



THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
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**TRANSFORMATION OF BUILT FORMS
CASE OF RIVER ROAD, NAIROBI**

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**TRANSFORMATION OF BUILT FORM
CASE OF RIVER ROAD STREET, NAIROBI**



DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and to the best of my knowledge has not been presented for a degree in any other University

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DEDICATION

TO GOD AND TO MY FAMILY

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I wish to pass my heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals who have in many ways impacted in the completion of this thesis, and also played a role in my journey through my studies.

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ABSTRACT

Human population in cities all over the world has dramatically increased causing fragmentation of the urban fabric (UNHSP – UN-HABITAT), 2013,)The increasing urban population leads to changes in the physical form of cities caused by the demand of spaces and services.

The United Nations report on the state of world population indicate that by 2030, the urban populations in Africa and Asia will double (HABITAT 2012).

As cities grow and develop, considerable strain is placed on city fragments, and they have to constantly transform and grow to accommodate the ballooning population. This growth contributes to increase in commercial activities as well as increases the need for housing. The city thus expands, takes over the neighbouring low density residential areas.

Areas initially designed to handle low-density urban developments have to contend with needs of increased commercial and residential activity.

African cities have transformed considerably in the post-independence period, including economic base, forms of ownership, architectural view, land structure, methods of planning and governance. However, the patterns of such transformation are significantly varying for different types of cities. In this thesis the architectural transformation processes and the factors that drive urban transformations are discussed. The author focuses on the built form transformation in Nairobi and specifically the Historical street of River Road. The author concentrates his effort on analysing the modes of built form transformation. Considerable attention is paid to identifying the reasons of urban transformation, and the transforming elements in these built forms. The transformational pattern is analysed in the context of older development juxtaposed to the new transformed built forms.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The city of Nairobi, which is the capital of Kenya, is ever-changing and in its different districts have undergone various physical and functional transformations. These changes are occasioned by rapid urbanization that results in an increase of consumers of commercial spaces in the city. This has led to different parts of the city being spontaneously developed. The current developments in the city and its suburbs are characterized by transformations of the existing built forms and demolitions for new high-rise buildings. While one may understand and explain the design of the emerging built forms, there is a gap in understanding how the urban built forms are evolving. This thesis seeks to contribute to this discussion by documenting and then analyzing the changing building type in River Road which have undergone transformation in the last three decades. This will add considerable knowledge and also propose particular design strategies on this part of the city that will contribute to future planning of a sustainable city.

This evolving of built forms, driven by different motives like the quests for better urban life, search for economic sustainability, adaptability of forms for changing functions has been left to uncontrolled market forces. This thesis also seeks to Investigate and propose design guidelines for transformation of built urban built forms and spatial adaptations that will accentuate River Road's sense of place and showcase the original expression of the cultures through built forms.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The changing built forms in River Road, with new contemporary buildings coming up at an accelerated pace has led to River Road's character of built forms being progressively eroded. The current rate of redevelopment does not show any signs of slowing down.

The architectural heritage of the city is tightly tied to its character and history. Despite the rich architectural history portrayed by this old built forms, old buildings in the city are being pulled down at an alarming rate to pave the way for gleaming structures that announce the departure of Nairobi from its historical moorings.(Wanjiku,2013).

The old buildings represented an irreplaceable heritage that is an important legacy of the present generation to the later ones, especially in terms of culture, aesthetics, educational, and inspirational benefit. This have ben demolished and in their stead structures with little regard for the history, culture and environment quality.

In River road, Nairobi, a major street in Downtown Nairobi area, Commercial developments have sprung up in a haphazard manner. This has led to chaotic scenes where old buildings and every available space has been altered for commercial use. This leads to poor quality of public open spaces and the structures inhibit accesses. The result has been a place without a sense of space, character, and appeal.

As noted by Sheuya (2004) "continued transformations of built forms and land uses which are triggered by need for economic gains and which are not guided by statutory urban planning regulations may lead to densification and congestion,"

River road is transforming to mixed use zone with the number of dwellers and commercial activities rising on undefined spatial distribution. This has gradually led to filling any open available space with activity up to the streets, layers upon layers of street vendors, hawkers. This in addition to the already existent character of this street as a transport hub, . Congestion, insecurity, health risks are some of the issues this streets contends with.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.

1. To identify the main actors and drivers of transformations, (*social, economic, political*)
2. To trace and analyze the transformation process of built forms along River Road
3. To identify how the transformation of built forms is taking place in River Road

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

1. Which are the forces driving the transformation of built forms?
2. What are the morphological, spatial and built forms transformations taking place in River Road?
3. How can urban heritage be used as a means to achieve urban transformation?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION.

There is little existing documentation on urban transformation in Kisumu, particularly River Road street. This thesis seeks to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive documentation on the transformation of built forms along River Road for posterity's sake and to the advantage of future generations

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study contributes to addressing the impacts of transformation on the legibility of African urban areas. It brings to focus the importance of urban heritage in the context of African cities. The study also attempts to contribute knowledge on how transformations can be controlled focusing on achieving legible urban settlements..

Findings from this study will guide urban development policy and Kenyan urban heritage development policy. The study is going to propose some ways of creating opportunities through making its environment legible in order to attract business investors, tourists, and improve the economic sustainability and liveability in the area.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY.

The study will deal with the spatial and physical aspects of the built environment focusing on changes in the building typology and form. The physical area of study is River Road Street.. The study will cover built forms between two main streets whose junctions intersect with River road. **Latema Road and Ronald Ngala Street.**

LIMITATIONS

High levels of insecurity in relation to terrorism in the country posed a major challenge since the building owners and caretakers were unwilling to cooperate. The sources of information were inadequate. Time was a limiting factor during the research.

Access to the buildings was an issue as the buildings are privately owned.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

CHAPTER ONE gives a brief overview and a background of the study, contextualizing the situation at hand. The problem statement gives a snippet of the problems that the consequent research and recommendation will tackle, In aid of the research, research objectives and questions have been formulated. The scope is defined and the limitations of the study are outlined. This chapter guides the research all through.

CHAPTER TWO critically reviews the literature on urban transformation, It attempts to understand built urban forms and their transformation. It will delve into understanding the issues related to built form transformation. This chapter will guide in reaching the parameters of research.

CHAPTER THREE involves identifying the major sources of data collection, both primary and secondary. The parameters being the guide to research, This chapter designs the research and methodology procedures used in the study. The chapter will produce the possible cases of studies in the field based on the aforementioned parameters.

CHAPTER FOUR analyses and presents the primary data collected from the fieldwork conducted for the study. The field study findings will be recorded and analyzed.

CHAPTER FIVE This chapter will conclude the research findings and offer conclusions and recommendations from the findings drawn from the fieldwork analysis. The chapter also recommends further related research areas of investigation.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Transformation of Built Form**

Building transformation (in the context of this research) is defined as an alteration or extension involving construction activity and using materials and technology in use in the locality (Tipple, 1991).

- **Morphology**

The knowledge of external form or the layout and configuration of urban form and space.

- **Urban Morphology**

Urban morphology refers to the study of urban form that focuses on the formation and transformation of urban forms of cities, towns, and villages over time; their spatial patterns at different scales; and physical characteristics to inform appropriate urban interventions to promote sustainable urban development.(Carmona, 2003).

- **Morphological transformation**

Urban morphology is the study of the form of human settlements and the process of their formation and transformation (Urban morphology, 2010). Morphological transformations in the context of this research refer to the changes of urban form that are taking place in River road Street, how the emerging building types (high-rise) has changed the image and skyline of the neighborhood. It is also used to refer to the changes of street structure, size and functional operation of the built forms.