

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on the redevelopment of Ndia Kuu Street, which is located within the Old Town of Mombasa Island. “Ndia Kuu” is a Swahili name for the Street, which means the “Main Street”. The Street is known for its historical significance and it connects Fort Jesus with interior parts of the Old Town. Together with Mbarak Hinawy Street, the two streets form the major spaces that connect important landmarks within the Old Town. These landmarks include the Fort Jesus, the old Port, the old fish market and Leven house. Other landmarks include the Mandhry mosque along Mbarak Hinawy Street and the Mazrui Cemetery at the beginning of Ndia Kuu. The urban design challenges within the street are addressed in form of a redevelopment proposal .

1.0 Statement of the Problem

The study established a failure in urban design of Ndia Kuu. This failure includes issues such as inappropriate provision in design terms for vehicular and pedestrian movement, inappropriate reflection of space use in material form, lack of building maintenance, poorly defined urban design elements, lack of environmental protection, poor articulation of historical attributes and poor definition of space that results in repulsion of human activities.

The paths, which accommodate pedestrian and vehicular movement, were found to have serious functional deficiencies. For example, pedestrian movement was

observed to be hindered by vehicular movement along the street. This presents a risk of road accidents occurring along the street. Human and vehicular traffic flow along the street, therefore, forms one of the major urban design challenges along Ndia Kuu.

In an urban space, materials are used in defining spaces, however, in Ndia Kuu Street, some materials used have created rough surfaces that do not add value to the street. Specific materials being referred to are building materials and exterior wall finishes such as mazeras stones. The introduction of these new wall finishes such as mazeras stones and roughcast plaster along the street has changed the surface texture of the street from smooth to rough thereby altering the urban design qualities of the street while at the same time not conforming to architectural conservation principles, guidelines and regulations for the Old Town. The main exterior wall finishes for the street have been whitewash on lime plastered wall surfaces until recently when some building owners experimented with new exterior finishes.

The edges of the street formed by buildings of architectural and historical significance have in the recent past undergone physical deterioration. Maintenance of such buildings has been very poor to the extent of these buildings collapsing and leaving gaps within the once beautiful urban street profiles. The deterioration of these urban spaces has resulted to numerous negative effects such as uncontrolled developments in form of non-conforming structures disregarding

conservation guidelines and inadequate provision of public spaces such as streets and alleys through encroachment into existing public paths.

Ndia Kuu as an important street within the history of Old Town lacks clarity of definition of its important urban elements such as nodes and landmarks. Other secondary streets intersect Ndia Kuu as simple junctions as opposed to forming nodes upon which social and other human activities take place. The Mazrui Cemetery is an important landmark that is not spatially defined in reference to the street layout. Part of the perimeter wall including the entry to the cemetery along Ndia Kuu lacks space-defining elements including variation of materials and street furniture to accommodate human activities.

The recently introduced public mode of transport known as the “Tuk Tuk”, has resulted into several challenges within the Old Town. This mode of transport not only creates noise nuisance for the residents, but also causes physical deterioration of the built fabric due to vibrations resulting from the two stroke diesel engines. The “Tuk Tuk” also causes physical damage to the corners of buildings as the drivers negotiate corners within the narrow streets and alleys. The study has therefore established that there is a failure in accommodating the “Tuk Tuk” as a mode of transport within the Old Town. This failure has contributed to the urban decay within the Old Town.

The street generally lacks appropriate space defining elements such as street furniture, canopies and material finishes to enhance human activities. Re-organisation of and use patterns and provision of urban street furniture are some of the design issues that need to be addressed in order to enhance human activities within the street.

The historical context of Ndia Kuu is also an important element that is not well articulated within the street. Important historical events such as the Portuguese Period, the Omani period and the British period are associated with Ndia Kuu together with other streets within the Old Town of Mombasa. Urban design elements and features along the street depict these historical events. These features and elements include the trolley line, the wooden balconies, the narrow streets and the building typologies. The physical deterioration of these elements in the recent past implies that the street is losing its historical and cultural values.

1.1 Research Methodology

The study utilizes case studies approach in identifying the parameters that are in turn used in analyzing the study area and identifying its problems. Two case studies are selected based on their similarities in terms of urban design characteristics to the study area and historical context. The case studies selected are the Stone Town of Zanzibar, Tanzania and the urban design of Chandigarh in India. The two case studies are located within historic districts similar to the study area of Ndia Kuu in the Old Town of Mombasa.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on urban space definition elements and problems related to definition and enhancement of human activities along Ndia Kuu Street, which is located within the Old Town of Mombasa. The physical extents of the study area include the junction between Nkrumah Street and Ndia Kuu Street on the southern side of the study area near the Fort Jesus, and the junction of Nyeri Street and Ndia Kuu Street. The study therefore covers the public spaces between these nodes as defined by the first row of buildings on both sides of the Street.

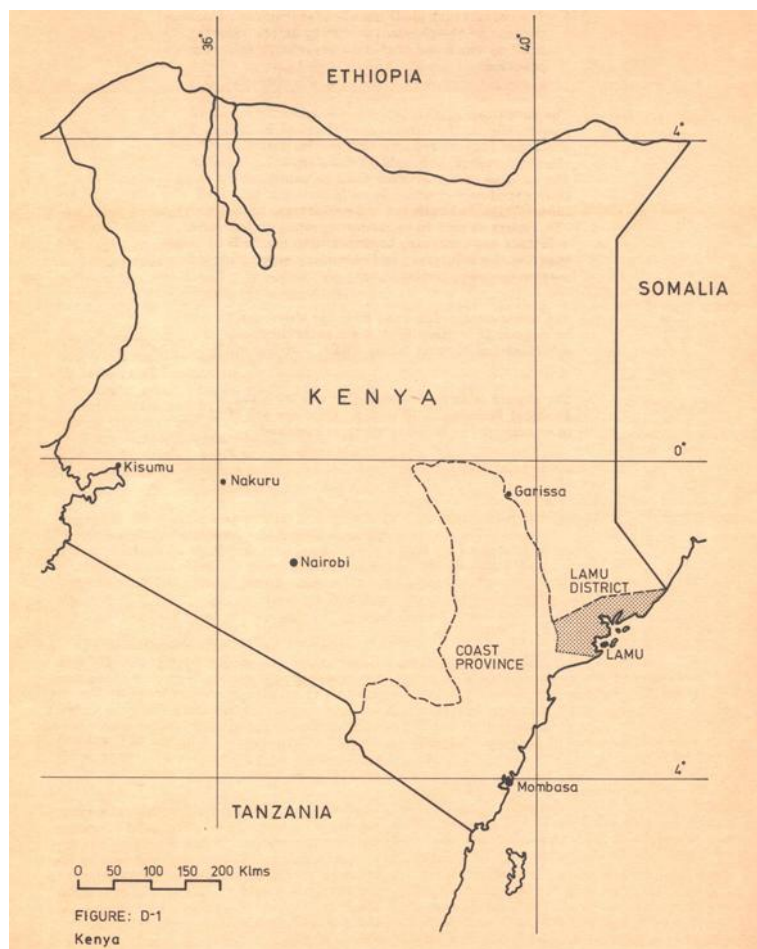


Fig. 1.1 Map of Kenya showing the Location of Mombasa
Source: Ghaidan 1975

Fig. 1.1 is a map of Kenya showing the location of Mombasa, which is approximately 39° East and 4° South of the Equator. The Island of Mombasa is surrounded by Tudor Creek, Port Reitz and Indian Ocean as indicated in Figure.

1.2. The dotted area in Fig. 1.2 indicates the location of Mombasa Old Town.

Figure 1.3 shows the location of Ndia Kuu within the Old Town of Mombasa.

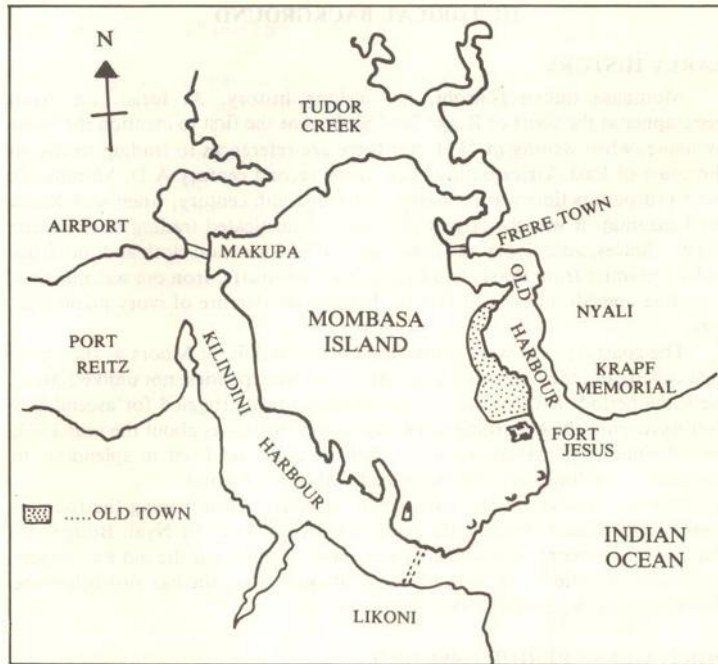


Fig. 1.2 Map of Mombasa Island

Source: Mombasa Old Town Conservation Office (MOTCO)

Note: The shaded area is the area covered by the Old Town of Mombasa.

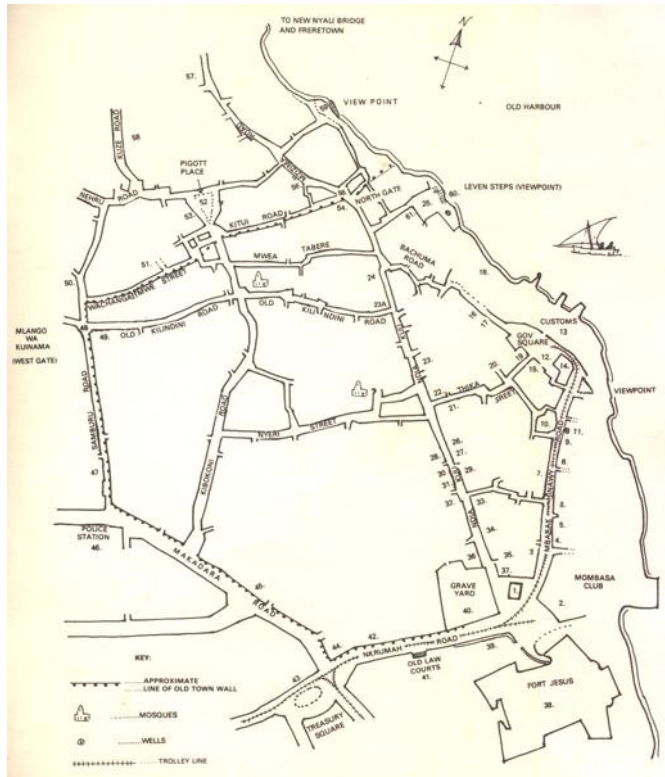


Fig. 1.3 Map of Old Town Mombasa
Source: MOTCO

1.3 Significance of the Study

The recommendations of the study provide directions for improving urban design characteristics that enhance human activities along Ndia Kuu. Job opportunities are intended to be created through the proposal made by this study. This is achieved by the creation and organization of appropriate urban spaces along Ndia Kuu that intend to promote business opportunities, social cohesion and other commercial activities.

Redevelopment proposal for the study area intends to achieve an urban environment that promotes social order and togetherness. This helps in combating

social challenges such as drug abuse and insecurity. Community policing should also be achieved through this proposal.

Through the re-organisation of nodes, landmarks and edges, the study intends to promote the restoration of urban environment within the Old Town including its cultural and historical values. The study therefore provides for an opportunity for the establishment of urban design policies to enforce urban conservation within historic streets. These include policy frameworks that promote economic, environmental and cultural sustainability.

1.4 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction of the study, the statement of the problem, research methodology, scope of the study, significance of the study and the organization of the study.

Case studies are discussed in chapter two and these include; the Stone Town of Zanzibar, Tanzania and the urban design of Chandigarh, India.

Chapter three covers the existing urban space characteristics of Ndia Kuu. These include urban space characteristics such as the building height, building functions, visual access, material use and others.

The fourth chapter includes the design proposal based on the problems established along Ndia Kuu. These include urban space characteristics such as the edges, the path, the nodes, street furniture, columns, doors and others.

Chapter five covers the conclusion of the study.