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WHITHER WAY?

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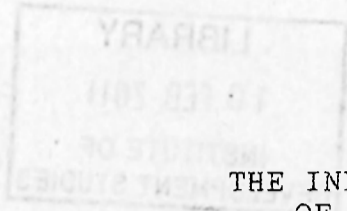
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THE INFORMAL AFRICAN CITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF *JUA KALI* ASSOCIATIONS: WHITHER WAY

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the concept of Informality using the case of the Third World City or what has been referred to in the paper as the "African City" so as to bring this concept closer to home by using local examples wherever possible. The paper attempts to discuss the "informal city" with the hope of coming up with a new analytical framework of the African city and its many social, political and economic structures and processes. The various informal structures in the "African city" are discussed with more emphasis being given to the informal economy, or *Jua Kali* as it has come to be commonly known in Kenya.

The recent rise of *Jua Kali* Associations in Kenyan towns is analyzed with the view of understanding whether the formal introduction of these Associations, both local and national is promoting or killing the spirit of entrepreneurship that has been the engine behind the success of the *Jua Kali* sector in the country. The paper argues that the *Jua Kali* operators had all through been organizing themselves informally in the informal city or town that they operate from and do not need the formalized Associations which to date are seen by the *Jua Kali* operators as an extension of the newly-found government's interest in the sector through the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will analyze the African City (read also Third World) in general but more specifically the city of Nairobi (and other Kenyan towns) with the emphasis that the African City has been struggling to find its own identity since it is distinct from its Western counterpart which it has continued to ape with limited success. I will argue that it is distinct from the Western city in its socio-economic and political organization which gives the "African-ness" in it that should be understood by planners and policy makers trained in the West and who dream of making Nairobi, another London, Abidjan, another Paris or Bujumbura, another Brussels to name but a few.

I will introduce here the concept of "Informality" which will form the basis of the analysis in this paper. This will not be a simple dualistic perspective juxtaposing "formal" and informal" as we have seen these terms especially in the discussions of the economy, (Bromley, R.1979; Moser 1984; De Soto 1989). I will show the multi-complexity of the informality arguing that it transcends in almost all aspects of the African city making it not only distinct from the Western city but also an exciting city to study on its own as to how its socio-economic processes have emerged as being uniquely African. This is despite the common knowledge that the modern African city is purely a colonial creation with the Western city in mind but this has not stopped the emergence of informal housing, informal economy, informal political system all of which make the African city. From what I have said so far, it may appear that the informal is to African as formal is to Western. This is one way of looking at this perspective and given the western education most of us have gone through, such distinction does make sense. The point here is to give it a wider understanding.

The informality concept attempts to resist the kind of emphasis on a formal western city model that has been the pre-occupation of our planners and especially foreign donors who have tended to look down on the way the African cities develop in favor of a Western model. This may explain, for example, the emphasis the World Bank had in the 1970s and 1980s where according to them the site and service schemes were the solution to low income housing. Such schemes were introduced in many African countries, Kenya being one. Research in this area has shown the failure of that particular scheme (Macharia, K. 1985). Indeed it may be in the same view that we may start questioning the over-emphasis on training both technical and management that is being widely sponsored by donors like ODA, Ford Foundation and also the World Bank with a belief from their perspective that this will promote small enterprise development thus increasing Jua Kali activities which as the logic follows will create new jobs and eventually create more income generating opportunities for the countrymen (see for example Kenya's Sessional Paper No.1 of 1992 on Jua Kali and Employment). What this has produced is what a casual observer notes, that is, the physical structure of the downtown Nairobi for example resembling London but that may be as far as the similarities go. There may have been rational decisions (city planning) for the layout to become a reflection of the former colonial capitals but the socio-economic and political organization has remained predominantly African where the formal has continued to be informed by informal contacts either through voluntary associations, kinship networks, ethnic groups or associations, football clubs that the officials in the formal decision-making bodies belong to.

One interesting area that has come about as a result of this informality which is very African is the development of the informal sector activities,

popularly referred to as Jua Kali activities in Kenya. Also with this and especially with influence from the formal side have emerged Jua Kali Associations both locally and nationally all claiming that they are representing the small scale entrepreneur. I will analyze the emergence of such Associations based on research into some of these Associations carried out earlier this year (1993) and also partly based on a three-month stint of experience working on a day to day basis in 1992 at the Headquarters of the Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Associations. The role of these associations in an area that has been growing on informal lines and the attempts to formalize it through close association of the government of Kenya and foreign donor agencies goes back to further the area of inquiry that is still puzzling, mainly the search for identity of the African city and some of the processes that emerge and grow in them like the Jua Kali phenomenon in the Kenyan context and its general impact in our towns. The Jua Kali Associations discussion in this paper are therefore an extension and a further elaboration of the argument of informality of the African city that is part of the core of this paper.

The African city is socially informal. It has come into being as a result of rural-urban migration. The majority of those who migrate come into the cities using various kinds of social networks (Macharia, 1987 and 1989). Such networks could be along such informal lines as relatives, friends, former school mates, members of the same religious faith and others. It is not unusual that there will be conflicts of interests between the formal and the informal where for instance in such an ethnic-conscious nation like Kenya, evidence of this which may be explained by the current ethnic clashes in the country which have been hitting the press headlines.

Formal policies will eventually be seen to conflict with existing informal processes in our cities. Although I had not elaborately used the concept I am using in this paper, my analysis of the slum clearance in Nairobi especially the case of Muoroto is a good example of such conflict between what we are generally referring to as the formal versus the informal (Macharia, 1992).

THE INFORMAL AFRICAN CITY

The African city, like its Third world counterpart in Asia or Latin America, is distinct from the western city in many ways. Thus, when we see such a book title in the market as African Cities In Crisis (Stren and White 1989) we should read it with the concept of informality in mind and question whether the western authors saw the African city from that perspective before declaring it to be in a crisis. Informality here is referring to defiance of formalized ways to do things. In this particular context formal is equivalent to western while informal is equivalent to traditional/African. The latter could be seen as "formal" in the traditional African ways of doing things but put in the international literature about cities, there is informality especially because right from the colonial days to the present, most African cities are struggling to achieve the (formal) western norms and processes.

Indeed, the same argument would be advanced for the state--- that very important institution responsible for policies and programs which ideally should shape the African city. Thus even the African state is still struggling to catch up with the west yet it is very African in its composition. New waves of system

processes usually hit the African state emerging from the west and the dilemma and the continuous search for identity continues to become more of the norm of the African state rather than the exception. For example the current so-called second liberation that is taking place in many African states from West Africa to East Africa calling for multiparty democracy is an induced dose from the west with stiff conditionalities as in the case of Kenya where foreign aid has been suspended for almost two years.

New catch phrases are introduced in the African state which are ideally formal and reflecting western thought and not taking into account of the African's informality. Thus in Kenya in the last two years, one hears of "democratization", "human rights", "transparency and accountability"--all these reflecting western socio-economic and political norms. Such western norms may be ignoring at the expense of chaos in the state such informalised Africans systems where nepotism, tribalism, the influence of the council of elders much more than a modern state machinery of administrative officers have been the order of the day and continue to struggle hard to be accepted in the superficially westernized African state. Senior appointments in the state's public companies which have been described as hot-beds of corruption by opposition leaders (Sunday Nation, October 21, pp. 12-13) are another element of the African state leadership in action using informal justifications for appointing senior people rather than formal justifications which would ideally be their level of western qualifications so as to be able to run what is itself a complex western organization. Students of African political systems at state level have described the patron-client system of governance as being typically African (Jackson and Rosberg 1982)

This dilemma at the state level is reflected in our cities virtually in all civic government out there. The experience in the city of Nairobi in the 1980s when it was run by commissions appointed by the Minister of Local Government showed high degree of mismanagement that partly could be explained by the incompetence of the commissioners who may have been appointed for other reasons eg. nepotism, political patronage, tribalism etc. (appointments based much more on informal qualifications as opposed to formal qualifications which would probably have been more befitting to run such a modern city ideally one that looks like a western city). Such informal justifications of appointment are in conflict with the modern formal city yet we have to understand that its management has to emerge from this informality that becomes the core of major decisions to be made. This may also explain why the former "green city in the sun" has become a forest of concrete in the last ten years, where former public playgrounds or just open space have become commercial buildings.

An example is the former green space just opposite the University of Nairobi. When I was a college student in the late seventies, this area used to be green and beautiful and a nice place to walk by instead of walking through on the concrete and the heavy traffic of University way. Today it is a forest of concrete with such tall buildings as the View Park Towers, obviously by its suggestive name, blocking the view of Uhuru park to the majority Nairobians and only reserving it for the privileged view who could afford the expensive office space in this building like the infamous Exchange Bank of the Goldenberg scandal, or some multinational agencies like the World Bank. Other tall buildings built on this formerly green space are the Anniversary Towers right opposite the University which was the home of the infamous Youth for Kanu '92. Without proof

of details on this matter, which is outside the scope of this paper, suffice is to say that it is commonly alleged that some influential personalities, again using that informality aspect -- possibly nepotism or tribalism may have been used to allocate such green spaces to some politically powerful individuals who have changed what had been formally well planned as an open space to be enjoyed by Nairobi residents. This is another example of the conflict between the formal and the informal.

About three years ago here in Kenya, there was the big controversy between the well known environmentalist cum political activist, Prof. Wangari Maathai who led a crusade of committed environmentalists to oppose the construction of a 66-story building which was to be put right in the middle of the Uhuru Park opposite Serena Hotel (which should not also be where it is going by this argument as it also took up part of the public park) using such informal influences in the corridors of power.

In the residential areas, the use of such informal ways to acquire public land for private development is so common that one may think it is the norm in our cities. Outcries of such incidence have been noted in Buru Buru, where for example a former Chairman of the City Commission has allegedly put up a huge building in what was formerly public land, or the awful case of a former football playground in Uhuru estate where some influential personality, again using informal connections was permitted to put up a commercial building encompassing a butchery, bar and boarding rooms, and what is worse, turning the remaining part of the playground into a car park, with patrons drinking from their cars and littering the place with all sorts of environmental hazards like broken glass from bottles and other kinds of litter.

Soccer players can no longer use the park and the stench from this abused former soccer field is both an eye sore and a nuisance to the immediate residents. Another case of informality? Maybe! Such examples are many in Nairobi and in other towns in Kenya and anybody reading this paper would come up with at least two more examples.

Planning the African City

Until only very recently when some African city planners are starting to appreciate the need to plan for the African family in the city, all planning from the times of the colonial masters to the post-colonial period has been wholly western. African cities have been replicas of their colonial master's cities, thus Nairobi, Harare and Lusaka for example being a replica of London, Abidjan, Dakar and Algiers being a replica of Paris while Bujumbura and Kinshasha are a replica of Brussels and the list could go on. Such an attempt to duplicate the African city for its western counterpart in the planning has been going on despite the fact that different reasons account for the rise of the African cities. Some of these include:

a) Administration.

Most African capital cities like Nairobi were started as administrative locations for the colonial power. The hinterland which was to be exploited by the colonial power was to be governed from the administrative towns set up for that purpose. Smaller towns in Kenya like the former Fort Hall (Murang'a), Kapsabet,

Machakos were also started mainly for administrative purposes and not to accommodate the Africans as is the case today.

b) Commercial.

Some towns in Kenya, for example those that are in the heartland of the former white highlands, were started mainly to serve the colonial settler's commercial needs. Stores to buy seeds and household items in supermarkets were established to serve the white farmers. Storage places for their harvests were built up increasing the town size. Also, food processing and canning industries depending on the local farm products were established. Examples of such towns in Kenya include Nakuru, Eldoret, Thika. The railway line also helped the establishment of other towns such as Nanyuki or Solai, which grew also to serve commercial needs of the colonial settlers. Indeed, the city of Nairobi mainly started as a railway headquarters and acquired the administrative position gradually.

c) Africans' rural-urban migration.

Various reasons accounted for the influx of Africans to the towns which were mainly a reserve of the whites in this country and later the Asian businessmen. The introduction of wage labor in the 1920s started to attract the Africans to the towns. Landlessness which started in some areas of Kenya for example as a result of occupation of African lands by the white settlers and later on due to population increase especially in Central and Western province became a major push-factor of rural people coming to the rural areas.

The rural-urban migration has been one major factor that has caused a very rapid growth of the African city especially after independence in most countries. In settler colonies like in Kenya and Zimbabwe for example the towns were strictly for the whites prior to independence. The laws restricting Africans particularly those without jobs were relaxed and almost a completely new urban form emerged characterized by overcrowding in the few houses put up for Africans; unemployment and underemployment for the majority who came to town. The numbers of new migrants were very high to the extent that most African cities doubled their populations within a decade from the time of their independence.

The hope for a brighter future in the African city was a major pull factor for the majority of the new migrants. Such hopes were built by friends, relatives or rural neighbors who may have been residents in the town before. Passing information through informal networks as to the possibilities of getting a job became the order of the day and more new migrants came into the cities and started to compete for the few job opportunities available especially in the formal sector, that is the government, local and multinational companies etc. This was not enough, and informal systems of employment especially in the informal sector started developing and absorbing most of the migrants especially those without high educational qualifications. The magnitude of rural-urban migration in the African city especially in the 1960s and 1970s is so high that it cannot be compared with the migration that took place in the western cities be it rural-urban or international migration as was the case with most North American cities.

d. Natural increase.

The increase of the population through the natural birth has also been a major contributor to the African city's rapid growth. This has caused unique problems similar to those brought about by rural-urban migration like overcrowding and unemployment. The population rise through natural birth are much higher than those of the western city.

Settling in Cities on Informal Lines.

Very few people come to the African city assured of a house by either an employer, college administration or any other kind of a formal organization. A majority of new migrants enquire from kith and kin or friends before they take up the journey to the city. These people who form part of their social network are used as possible resources for housing. It is rare that new migrants for example will apply to the City Hall's department of housing in search of a house. They may eventually live in a city council house but usually this will be acquired through informal networks established after a few months stay in the city. Others will rely on word of mouth from their friends or relatives to know where houses are available.

I contrast the reliance of the informal networks in searching for a house to settle in the African city to the western cities where a lot of faith and trust has been put on real estate agencies. People in the western cities have gained confidence in such agencies, and rarely does one hear the concern of "who do I know in such and such city that I am moving to." Americans, for example, are constantly moving to the west coast, mid-west, the East coast or the South in search of new opportunities, schools, retirement etc. Their first contact in

the city they move into is usually a real estate agent or one of the established hotel or motel chains. In very few cases do they have personal contacts. They fully trust in the formal establishment which we may add, also tends to deliver. The Africans living in the West also have come to have faith and confidence in such agencies while in the West but not when they are back in their African cities. For example, when I (this author) moved from Nairobi to the Boston area in the USA I fully trusted the hotel industry and the institution I was going to work in to arrange for my accommodation, and it worked. I did not know anybody hence I could not use my informal networks. But on the contrary whenever I am coming back to Nairobi, I have to call a friend or a relative to seek accommodation either in a hotel or in a house somewhere. Rarely does the thought of calling the hotel directly or a real estate company come in. It seems like there is a cultural reinforcement of relying more on informal networks than on the formal organizations that may be explained by my being an African going back to the African city! A leading contemporary sociologist, Anthony Giddens (1990), makes the argument that the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in systems, especially expert systems like banking, real estate, and education. While this modernity may have taken root in the West, we argue here that trustworthiness in the African city is not well established.

The significant point we draw from the above example is that a more socially cohesive arrangement, that is a strong social-cultural way of life previously described by early anthropologists especially Radcliffe, still exists in the African city. It is the social informality that continues to defy the Wirth's (1938) thesis of "urbanism as a way of life" which cited anonymity, superficiality and individuality as guiding pillars of city life with high

economic competition and disregard of social networks. While the thesis here was for some time accepted in the western cities, researchers like Fischer (1982) and Wellman (1988) have shown in their works that the social cultural basis of life is still prevalent especially among different ethnic communities that have settled in the American cities.

In the African city, almost all aspects of life depend on the socio-cultural origins of different players much more than say, economic-political as the basis of interaction or development. In other words residents in the African cities will first identify themselves and seek cooperation among people with a similar social and cultural background. If there will be economic or political cooperation it will emanate from the strong ties established from the socio-cultural background. While this may look commonplace, it is fundamental in understanding the basis of the informality that is so characteristic of the African city in comparison with the western city.

Informal Structures in the African City

There are a number of informal structures that can be identified with the African city and only a few will be discussed here. The first one that is predominantly striking is informal housing. In a city that is supposedly a replica of the western city as argued earlier, we argue that about 60% of all housing in the African city like Nairobi are informal. This refers to "housing schemes" established by the Africans themselves when they settle in the city which defy formal rules and guidelines that would otherwise be expected in the western city.

The squatter settlements in Mathare, Kibera, Mukuru, Kangemi, Kawangware to name but a few in Nairobi account for the majority of houses that Nairobians live in. (The current mayor of Nairobi was quoted by Daily Nation of Dec 1 1993 as saying that 60% of Nairobians live in slums.) The comparable number of those living in city council houses or others by either government developers through National Housing Corporation or private developers who follow the set formal building standards and by-laws are much fewer. The less attractive shanty housing structures either in cardboard material, polythene bags or simple corrugated iron sheets that are so common in most of the African cities form part of the informal housing which in magnitude would by itself qualify the African city to be referred to as the informal city. Or could one say there are two cities in one?

Another form of informal structure that could be identified is the political organization in the African city. A deliberate comparison here will be given by making the argument that political organization in most western cities is influenced a lot by the powerful business community. Leaders elected, be they mayors or aldermen are seen to represent business interests especially of the big companies. Power-machines like in the case of Chicago in the 1960s -1970s are put in operation with heavy financial backing from big business which becomes identifiable with such western city's political organization. On the contrary, the political organization of the African city is so much influenced by social-cultural factors particularly ethnicity--or is it tribalism? One may extend the argument here beyond the city and say the same still applies for most African states but since this paper is more concerned with the African city, we will limit our examples to the city.

The December 1992 multi-party elections in Kenya countrywide showed a major

influence of the ethnicity in the way the voters choose their leaders, sometimes in disregard of what the leaders can deliver. The four major parties countrywide (i.e. Kanu, Ford-A, Ford-K; and DP) both in rural areas and in the towns are still very heavily ethnically and regionally biased as well. Civic and parliamentary leaders in Nairobi for example were elected mainly as a result of the informal networks they had formed through their ethnic social networks. The political party in which these leaders were elected was first and foremost a concoction of their ethnic and regional affiliations worked out by the leader and his or her supporters prior to formalization of the process during the voting day.

The informal process which took place prior to the December 29 1992 in the city of Nairobi is more critically and analytically important as it portrays clearly the informal political structure that leads to the idea of informality in the African cities. A recent visit to Harare and an investigation in this issue showed the same ethnic influence in the political organization of this city that is the capital of Zimbabwe despite the fact that it is only about thirteen years since Harare was dominated by a western kind of political organization based more on the business community's influence.

Another informal structure that has attracted many studies (Ngethe and Ndua 1992, Macharia 1989) in recent years is what has been referred to as the informal sector. It has also been Kenyanized and referred to as the Jua Kali sector and there are attempts by the government to "formalize" what has grown purely on informal lines in the Kenyan towns. Growth of economic activities with one to ten workers outside legally zoned areas and with least or no government regulations has been generally agreed to modestly define the informal sector. The

Jua Kali on the other hand while popularly accepted by most Kenyans as an equivalent to the informal sector has gained a technical usage that has been advanced more by the government through the Ministry of Research Technical Training and Technology also loosely referred to as the Jua Kali Ministry. The technical usage refers to all those economic activities that utilize technical skills to manufacture, assemble, service various products. The emphasis here is the use of technical skills. Thus second-hand clothes (mitumba) seller would fit more in the informal sector definition while a tailor or a garment maker would fit more in the Jua Kali definition. We will use the term Jua Kali here more loosely and it may encompass other small scale businessmen and women who may not necessarily be utilizing any kind of technical skills.

The Jua Kali development in this country has been going on since the 1960s. Those involved in it have been artisans and other small scale entrepreneurs who have been more concerned with the products they develop and where to get the market for them in order to make a little money for their families. Those involved have in almost all ways relied on informal systems to establish their business including informal training of skills through apprenticeship, informal banks, mainly from money lenders who are relatives or friends, informal marketing, that is not necessarily through the chamber of commerce branches of the various towns. These people have utilized their informal social networks to enter their trade and to develop them.

The government started showing some interest in this sector in the mid 1980s as evidenced by such policy papers like the 1986 Sessional Paper NO.1 which emphasized the development of the informal sector/Jua kali as the answer to the unemployment that was increasing in the country and also as a way of increasing

income opportunities for the country. Some of the intervening measures that were introduced towards achieving that goal included provision of infrastructure symbolized by the Jua Kali sheds like the one in Kamukunji, which was among the first of many to come up in various Kenyan towns; provision of land for the Jua Kali artisans in various towns; recognizing the sector by for example having a Directorate in charge of Jua Kali, lessening the harassment that was more the order of the day for the Jua Kali businessmen prior to 1986. Suffice is to say that such harassment has not disappeared and can still be recorded in almost every town in Kenya. While the government promised to create an enabling environment for the development of Jua Kali and small enterprise in general, the promise is yet to be achieved. This may explain why there has been a development of Jua Kali Associations which are like civic associations founded to rally together the Jua Kali artisans in particular and more so to act as lobby groups for their grievances.

The Jua Kali Associations which are now to be found in most towns in Kenya grew up informally as a result of artisans and other traders coming together with the aim of speaking with one voice whenever the city police as was common in Nairobi demolished their kiosks or the sheds they operated from. They were ideally loose associations. Some performed the function of bailing each other out financially in case one of the members had a problem like lack of school fees of a child, sickness, confiscation of goods by authorities and at times laying marketing strategies for their goods.

In the last three years, these informal associations have been taking a new formal role. not only of organizing the small scale businessmen and women, some who are artisans, welders, mechanics etc. but also acting as a link between the

government, donors and the artisans. This attempt to formalize the formerly informal associations in the informal city is the subject of the remaining few pages of this paper.

The Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology through the Directorate of Applied Technology has been behind the mushrooming of Jua Kali Associations in Nairobi as well as other towns in Kenya. These Associations have acquired a new formal role of liaising with the government. This would be a very good role but if played wrongly, it could be a problem. It is in this context that we ask the question; "Whither way for these Associations?" which are acting formal in a traditionally informal environment, which are introducing too many formal requirements thus losing touch with the original ideals of the informal associations, and which are too quick to look up to the donor community which poses the question to us as to whether it is for the common man Jua Kali operator or it is for the officials who lead the now formalized Jua Kali Associations in the disguised role of civic Associations.

Field Work on Jua Kali Associations

From October 1992 to the present, I have had an interest in the rise and development of Jua Kali Associations in Kenyan towns which in a broad sense fit the discussion above of the African city. While doing research on Jua kali and small scale enterprise in six towns, three small ones: namely Siaya, Muranga and Karatina; and three big ones, namely Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa, the role of Jua Kali associations especially in promoting the development of the Jua Kali sector itself or the small enterprises in general has been a major question. A working hypothesis to answer this question has been "Jua Kali Associations may promote

small enterprise development" The alternative being "Jua Kali Associations may kill the entrepreneurial spirit among the Jua kali entrepreneurs".

More precisely, are the Jua kali Associations both local and national ones doing more harm than good to the small enterprise development in this country and particularly in the towns where the majority of them are? The experience from the local Associations is that there are mixed feeling among the Jua Kali operators themselves. A minority of those who are members of the Associations said they benefited from being members most of them now for about to three years. An interview with those who said they benefited revealed that they had either got a space to work from in one of the sheds that have been put up in their towns, or their marketing had been improved by the fact that through the association they were able to be concentrated in one area which made it easier for the customers to reach them.

Those who reported that they did not find the association beneficial said they felt exploited to be paying on average Ksh 50.00 per month and an extra Ksh 10.00 payable to the National body of which the local Association is usually a member. They felt this was a rip-off especially those who had not benefited from any space in the Jua Kali sheds, had not got any loan or grant through the initiatives of the Association, had not got any plot though some members got some (as in the case of Mombasa Jua kali Association) and had to attend endless meetings called by the officials. These group with such dissatisfactions preferred the good old days when the association was so informal and attended to quite localized needs than the latter ones which some Jua Kali artisans accused of being too politicized instead of showing concern for the members problems.

Some of the members also complained that besides paying some money to the local and National Associations, they also had to register with the Directorate of Applied Technology and that also cost money. For these small-scale entrepreneurs, any little amount taken away from their businesses hurts. They felt that the Associations were becoming like the extended arm of the government and the officials acting like extension officers to propagate government policy. They also fear that these associations may be the entry point of the income tax official whom the Jua Kali have so far avoided.

The Mombasa Jua Kali Association, for example, at the time of research in December 1992 claimed to have a membership of 1600 members, the largest in the country. This may be explained by the fact that unlike in Nairobi or Kisumu where at least three Jua Kali Associations are registered, the whole of Mombasa, that is, on the island, Likoni, Kisauni and Changanwe all belonged to one Jua Kali Association. The officials painted a rosy picture of their Association and were ready to enumerate their achievements mainly acquisition of land for the Jua Kali in Likoni, Kaa Chonjo and Miritini where they took us to witness. They also have Jua Kali sheds near the refinery where a few of the artisans operate from which is also the home of their office.

The Kaa Chonjo site is the most developed partly because it is on the island and adjacent to the main Nairobi-Mombasa highway. The government official charged to oversee the activities of such organizations was not as pleased with the Association as the officials were. The government official has the title of Provincial Technical Training Officer and is an employee of the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology. He was unhappy with the way the officials had allocated themselves large plots in the best sites at the expense

of majority of the members. He also accounted cases of nepotism, and open favoritism of those allocated, some of whom were not members of the Association but were well known or related to the officials. During our visit to the Kaa Chonjo site, we noted the disproportional large plots to the senior officials compared with the small plots of the rest of the members. An interview with majority of the members revealed a lot of dissatisfaction. Many had still not been allocated any plot and they had decided to withdraw their membership by refusing to subscribe their membership fees.

The few women who were members of this association felt exploited by the men officials and were planning to form their own association which could address the women's concern better than the Mombasa Jua Kali Association. They were unhappy with the allocation of plots. Ironically, land promises is one major factor that has rallied most of the Jua Kali operators to want to become members of these Associations. When there are outcries of corruption during the allocation process, this indeed kills the Association and demoralizes the previously excited artisans. This is true of the Mombasa Jua Kali Association.

In Kisumu, there were three Jua Kali Associations, one at the famous Kibuye market and two formerly bitter rivals near Kisumu's industrial area where there is a proposed site for the Jua Kali artisans. A reconciliation of the two rival Associations was facilitated by the Ministry of Technical Training with the senior most civil servant, the permanent secretary, going to Kisumu to settle the differences. The Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Association official also went to Kisumu to help settle the differences. This is a case of the formal system intervening with the informal. The approach for the reconciliation bordered on intimidation from these officials from Nairobi who told the two

Kisumu Jua Kali Associations that if they did not unite, the government would not assist them because they would not know which Association was legitimate. In Kisumu, since there was a promise of plot allocation in the site at the industrial area, the members there were very enthusiastic about the now merged Association and expressed support. On the other hand, the Association based in Kibuye market was not supported much by the members and most of the members claimed that they did not see the use of it because only a few individuals who were close to the officials benefited from it.

The carpenters and the women tailors in this market who used to be members had already ceased to be members. They decried the membership contribution which they felt benefited the welders, and metal artisans who were mainly the officials. There was no promise of land allocation in Kibuye and this may explain the lack of enthusiasm. We can deduce from the Kisumu case that there has to be certain incentives to join these formalized Jua Kali Associations and once those incentives are not delivered, the collapse of the association becomes imminent. Due to disappointments and frustrations that may befall such members who do not realize the promises given, the entrepreneurial spirit could be killed among these small-scale entrepreneurs.

In the other towns similar sentiments were expressed by the members. In Nairobi there are many Associations as almost each area of operation has its own. For example in Kamukunji, there is the Kamukunji Jua Kali Association; in Matharæ there is one with the same name, along Rabai Road near Buruburu there is another one with the same name; so is one in Kibera, Kariobangi etc. In the small towns like Karatina and Siaya there is one Association which purports to represent all the Jua Kali operators in these towns. In Murang'a, there are two:

one in the main town called Murang'a Jua Kali Association and another one Mukuyu which was not active during the time of our research since there were disagreements among officials. The Murang'a case is also interesting in that the Jua Kali Association which is active happens to be the recipient of the Jua Kali sheds which have been put up by the government--another kind of incentive to formalize into an Association. This raises the question of the sustainability of these Associations in the small enterprise development in this country and particularly in Kenyan towns.

One thing that was common with all these Associations is that they looked down upon artisans, tailors or carpenters, for example who were not members (paid up members). To the officials of these Associations, those who have not formally registered and paid the membership dues are not Jua Kali operators. In one exercise where we were enumerating all Jua Kali operators in some of the towns mentioned here, the officials would openly skip an operator who is his immediate neighbor simply because he is not a member. This attitude has developed as a result of those leading the Associations believing that outside aid will only come through the Associations, a point that has been emphasized by the Ministry of Technical Association. It is therefore a system of reward and punishment where you are rewarded for being a member of the Association and punished if you are not or if you choose to continue operating in the informal way you had always known prior to the introduction of these formalized associations. This in our view is wrong. Most of the Associations in the towns visited tend to be exclusive and therefore not fully encompassing all the Jua Kali operators in these towns.

National Jua Kali Associations

Besides the local Jua Kali Associations that are based in various towns, there have emerged also in the last three to five years what may be referred to as National Jua Kali Associations. They may be referred to as such since it is not evidently clear that they are representative of all the Jua Kali operators in the country.

The first of these national associations is the Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Associations with its headquarters in Nairobi. This "Federation" as it is popularly referred came into existence at the beginning of 1992. It has the support of the government through the Ministry of Technical Training whose officials were instrumental in legitimizing it and organizing the first national elections at the Kenya Polytechnic in February 1992. This author worked on an advisory/consultant capacity for about three months and came to learn the strengths and weakness of such a national organization. Unlike the others that do not enjoy direct government support, the Federation while enjoying this also suffers legitimation from the ordinary Jua Kali who as we have continually argued had always organized themselves along informal lines.

Most artisans I talked to refer to this Federation as a government unit and some argue that the elections were rigged in favor of those who were seen as willing partners with the Ministry officials. This has been hard to verify as the government officials usually allege that a fair election was conducted and the best men and women won. This is not what most Jua Kali operators believe. The Federation, again with the support of the government managed to get a foreign donor in the name of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) a German based donor that has

been quite conspicuous in Kenya funding those with activities that could be generally referred to as social democratic. The foreign donor gave funds for the elections and also for establishing the offices in a posh section of Nairobi.

In an interview with the director of FES, we learnt that they see their role as the donor for the Federation as one way of educating the Jua Kali operators about their political rights. Their logic is that once you know your political rights, you may also demand better working conditions and you may eventually raise your economic well-being. For them therefore, the Federation is like a civic institution which should be politically astute to lobby for the common man who in this case is the Jua Kali operator.

The problem with this particular conceptualization is that when the Federation is so closely linked with the government one wonders when it will stand out against the government's oppressive regulations towards the Jua Kali sector. One is not suggesting some kind of adversary roles between the two. It could be complementarity but from the experience in the three months there, the Federation was more in tune with what the Ministry of Technical Training was suggesting. They were either elaborating or advancing the Ministry's ideas and rarely did they show some originality to keep up with the donor's idea that they should lobby for the Jua Kali operators.

The leadership was itself unprofessional although this may be seen as part of teething problems of any new organization. The local Jua Kali Association had not been quite convinced that they should become members because they were concerned as to the what benefits their membership would award. In brief, the Federation did not represent all the Jua Kali operators and their close association with the government was turning out to be more of a liability than

an asset in terms of recruiting members. Again it must be understood that the local Jua Kali artisan is more concerned with making a new product, coming up with a more competitive design, marketing the product than with the national politics which seems to be the pre-occupation of the Federation.

Another national association is the Kenya National Organization of Jua Kali Associations with its headquarters in Eldoret. This Association popularly referred to as the "Kenya National" has tried to gain legitimacy with the government through the Ministry of Technical Training without much success. The Ministry even in this era of multi-party democracy is still insisting on one representation. Some of the officials in the Ministry feel that other national associations should be allowed to operate and compete among themselves in their delivery of services to the Jua Kali operators. This view is held by middle level civil servants in this ministry but not by the senior-most ones who make the final decisions.

The Eldoret based national association is seen as a rival of the Federation and has continued to play that role of the rival. They claim to have national representation but I would say they are disadvantaged by being so far from the national capital. They however do have representation in Nairobi and indeed a number of Nairobi's associations like the Rabai Road, the populous Kamukunji Jua Kali association belong to the Eldoret based Association. Their ideology is different from that of the federation --they believe more in getting their mandate from the local Jua Kali operators and not necessarily being closely aligned with the government through the Ministry. To some extent they are still keeping up with the informalized way of dealing with their members. They have been talking of possible donors but none had been identified as yet early in the

year when we talked to the officials. One area of rivalry between these associations is that the "National Organization" existed much earlier than the "Federation" which was a recent creation.

The third registered national organization is the Jua Kali Co-operative and Kazi organization, with its headquarters in Nairobi. This one has been a bit on the low profile due to illness of its chairman who was very articulate on Jua Kali needs prior to falling ill. It started like a co-operative as its name suggests with members contributing money that would be shared or that would be invested jointly. It has members countrywide and it is quite practical in its approach. Like the "National Organization" above, it too has no direct association with the Ministry of Technical Training who also view it as a rival of the Federation, though it performs different roles like that of bringing the Jua Kali together as a co-operative.

Advantages and Disadvantages of these Associations (National and Local)

There are some advantages that could be deduced from the operations of these associations that have come up in the last few years. These include:

- a). Associations could be good and helpful in organizing the small-scale entrepreneurs to keep up with the rapid changing economic system in the African cities, especially with the influence from outside of the structural adjustment programmes.
- b) If run properly and without corruption, they could be trusted to put together scarce resources either from foreign donors, the government or private companies.

- c) They could be particularly useful in disseminating information either for marketing or improving products of their members.
- d) They could also if unbiased act as lobbyists for the Jua Kali operators and hopefully promote production and sales.

There are also disadvantages of these associations, some of which have already been mentioned. These include:

- a) The danger of excluding or ostracizing those Jua kali operators who are not paid-up members of the associations thus benefiting only the few who can afford membership.
- b) Nepotism practices especially during allocation of shed or plots at the expense of other members. This is more practiced by officials of these associations
- c) There is a clear gender bias favoring men and giving a raw deal to the few women who are members. The women see these associations as a men's world and are not willing to become members meaning that they will also get excluded when sharing of rewards comes.
- d) Tribalism especially by officials in those association like in Mombasa and Nairobi where multi-ethnicity is common place among the Jua Kali operators.
- e) Withdrawal of members because of various disappointments thus killing their morale especially when the promised incentives are not delivered.
- f) Exploitation by officials and their close associates when the membership dues are misappropriated. This also kills the entrepreneurial spirit among the Jua Kali operators.

The role of Associations need to be redefined and should take into account the local socio-cultural environment in every town that they operate. If the close association with the government does not go well with the members, then the association should refrain from it. If there are no rewards forthcoming the officials should be direct and forthright so as not to kill the hopes of would be co-operators in the future. Empowering the associations by letting them advocate their real needs and concern should be the goal. All aspects of informality that worked prior to the introduction of the formal Jua Kali Associations should be incorporated to attract more members.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the informality that characterizes the African city. This could be Nairobi or any other of the Kenyan towns that have been mentioned. The same concept could be applied to other African cities as well as other Third World cities using the theoretical framework advanced in this paper. The discussion of the Jua Kali sector as one of the informal structures (economic) which is currently the main section of the economy that is creating jobs in the African city qualifies more the unique identity that we have tried to portray in the African city. We have also analyzed the significance of the newly formed Jua Kali Associations which are acting in a formalized version (especially their close association with the formal government organs like the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology). We have discussed the problems with this especially when being imposed on a section of the economy that has thrived on informal lines during its past. The informal African city does exist and informal systems still exist and the modern which are formal have to

recognize the informal and derive any policy recommendation from that understanding. The search for identity of the African city and its various structures should therefore be understood and analyzed from the framework that has been presented here. There is really an African city with its unique social structures different from the Western city.

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