021, around 16% of Kenya's population live below \$1.90 per

day, compared to 35.5 percent in 2016 (Faria, 2021). The country's extreme poverty percentage has reduced somewhat from 17 percent in 2020. However, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was blamed for the slow decline, although the aim was to eliminate extreme poverty by 2020 (Faria, 2021). Despite progress, the World Bank has since noted that it does not expect Kenya to be free of poverty by 2030. Representatives noted that despite Kenya's GDP having been increasing on a regular basis, the rate has not been quick enough to eliminate poverty by the above-mentioned year (Merchan, 2020). One key element slowing the fight against poverty in Kenya is corruption. Kenya's government is often regarded as one of the most corrupt in the world. Corruption might be found in every facet of governance, as huge amounts of money could not be traced by the government (Werlin, 2006). However, poor people cannot develop in society if their government does not work for them, and public funds are misused. Though poverty in Kenya is presently lower than in other countries in the area, the poverty rate is expected continue to fall. Agriculture is a big contributor to the fall in poverty rates. Unfortunately, due to bad weather patterns, Kenya's agricultural successes are in jeopardy. Unexpected droughts have the potential to reverse recent successes in the fight against poverty. Since 2005, Kenya's literacy rate has improved by 11 percent. This figure exemplifies the enormous progress Kenya has made in its education system. Kenya's literacy rates are higher when compared to similar-sized nations such as Ghana (Merchan, 2020). In the past decade, child mortality has decreased considerably. By 2008, the prevalence of child mortality was 52 out of every 1,000 live births. In 2014, it dropped to 39. Death rates among children under age five declined from 74 per 1,000 to 52. (Merchan, 2020).

Another issue influencing the fight to reduce poverty is the rising inequity in urban areas. This has a detrimental impact on human security, stability, and economic growth. A tiny group of wealthy individuals and investors appears to be benefiting from the country's economic performance. The wealthiest are receiving a huge share of the benefits, leaving millions of people behind. If inequality remains constant over the next five years, an extra 2.9 million people may be forced to live in extreme poverty. (Oxfam International, 2021). The wealth disparity between Kenya's poor and rich citizens has reached unprecedented proportions. Less than 0.1 percent of the population (8,300 people) owns more wealth than the remaining 99.9 percent (more than 44 million people). Kenya's wealthiest ten percent earned 23 times more than the poorest ten percent (Oxfam International, 2021). Furthermore, Kenya produces one of the fastest-

growing numbers of super-rich people in the world. Over the next ten years, the number of millionaires is predicted to climb by 80%, with 7,500 new millionaires being produced. This is as a result of corporate tax avoidance is weakening Kenya's income base. An estimate of \$1.1 billion is lost every year due to tax breaks in Kenya. This is nearly twice what the government spent on its overall health budget in 2015/16, in a nation where women have a one-in-four risk of dying during and after childbirth (Oxfam International, 2021).

Furthermore, nearly half (43 percent) of Kenya's overall 'food poor' live in urban slums, numbering over 4 million people (Oxfam International, 2021). The poorest urban dwellers spend up to 34% of their income on basic staples alone. This has been aggravated by the recent food crisis, which has resulted in corn prices rising by 133% (Oxfam GB, 2010). While elementary school enrollment is slightly greater in cities, above the age of 15, cities have significantly fewer boys and girls than rural regions. This has serious ramifications since urban poverty has been demonstrated to be conversely related to the amount of education of the household's head.

In rural Kenya, inequality is decreasing while growing in the city. The rural Gini coefficient is currently about 0.38, implying levels of inequality equivalent to Portugal and significantly lower than the United States. It is a horrifying 0.59 in Nairobi, implying levels of inequality akin to Johannesburg in the mid-1990s at the end of apartheid. In a Nairobi slum of 25,000 people, there may be no more than two private schools and no public schools. Women are roughly five times as likely as men to be jobless in the slums. (Oxfam GB, 2010). Gender inequities are firmly embedded in the slums, with women suffering the most. According to various indicators, slum children are the unhealthiest in the country. Recent urban research in Kenya by Oxfam GB emphasises the severity of the problem affecting Kenya's cities and calls for prompt action to address a situation that has already reached crisis proportions. (Oxfam GB, 2010). Access to opportunities such as healthcare and education is often inequitable. Nearly one million primary school-aged children are still absent from school. Ranking Kenya, the seventh highest out of all school-going children in the globe. Despite these, Kenya's education budget has been progressively declining since the early 2000s. (Oxfam International, 2021). Despite significant advances in health during the last decade, the government only invests 6% of its budget in health. One-quarter of Kenya's population lacks regular access to healthcare. According to a



recent poll, nearly 2.6 million people fall into or remain in poverty as a result of the disease each year. Gender inequality is pervasive in Kenya. Not only is economic policy producing significant inequality, but it is also hindering women from obtaining economic empowerment. For example, even though 96% of Kenya's rural women labour on farms, just 6% of Kenyan women own land (Oxfam International, 2021).

### **3.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

To better understand the upsurge and the characteristics that facilitate slums. The paper relied on the methodological explanation of David Harvey. A Marxist geographer, whose concepts and categorization of knowledge are founded on Marx and Engels. Harvey's observations on the characteristics of slums were based on India's relying on data from the official UN Habitat reports and other related literature. The study also introduces Davis's methodological explanation, banking on the earlier literature provided by Marx. Many scholars continue to heavily rely on Marx to construct their theories, and the critical theory of David Harvey is no exception. However, Harvey also relies on Engel's explanation of the continuity and expansion of slums around the world. According to Harvey (2010), for us to comprehend urban disorder and the role it plays in capitalism's reproduction, he highlighted three principles based on Marx and Engels:

Firstly, the capitalists dominate social space and mobility in space through technology, organisational and communicational systems, finance, market regulations, and so on (Harvey 2010). In Kenya, inequality has gone out of control despite strong economic progress since 2005, and poverty continues to touch the lives of millions of people (Oxfam International, 2021). As a result, a small number of super-rich Kenyans control most of the economy, which has continued to put Kenyans below the poverty line. For example, the former President and current President are among the richest in Kenya and collaborate with allies within their ethnic groups, reaping the biggest benefit from the country's economic expansion. According to VOA, former President Uhuru Kenyatta and his family are among the world leaders who are claimed to have concealed billions of dollars in secret offshore accounts. According to the Pandora Papers, the Kenyattas covertly controlled multiple offshore shell businesses in the British Virgin Islands. In 2016, one of the firms, owned by Present's brother Muhoho, had a bank account with a \$31.6 million investment portfolio. From 1999 through 2004, Uhuru's mother, Ngina, and

his two sisters had shares in a British Virgin Islands firm that were used to purchase an apartment in an expensive London neighbourhood. (VOA News, 2021).

Secondly, as Harvey (2010) mentions, the flow of capital does not take place on the head of a pin. For Harvey, the geographical concentration of money means production and labour power. *Money* is the socio-economic and political element that makes the concentration of means of production and labour possible. This also involves financial structures on a local, regional, and global scale, with most of the investment situated in urban areas, resulting in mass migration from rural to urban areas in search of jobs. It is worth noting that most of the labour force in urban Kenya lives in slums as a result of this. As the concentration of *means of production* involves investment in fixed capital (including technology and the infrastructure for packaging and shipping, tools and instruments, knowledge, and proximity to natural resources), labour, and consumer markets, the economies of agglomeration lower costs and raise profit margins. For example, in Kenya, one of the main reasons for large capitals to invest in the construction of the railway to neighbouring countries is precisely the development of this area as a zone of production where multiple means of production are accumulated. The facilities for shipping goods, the access to markets, and the reserve of cheap labour are abundant. Another possibility is attracting labour from other cities or rural areas for cheaper labour. In fact, since the liberalisation of financial markets in the 1970s, the search for profitability in finance rather than productive sectors has become the norm. And this phenomenon in big cities includes real estate and gentrification (Harvey, 2010).

The third and final principle Harvey noted is that the owners of land had everything to gain (Harvey, 2010). The third principle clarifies that large capitalists, owners of land, benefit from increases in land values and rising rents. This fact "increases their role in making and remaking capitalism's geography as a means to enhance its income and its power" (Harvey, 2010: p. 181). This principle involves the guarantee of the system's ability to reward powerful actors. Since the beginning of slum formations, cities have depended on the availability of water, food, and labour. Social organisation and politics play a role in obtaining food surpluses and clean water for most people. Control over the use and distribution of the resources and the labour surplus typically lies in a few hands; for this reason, class formation and urbanisation have always gone together. "Capitalism is a class form of society given over to the perpetual production of surpluses. This means



that it is always producing the necessary conditions for urbanisation to occur" (Harvey, 2010: p. 166). For Harvey, exploitation goes beyond the factory, the mine, or the agriculture field; in the city context, it also includes the rent of a house. First, it is necessary to specify that, from a Marxian perspective, soil has a price but no value because it is not the product of human labour. Price, commonly known as rent, is the result of soil monopolisation, and it constitutes both a means of production and the spatial condition for human activity. For Marx, rent is not generated by the land itself; rent is surplus value, that is, unpaid work (Subaşi, 2020).

Moreover, private ownership of the land only allows the capitalist to appropriate the rent but does not generate rent by itself. For example, land A is more fertile than land B, so with the capital investment, land A generates an extra annual surplus value of \$200. This extra surplus value is constituted by rent. Land B needs a higher quantity of capital than land A to have a higher rent or a rent closer to land A (assuming that only these two types of land are in production) (Subaşi, 2020). In an urban city, the process is similar. If a company is located in an urban location that allows it to obtain an extraordinary capital gain of \$200 (e.g., because it is close to the market, a job place, or a train station), that surplus value will constitute the rent for that land. It means that there is a process of valorization of the social space, which is largely produced by capital. The production of social space is regulated by the government and/or Congress or parliaments. The state regulates loans and plans for the use of public land, including taxes (Harvey, 2001). In Nairobi, for example, informal settlements are locations where people stay, eat, sleep, work, and bring up their kids, just like any other community. People living in informal settlements, on the other hand, face inadequate housing, restricted access to water, sanitation, and other vital services, and the continual threat of eviction. The slums in Nairobi are the product of both purposeful government liberal policy and years of official apathy caused by capitalism. Informal settlements, in particular, were ignored in city planning and budgeting processes, resulting in public policy that frequently treated these areas as if they had no existence. As a result of government policies not focusing on providing low-cost housing or sustainable long-term solutions to slum residents, the government has contributed to the growth of urban slums. Many people who migrate to Nairobi have no practical alternative except to live in the slums because there are no other affordable housing alternatives (Amnesty International, 2009).

Another important scholar who contributes to the debate about slums is Mike Davis, the author of *Planet Slum*. Davis notes that in recent decades, various factors have shaped the rise of urban slums compared to Engels's unique vision of capitalism as the locomotive of rural migration, increasing production, and urban dwelling. Davis examines the complex aspects of global capitalist policy (structural adjustment programmes known as SAPs), decolonization processes, national sovereignty, civil inter-national conflicts, drought, and famine as the mass manufacturers of slums in the third world. Moreover, most Third World cities lack an established (or emerging) basis of formal employment to provide migrants with a toehold since enormous urbanisation has decoupled from industry, resulting in a surplus population considerably beyond Engels' projections (Davis, 2006). For these reasons, many people occupy places that are not fit for living. Davis argues that modern slum residents are compelled to occupy more risky positions like swampland, flood plains, volcanic slopes, garbage dumps, and toxic sites in their attempt to find a place to live. They face both natural risks such as mudslides or collapse, earthquakes, and flooding, as well as manmade threats such as harmful industrial activity or trash dumping too close to residential areas. The scariest of all this is the ever-present prospect of severe eviction or death by fire, either unintentionally amid homes that burn quickly or maliciously on the part of property developers in order to obtain speedy access to wanted territory (Davis, 2006). Although injury-related mortality has decreased in industrialised nations over the last few decades, severe injuries have become a main cause of death in underdeveloped countries. According to studies conducted in two Nairobi slums, injuries constituted roughly 18 percent of the disease burden assessed as life years lost due to premature death. Kenya is also ranked second in HIV/AIDS-related causes of mortality among those aged 5 years and older. While a variety of community and hospital-based studies have shed light on the issue of injuries in Kenya, they also emphasise that more work remains to be done. Although very little research has been conducted to explore the global range of injuries, particularly the less common ones that are fast becoming a major cause of mortality in urban Kenya, people may be at a higher risk of damage due to the peculiarities of slums; nevertheless, no previous research has focused on these areas (Ziraba, Kyobutungi, & Zulu, 2011).

Furthermore, as Davis points out, the scale of urbanisation in the Third World as well as its chaotic spatial configurations contradict the basic principles of urban planning and ecological efficiency that cities require to be sustainable. In terms of housing, the

historical scarcity of substantial quantities of public shelter stock in developing countries cities has resulted in a range of solutions on the side of the incoming masses. The traditional character of the squatter, who recycles garbage materials to build a fragile residence on the outskirts of the city, is just half of the story (Davis, 2006). Davis also highlights the significant rented-property sector and the activities of 'pirate urbanisation' (for example, the illegal subdivision of entitled property), which have also forced official and unofficial real estate markets into slums. These tendencies are increasing existing severe housing shortages and driving more confined "infill projects" and multi-family structures. Another effect is increased social divides because these markets are used by both urban proprietors and underprivileged people with some entitled property who may engage in petty exploitation (renting a room) at the very lowest cost (Davis, 2006).

### **3.1 The Causes Of Slums And Their Existence**

In the book *Rebel Cities*, Harvey rightly observes that the undertaking of urbanisation has become capitalistic; it has become a weapon in the hands of capitalists. A fundamental component in the reproduction of capitalism (Harvey, 2012). Towns and cities in Kenya are hubs of industry, culture, and education, housing 34% of the country's people and accounting for more than 65% of its GDP. It is one of the region's fastest urbanising countries, with an annual growth rate of 4.4 percent (UN-HABITAT, 2007). Many Kenyan cities are confronting significant problems as a result of a confluence of demographic, economic, and political circumstances. Perhaps the most significant is increasing urbanisation, which significantly outstrips the ability of both local and national governments to oversee the physical expansion of urban spaces and deliver critical urban public services to their residents. As a result, slums in Kenyan cities and towns have grown rapidly (UN-HABITAT, 2007). The explosive growth of slums is the cumulative consequence of various factors such as internal migration, increasing urban poverty and inequality, stigmatisation of disadvantaged communities, high living expenses, the inability of slum dwellers to obtain reasonably priced homes, inadequate investment in new low-income homes, and a lack of maintenance of existing housing stock (UN-HABITAT, 2007).

Moreover, insufficient revenue and the overall poverty of a segment of the labour force lead to the formation of slums in several sections of the world's metropolises. This is what Harvey refers to as the "geographical and social concentration" of surplus product,

which he believes constitutes a class phenomenon because surpluses must have come from somewhere, specifically the working poor. For that reason, the type of urbanisation that creates and continues to grow cities around the world is capitalism's perpetual generation of surplus product. (Harvey, 2012). Furthermore, environmental pollution is caused by the additional load on the basic facilities of congested cities, particularly in low-income areas. Increased population density, a contaminated environment, poverty, and social problems are seen as breeding grounds for criminal activity and the development of numerous illnesses and diseases (Pokhariyal, 2005). Moreover, human migration and settlement have taken on a new dimension as a result of industrialization. The centralization of industrial units has come from large-scale manufacturing. Because these few areas are capable of offering greater employment opportunities and means of living to the population, the spatially non-uniform economic development widespread in most nations of the globe has put additional pressure on a few selected places that have comparatively higher economic activity (Pokhariyal, 2005).

Unemployment and/or low compensation for those who are employed can be major motivators for people to seek refuge in slums. Slums frequently form in the neighbourhoods of locations and organisations that provide job possibilities for the lower levels of the labour force. This saves important time as well as transport costs from the community to the workplace. In this way, people in the slums redirect part of their limited financial resources to get other extra amenities that they would most likely be unable to pay for if relocated to comparably better settlements. This appears to be one of the reasons why some residents continue to live in the slums (Pokhariyal, 2005). Existing statistics provide solid proof of the bleak condition in many of Kenya's metropolitan areas. Based on this, the majority (60 to 80 percent) of Kenyan residents in urban centres live in slum areas. Which are typified by inadequate sanitation, proper housing, a lack of water, and secure tenure, and where many people confront major security and health challenges and rely on the informal sector for a living. Harvey notes that there is a bidirectional relationship between the formation of urbanisation and capitalism. This indicates that capitalism is always manufacturing extra goods to meet the requirements of urbanisation. For Harvey, capitalist urbanisation comes with a negative side, which is the urban reconfiguration that occurs as a result of relocation and eviction. This signifies that the city's poor and less influential residents are losing their position and space (Harvey, 2012). In Nairobi, for example, 60 percent of the residents who live in slums occupy barely

5 percent of the city's total geographical space. These slums are expanding at an unprecedented rate, with the number of slum inhabitants anticipated to quadruple within the next 15 years. However, the number of households that have water connections in the Nairobi slums is approximately 22 percent, while around 75 percent acquire their water from overcharging water vendors. Leading slum inhabitants to pay more for their water than people living in middle- or high-income communities. Sanitation services are often insufficient, and the usage of open places and "flying toilets" is prevalent. In areas like Kibera, the poor environmental and sanitary setup has led to the outbreak of waterborne illnesses such as diarrhoea, malaria, and cholera. Diseases such as typhoid and cholera are on the rise. This harsh reality offers persuasive justification for the country's slum redevelopment efforts, which strive to improve living circumstances. (UN-HABITAT, 2007).

### **3.2 The Slum Demographics And Poverty Traps**

As a result of the establishment of a new world order in megacities and the massive concentration of people in these cities, individuals have developed a typical materialistic society. Because of the widespread conviction in the motto "survival of the fittest". This new society is defined by nature as super-individualistic, making it difficult for individuals to trust one another. The prevailing neoliberalist ideology of strong possessive individualism, according to Harvey, has turned modern cities into commodities. While the commons have been destroyed, they have been replaced with gated communities—private and public spaces that are regularly monitored. The commons are important urban partnerships that sustain and reproduce life in the city between social groups and, in particular, public spaces or customs. The premise that the interaction between the social group and the portion of the environment being treated as common must be both communal and non-commodified is at the heart of the communing practise. (Harvey, 2012). However, capitalist privatisation tactics have commodified the commons and cut financing for public places, both of which are essential for the establishment of the common. (Harvey, 2012).

As per the data obtained from the World Bank's development indicators, the number of Kenyans living in slums was 46.5 percent in 2018 (World Bank, 2021). A slum household is defined as *"a group of individuals living under the same roof lacking one or*

*more of the following conditions: access to improved water, access to improved sanitation, sufficient living area, and durability of housing" (Trading Economics, 2021).*

For almost 2 million people living in Nairobi's shanty towns and slums, life is perilous. They constitute the bulk of the capital's population while occupying just 5% of the city's residential area and 1 percent of the city's overall geographical area. Many are forced to live in substandard housing and have little access to clean drinking water, sanitation, medicine, schools, and other critical government services (Amnesty International, 2009). Even at the time of independence, at the end of 1963 (when Nairobi's population was only approximately 10% of what it is now), most Africans could not afford the \$12 monthly rent for a decent basic housing unit (dual rooms, a kitchen, a toilet, and a shower).

By 2002, it was projected that the average impoverished household in Nairobi would need 34 years to gather enough money to acquire such a property (costing around \$4,000), implying that less than 20% of dwellings were owner-occupied. Renting is the only form of housing many can manage to have, although many of them earn an income of around \$70 per month. Sharing a room was the only option for the ordinary slum inhabitant with a monthly salary of around \$40–70 (Werlin, 2006).

This is what Harvey refers to as the art of rent." According to him, the commercialization of property and monetization of the city (rent) are based on private owners' monopolistic control over resources. This is now the primary exploitative tool of capitalists towards low-income people (Harvey, 2012). Additionally, in Nairobi, those who live in slums are also constantly threatened with expulsion from the temporary buildings they live in. Although these shanty homes have been in and around Nairobi since the creation of the city in the twentieth century (Amnesty International, 2009), government efforts have continuously failed to satisfy the state's commitment to achieving the human right to adequate housing. Recent government reports have highlighted the rising number of slums and the need to address them. However, the government has not made any progressive effort to address the problems slum dwellers are facing. For Harvey, rent monopoly, or "monopoly rent," has always been the desire of the capitalist in order to have control over money, land, monopolies, and the means of production (Amnesty International, 2009).



The experience of slum dwellers exemplifies how poor people are not just destitute but also forced into poverty because they are excluded from society, deprived of a voice, and exposed to violence and instability (Amnesty International, 2009). The unemployment numbers in Nairobi are a clear manifestation, with estimates of over 50% of the population living in poverty. The number of jobs created stands at around 300,000 a year, meaning most of the population has no other option but to engage in informal jobs or self-employment. (Werlin, 2006).

According to a 2002 survey conducted by a partnership of international urban groups (Cities Alliance), mortgage rates vary from 15 to 25 percent, with repayment terms averaging roughly 10 years. Borrowers must pay 20 to 40% of the assessed value of the property as well as any related legal expenses, which can amount to 10% of the loan value, up front. The cost of having the land surveyed, marked, and appraised, as well as stamp duties and legal expenses, is expected to be \$3,000. High inflation rates, the absence of a secondary market, and the inefficiency or complexity of the legal system are all factors that discourage long-term bank lending. It takes nearly a year (360 days) and costs 41.3 percent of the debt to enforce a contract, demonstrating the difficulty of foreclosing on property and retrieving invested cash.

Building standards continue to rely on the historical English system, which necessitates stone building, costly roofing, and imported materials that are out of reach for many middle-income households. It is not recommended to construct in stages or to fulfil code requirements gradually (Werlin, 2006). Above all, the process of obtaining and registering land may be not only costly but also time-consuming (at least a year), perplexing, and unpredictable. It is not unusual for many people to have claims on the same piece of land. There are many tiers of documentation, each with varying degrees of land security. As a result, even residents with very solid documents may be hesitant to invest in their home for fear of being demolished or evicted. Some of Nairobi's outskirts are claimed by local chiefs who take bribes or favours in exchange for distributing land-use rights in exchange for "usage fees". Despite their doubtful legitimacy, these use fees can generate up to \$10 million each year (Werlin, 2006).

### **3.3 The Provision Of Basic Infrastructural Service In Nairobi Slums**

Most of Nairobi's residents' live in slums; these people have inadequate access to shelter, power, and sanitation in the places they live. The informal sector employs two-

thirds of the city's workforce. The slums create and consume a significant portion of the city's income. This may be a result of neoliberal privatisation policies, which Harvey argues have commercialised the commons and reduced funding for public places, which are critical for the establishment of commons. Neoliberals are continually attacking the city life of lower-income groups. The fragile social, environmental, and legal circumstances of these settlements have a negative impact on people's health and the environment, as well as severely limiting local economic growth. The papers discuss some of the absent or poor public service in the slums.

**Water Supply:** The ineffective and inadequate water delivery in slum areas needs government policy revision. For this to be addressed, the government needs a bottom-up approach to ensure the unreliability and inadequacy of water supply systems are solved in the slum areas. (Elayaraja, Devkar, Narayanan, & Annamalai, 2017). For example, Nairobi's fast-growing population puts strain on existing water supplies. In Nairobi, access to safe drinking water is inequitable. Income influences both the environmental quality of one's surroundings and one's usage of urban services, according to UN Habitat. The most affluent groups, which represent less than 10 percent of the Nairobi population, use 30 percent of the domestic water supply. While the less privileged in society, who make up over 64 percent of the population in the city, consume just 35 percent of the water supply, In addition, in slum areas, only 22 percent of families have access to clean drinking water (UN-HABITAT b, 2006).

Moreover, the City Council offers standpipes in a few of the bigger communities. Such are metered and licenced to kiosks run by private citizens and, in certain cases, community-based groups (Alder, 1995). Those water merchants who supply by wheelbarrow typically charge three or more times the council's price. Water is accessible directly to 11.7 percent of the plots in informal communities. The bulk of the population (85.6%) gets their water from kiosks. Roof catchments, boreholes, and river water are the other major sources of water. According to the MHS, 80% of families reported water problems, with pipes frequently running dry (Alder, 1995).

Furthermore, UN Habitat reports that water scarcity affects slum inhabitants the most. As many slum inhabitants have limited access to clean water for bathing and frequently use filthy river water, only 3% of slum homes have access to public water. Rainwater collection options exist in both poor and nonpoor neighbourhoods, and they

should be taken advantage of. Nairobi has occasionally been hit with significant water shortages. In addition to distribution challenges, waste, unauthorised access, overloading, and mishandling all contribute to supply problems.

The council recently handed over water administration to a more commercially oriented but NCC-controlled corporation, which is in charge of distribution, pricing fixing, invoicing, and revenue collection. (UN-HABITAT b, 2006).

Electricity sector: The Kenya Power and Lighting Company provides electricity across Kenya. Nairobi uses 50% of the total national power output annually, primarily for lighting. In Nairobi, 72 percent of households have access to electricity, although the majority of families use kerosene for cooking (68%), with the concomitant high environmental impact (UN-HABITAT, 2007). Additionally, government utilities have several systemic obstacles when it comes to supplying electricity to slums. With regards to the legality of slums and informal settlements. The government has been very careful with regards to the supply of electricity. Using less power per connection, increased transaction costs (including payment monitoring and collection), and electricity theft Increased advance payments and connection expenses, a lack of legal documentation indicating security of tenure, and the threat of eviction all pose problems for slum dwellers. As a result, slum dwellers frequently have illicit access to power. Due to the fear of eviction, a lack of documentation leads to the rejection of power supplies and hinders investing in house renovation. According to data, the issue of land management can go a long way towards increasing access to power in slums (Elayaraja, Devkar, Narayanan, & Annamalai, 2017).

Sanitation: The majority of informal settlements lack sufficient sanitation. A survey conducted by the Metropolitan Household states that 94 percent of people living in informal settlements do not have access to adequate sanitation. Only a few dwellings have toilets; in Kibera and Korogocho, for example, 60% of families do not have immediate access to basic sanitation. In most cases, they share a pit latrine with 50 other individuals (Alder, 1995). In Nairobi, for instance, the majority of people rely on overcrowded and poorly maintained pit latrines. The city council is ineffective and limited to a few districts to provide additional services (UN-HABITAT b, 2006).

Moreover, water-borne sewage is in short supply in informal communities. It also necessitates significant investment in physical infrastructure, such as pipes, pumping

stations, sedimentation ponds, and so on. Because the majority of the population is low-income, such investments are not financially feasible. Furthermore, the dense physical layouts of the towns, as well as the "temporary" character of structures, have made the implementation of water-borne sanitation impossible. Although well-designed and built pit latrines are extremely suitable in many African metropolitan locations, they constitute a significant health threat in many Nairobi slums due to their high density.

Drainage: In most places, drainage is inadequate or nonexistent, resulting in pools of stagnant water. The Undugu Society assisted in the installation of cement-lined drains in one part of Korogocho; however, even these are frequently clogged with waste (Alder, 1995). Another key problem is garbage collection. For years now, the City Council has been battling to provide regular waste collection to all parts of the city. However, wealthy individuals contract private garbage collection companies to pick up their garbage. In the slums, this is not the case, and the city council does not frequently collect garbage in these settlements; collection is limited to removing big mounds of refuse when they represent a health danger. Even this is not done on a regular basis. Most villages have trash areas that are infected with decaying garbage, posing health problems (Alder, 1995).

Finally, health care and education are two main areas that those living in slums find difficult to access. In the health care sector, there are significant discrepancies between informal settlements and middle- and high-income neighbourhoods, as well as differences in health issues. Healthcare is mostly available to middle- and upper-income people through private clinics or government hospitals, whereas informal settlements are mainly excluded. Healthcare expenditures are becoming prohibitive for the poor as a result of privatisation and cost-sharing. Illnesses such as diarrhoea, malaria, and TB impact a huge number of slum residents, particularly children, because people lack access to clean water, improper hygiene, and large population densities. Poor living conditions and high density are additional factors contributing to higher death rates in informal settlements compared to middle- and high-income neighbourhoods. There is an urgent need to address these health challenges, with a particular emphasis on the needs of the urban poor (slums) (UN-HABITAT b, 2006). On the other hand, despite Nairobi's excellent educational facilities, which draw students from all around the country as well as neighbouring countries. These students travel to the capital city to study at prestigious universities and higher institutions. In comparison to the rest of the country, attendance

percentages are typically good, although discrepancies remain at higher levels, particularly among the underprivileged. Most schools in Nairobi's slums are unregistered with the government. Most informal pupils are unable to complete secondary school due to a lack of recognition for informal institutions. Mechanisms for allowing informal school leavers to join secondary schools are desperately needed, and female education should be targeted and pushed explicitly through campaigns and special programmes (UN-HABITAT b, 2006).

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Slums have persisted due to the purposeful segregation of shanty towns from public services. It solidifies the informal status of these settlements and the related power inequalities. The exclusion process has benefited a range of entities with vested interests in sustaining the status quo. The rich and well-connected are the beneficiaries: inhabitants of higher-income neighbourhoods, governmental administrators, and landowners. The advantages accruing to private service suppliers are also consistent with Harvey's argument. The profit of the company and market access limitations show that one group is richer and more connected than the bulk of slum dwellers (Defee, 2009). Slums not only appear to be stuck in a low-human-capital equilibrium, but they also have dysfunctional institutions, low amounts of physical capital, and limited access to established services. It is important to note three main occurrences that might lead to insufficient investment. Firstly, the well-known informality of property rights inherent in slum regions is one aspect. Slum residents lack incentives to enhance the condition of their dwellings and localities because they lack legal land rights. Informal settlements have generally arisen on unoccupied government land, implying that people living there have very illiquid property rights over the land, but they may be enforced locally.

A second aspect is the coexistence of slum congestion and low marginal returns on tiny upgrading initiatives. As a result, it may not be logical for slum inhabitants to fund housing or infrastructure developments. The third, less well-known reason for low investment levels in slums might be the large rent premiums that residents must pay to live close to the city, which reduces possibilities for capital accumulation. While slum inhabitants are commonly thought of as squatters occupying unoccupied public land, available research reveals that a considerable proportion of slum dwellers pay rent (Marx, Stoker, & Suri, 2013). According to Harvey, the 'right to the city' should be seen as either

a fight for fundamental reform and change that would eliminate capitalist urbanisation practises and re-create the metropolitan area in a socialist sense (Frantzanas, 2014). Harvey emphasises the significance of real city-site characteristics such as architectural design and transportation, which have been used as political tools. Due to the obvious site's significance in urban struggles, political authority has reshaped urban infrastructure and life in a variety of ways in order to keep rebellious people under control. This is similar to what we observe in Kenya. Although efforts were made to address and upgrade slums in Nairobi, these were comparatively small in nature. The Nairobi KENSUP programme concentrates on advancing basic services, reducing environmental risks, regularising the security of land tenure, and creating incentives for community development. This manifestation of the existing power structure in slums and beyond is deeply political (DeFe, 2009). To address this, Harvey called for a radical shift in attention away from industry and towards cities and living spaces. According to Harvey, there must be widespread mass support, the idea of work should also include labour for the production and reproduction of an expanding urban daily life, and labourers' difficulties against the recuperation and realisation of excess profit in their living spaces should be valued equally. He believes there should be a form of hierarchical organisation to develop and police the laws that govern the lower and higher levels, from local councils to confederal councils. In summary, he advocates for an anti-capitalist organisation that will be hierarchical (but not opportunist), democratic, and, most of all, really engaged in the battle against the capitalist principle of value that governs the social ties in which we live (Harvey, 2012).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Kenya's situation exemplifies the social isolation of slums and squatter communities from basic access to services. Many times, politicians and government officials blamed urbanisation as the key factor prompting the fast growth of slums in developing countries cities. However, as both Harvey and Davis argue, we should look beyond that and explore economic, institutional, political, social, and historical factors whose impacts are unknown since they have rarely been the focus of a realistic investigation. These economic, social, and political elements are the result of the capitalist system, in which a tiny percentage of the population controls a large share of the wealth. This is not to imply that, in the case of Nairobi, elite bias could account for all inefficiencies. The analysis



typically demonstrates the relationship between ethnic dispersion and class. If the result that elite prejudice is a key explanatory variable in the slum conundrum is correct, it has several consequences. It highlights that if the government wants to deal with the problem of slum upgrading, it must realise the political aspect of slum upgrading as well as the current power imbalance based on economic disparity.

Furthermore, because spatial inequality is a fundamental component of overall inequality, it is critical to address the huge geographical differences in living standards observed between and within metropolitan centres in order to lower total national inequality and poverty levels. However, more study is needed to properly understand the socioeconomic and political mechanisms that drive the creation and repetition of spatial disparities among the country's metropolitan population. Finally, this study discovers that the discriminatory nature of the regulatory regime governing the provision of designated habitation is positively linked to an increase in the frequency of informal settlements or shanty homes. It is therefore important for government officials and local city authorities to work in collaboration with all the necessary stakeholders and partners to put forward policies that will ensure people have access to land in planned residential areas.

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