



Urbanization is, generally speaking, a concomitant of economic development. Urban areas, especially large towns can be seen to offer environment for economic activities and a breeding ground for those ideas and forces which are needed in any process of development. The implication here is that, they are centres of innovations, information dissemination, employment, service etc.

Opposed to this, is the under-development<sup>of</sup> rural areas characterized by under employment and low economic power. This is the basic problem facing the developing countries. Kenya is no exception.

The existence of this dualism in the economies of the developing world has produced the wrong type of urbanization; the domination of the economy by a few large towns of all the economic, social and political life which may present serious problems. The consequent overcrowding of these towns tends to outstrip the opportunities they offer finally initiating a disorderly process of social change.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for provision of a proper interaction between the urban centres and the surrounding rural areas, so that there would be a flow of resources and benefits between the two systems.

It is in this view that a number of developing countries have adopted the 'Growth Poles' strategy, selecting a number of centres for concentrated development within a regional development framework.

" The interdependence between rural and urban areas grows in the process of development and with it comes the enhancement of the role of towns as the producer of goods and services and consumer of agricultural production. This interaction leads to cumulative self-sustaining growth. Urbanization, resulting from expansion of economic opportunities, will therefore be encouraged and will be seen as complementary to rural development in the effort to achieve national development goals".<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is designed to question the assumption in the 'Growth Poles' strategy. Do the service centres improve a regions' potential for adopting innovations?, bring a regions' economic growth which is faster, greater or more assured than would otherwise have occurred?.

Do they save public and private investments, provide a more efficient pattern of service provisions? Do they intercept the would be inigrants from the rural areas. All these questions are asked under one simple question, what is the role of service centres in rural development?. Hence the title of the thesis "Role of Rural Service Centres in Rural Development."

To achieve this end, the thesis looks, in the introduction, at the governments' policy on urbanization and rural development briefly. The problems of the rural service centres and those facing the rural areas are identified and analysed in the same section. Evolution of centres and the colonial Policy on the establishment of centres and businesses as well as restrictions are examined by time periods in chapter one. Chapter two looks at the factors that have encouraged development and growth of these centres. It gives a brief analysis on the development of centres and the characteristics of the retail sales and services as well as the level of provision.

The positive and negative roles of service centres in the development of rural areas in the study area are dealt with in chapter 3. Chapter four provides a synthesis of chapter 2 and 3 and tries to answer the question why some centres are declining thus playing a negative role - mis-utilisation of rural resources - wastage of capital, land and labour.

The criteria for selection of possible growth centres are given in chapter 5. The thesis concludes<sup>with</sup> the findings that, the centres have both positive and negative roles in the development of the rural areas. The positive roles have accelerated the development of rural welfare while the negative ones are depleting the rural resources gradually a case that needs urgent and more attention of the decision makers and Planners if rural development efforts are not to be wasted. Policy recommendations and scope for further research are also given in this last section on summary and conclusions.

#### REFERENCE

- 1 Republic of Kenya: Development Plan 1974-1978  
Government Printer 1974 p.114.