

A CITY OF DIVIDED SHOPPING: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LOCATION OF MARKETS IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

Introduction

Urban markets are part of the urban landscape in Zambia. As soon as the colonialist realized that a number of Africans had to live in towns permanently they allowed the growth of trading areas where the indigenous towns people could get their daily supplies. A few formal markets were provided by the municipality within the areas populated by Africans whilst many trading areas grew out of necessity. Since they were 'out of sight' they were allowed to develop without much regulation. These areas usually housed small scale traders and within the urban context provided people with access to food products which they could not grow in their back yards, since they had no back yards. Their main source of daily needs became the markets within their areas. Markets also provided incomes for the traders and many urban dwellers have raised their families from market incomes. As Hansen (2005) has noted initial studies from the 1950s indicate that most market traders were men and they were not full time traders. They mostly sold fruit and vegetables which were in season. By the 1960s the proportion of female traders increased from one fifth to one third. This was due to the increased number of females coming into the urban areas after independence. Currently there are more female traders within markets.

With independence the urban population grew rapidly since restrictions on movement were lifted. Lusaka being the capital experienced an unprecedented rise in population. The available housing was inadequate and unplanned settlements mushroomed all over the city. Within these illegal areas new markets also sprung up. Some eventually became official whilst others remain totally run by the communities. Markets have over the years become centres of political, social, economic and cultural life of the low income groups within the city. They contain a large portion of the informal employment within the city. Informal employment accounts for approximately 70% of the work force in Zambia. The planning within such a city needs to take this into account as city space is planned, but this has not been the case in Lusaka.

Markets have diverse commodities and activities that take place within them. They provide commodities and services required by a wide range of people. A high percentage of the food stuff found in markets is usually not found in supermarkets. The other important aspect of market trade is the packaging of goods. Within markets goods are sold in quantities that are required by the purchaser making them affordable. Goods are repackaged to make them affordable. Markets are also spaces of social interactions within the city. Traders interact with their customers on a regular basis and reach levels of acquaintance where people can get goods on credit. Markets have also been political places where political parties have wielded their influence in stall allocation. Female market traders have in the past been commandeered into dancing for dignitaries at the airport. Markets are however becoming less and less political in Lusaka with the introduction of multiparty politics. No single party has a hold over the markets in Lusaka any more.

Markets in Lusaka

The number of markets within the city has increased steadily since independence. In 1980 there were about 36 designated markets in the city. Lusaka now has approximately 57 designated markets which are acknowledged by the city council (GRZ, 2000), of these 5 are found in low density residential areas while 10 are found in planned medium density areas. The rest are found in unplanned high density low income residential areas (Figure 1). Of the five found in low density areas only two are found near local shopping centres (Northmead

and Longacres). On the other hand the low density areas have two major shopping malls which are less than ten years old but no new markets. It may seem irrelevant to have markets within low density areas but is this really so? Residents of these affluent areas are not homogenous. Most homes have quarters for their workers who fall within the low income bracket. There are also multiple housing complexes which, with the home ownership policy of the Chiluba regime in the 1990s have more owner occupiers who may not be in the high income bracket expected in such residential areas. The question is where do these people buy the goods only found in markets and not in the big shops? Markets also supply goods in affordable quantities as goods are also sold according to measure. The theory is that you only buy what you can afford. It is only in a market where one can buy a teaspoon of sugar! There are also certain indigenous foods which are only found in markets and these are not only desired by the low income residents.

Lusaka continues to be a highly segregated city in terms of residences. The colonial legacy of separate living areas for different races has been translated into class divisions. The affluent live separated from the poor and this remains the case in shopping activities. Many residents of affluent areas consume foods found in markets but find it difficult to access markets because they either do not know where they are or because of the unfavourably location, since most large markets are in unplanned settlements. Security is not ensured within most unplanned settlements and one needs to be conversant with the market to be able to locate what one is looking for. A big flashy car parked outside a market will obviously attract unwanted attention and most affluent people end up sending their workers to the markets. This means they do not get the chance to select the exact type and quality of goods they would desire. They are also unable to bargain for good prices, since bargaining is part of the market culture. They also do not get to develop a relationship with the traders within the market and the two remain within isolated and separate communities.

City of Lusaka: Markets

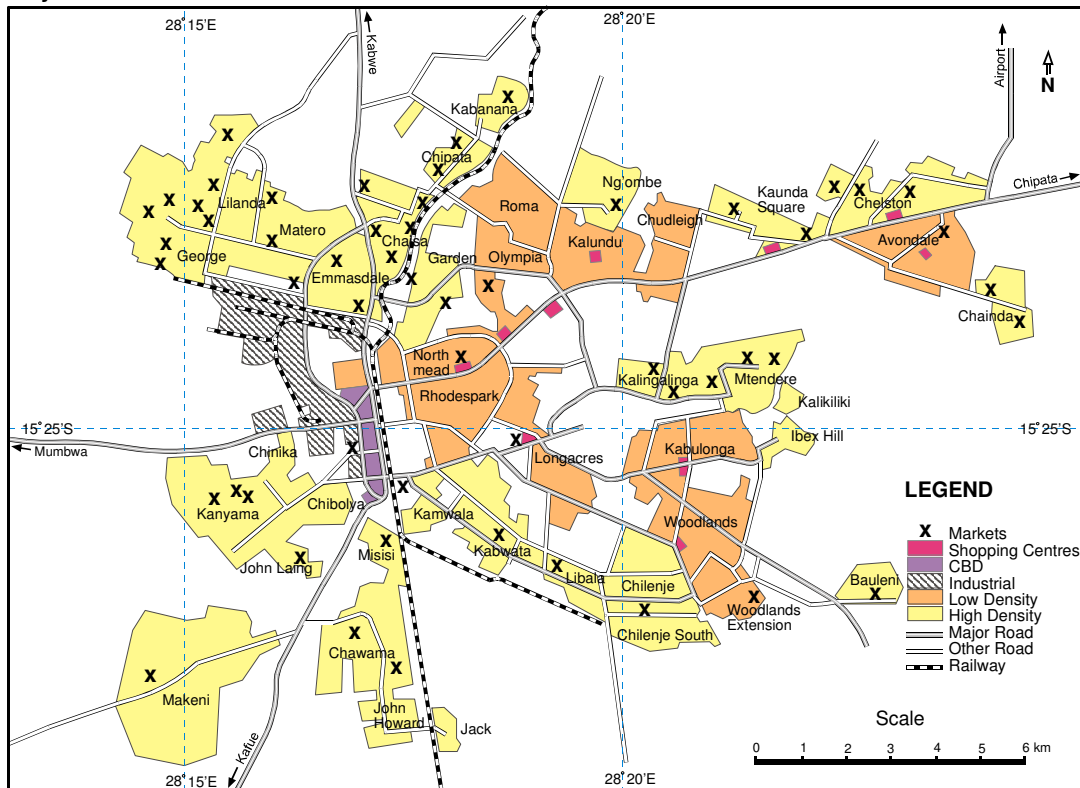


Figure 1. Source: Lusaka City Council, 2002

The location of markets depicts their perceived economic value within the Zambian economy. Markets have the ability to provide local councils with revenue but they have been highly ignored. Planners have also failed to consider the place of markets within Zambian society which probably explains why no market has been planned in the low density areas since independence. Markets are perceived as noisy, dirty undesirable places within the urban sphere evidence of a colonial hang over in as far as planning is concerned. The city is faced with the problem of street vending and planners have not sought to plan in such a way that the problem is partially solved. In other word planning in Zambia is not aimed at problem solving but at retaining the status quo which entailed strict enforcement of the regulations found in the Town and Country Planning Ordinance, Cap 475 enacted in 1961(Taylor,2004). Whenever street vendors are threatened with removal from the city streets they respond saying that they have no where to go, which is the truth. The available markets are full to capacity and people have no option but to trade on the streets. On the other hand the city has seen a number of new shopping centres crop up in both low and medium density areas. These shopping centres could easily accommodate a number of market stalls which would provide the much needed trading space within the city.

New developments

The city of Lusaka has ten shopping centres within the low density areas (Figure 2).The most recent ones are the Manda Hill Mall opened in 1999 and the Arcades Shopping Mall opened in 2003. Neither shopping centre has a provision for a market although the Arcades Shopping Mall has what is called the “Pakati Market”which trades on Sundays and Holidays. This is however not the normal market but mainly deals with curios and other goods aimed at attracting tourists. The older shopping centres are Northmead, Longacres , Kabulonga, and Woodlands from the 1870s ,while Chainama, Chelston and Avondale are from the 1980s. Of these only Northmead and Longacres have small markets near by. What has happened at the other centres is that traders have set up illegal stalls where they sell some goods normally found in mainstream markets. This brings about the aspect of illegality and regulation is difficult if not impossible. These roadside traders do not pay any levies to anyone and as is expected do not get any services. Planners have failed to come in even where the traders have taken the initiative to plan for markets at these centres even when the need is so evident and the space is available. An example is the Avondale shopping centre where a permanent market has eventually developed. At the Woodlands shopping centre the market has basically become a permanent feature though the structures are not permanent. The reason for this is the strict adherence to the planning rules entrenched in our colonial past. Rules from an era where blacks and whites did not mix and where people living in certain high cost areas had no need for markets. The continued perception of markets as noisy and dirty does not help the situation.

What is very evident is that shopping centres will attract traders who will fill a particular niche market and therefore one would expect that as an African city markets would become a part of the urban fabric. It would also be expected that planners would take note of this fact. The new developments have however avoided the mushrooming of markets on their doorsteps by fencing off their centres and employing guards to keep watch. The developers feel they are servicing a particular market and do not feel it is necessary to have markets within their premises. It is felt that the local authority should provide markets. It is also felt that the supermarkets within the shopping centres supply a wide variety of goods and some indigenous food is available. The Arcades shopping centre provides a specialized market on Sundays and public holidays only and do not intend to extend markets days due to administrative costs. These new commercial developments however make the city a place of diversity and enables the city to cater for people from all over the world which is a positive thing. These centres are obviously aimed at attracting the more affluent and the foreign and local residents. Those from the low income areas cannot afford the goods in these shopping

centres and many feel ill at ease even to wander around these places. They are sometimes accosted by security men who suspect their intentions.

City of Lusaka: Shopping Centres

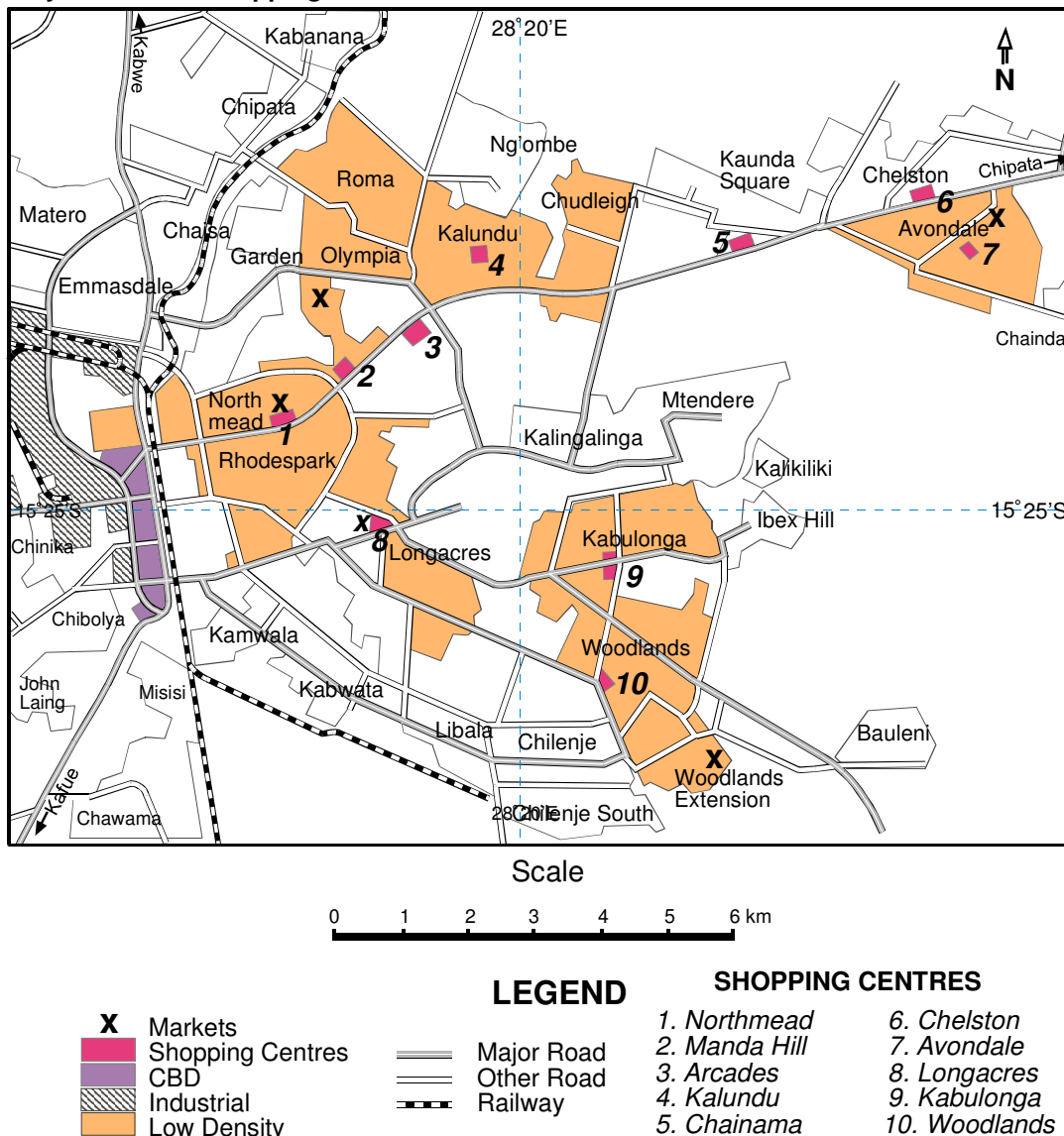


Figure 2. Source: Lusaka City Council, 2002

Another recent activity that is evident within Lusaka is the rise in the number of weekly markets and car boot sales around the city. A quick analysis of the location of these weekly or monthly markets reveals that all of them are held at venues within the low density areas and are normally held at school or church premises. These “markets” have a variety of goods but it is evident that they are aimed at the more affluent residents and tourists. They however provide added selling points for traders from the regular markets who have to pay a fee in order to trade at any particular market. The organizers of these periodic markets are not indigenous Zambians which probably explains the type of goods sold. A similar period market is located within a medium density area but this mostly targets the Asian community and indigenous Zambians.

The role of planner in the era of economic liberalisation

In the new era of liberalization one has seen new developments spring up. Most of them have increased the aesthetic beauty of the city. But what type of shopper is in mind of the people planning these centres? The government planning authority, the city council approves the plans given to them by developers but they cannot dictate that the developers include certain things like markets if the developer does not see the necessity. Then who are the developers? One mall (Manda Hill), was funded by foreign developers while the other (Arcades), by local investors which probably explains why it has at least tried to have some form of market. The other question is who is the target of these malls. It is obviously not the ordinary Zambian who basically cannot afford the goods sold in these places. This means that both local and foreign investors exacerbate the divisions in the shopping patterns of people in the capital.

It is easy to blame foreign developers but this should not be the case. Looking at the older developments one will realize that even local developers have failed to provide retail space that meets the needs of the community holistically. It is apparent that both planners and developers have had an 'ideal' based on western models and have proceeded to plan and develop spaces that fit this 'ideal' and not the people they are planning for. The fact that not a single market has ever been planned within the areas formally reserved for whites forty two years after independence show the need for change in the mindset of a Zambian urban planner. To this a planner can however answer that they are bound by the bye-laws of the country, another area that requires immediate change.

Planning requirements

When new residential areas are planned they will often have space planned for commercial activity. This commercial activity will most often than not turn out to be shops. This is because the people who can afford to pay for the space are the type of people who can afford to set up shops. Market are low turn over business with low net profits and so such space would be out of reach for market traders to bid for, which is why it is up to planners to make provisions for markets or insist on the provision of markets in new areas. Planning is supposed to assist both the private and public sectors to achieve their intended social and economic aims. Planners are expected to anticipate changes and to act as go between between the social , political, economic and physical forces that guide the form and location of urban development. In this case planners need to be aware of the changes in employment and the changes in requirements of residents in low density areas. The employment situation in the city dictates that more space needs to be allocated for informal activities while the requirements of people living in low density areas is that they are no longer exclusively inhabited by foreign expatriates and hence would also need goods offered in markets. The development of the largest market in the city, the Lusaka City market also show that markets can be properly managed and need not be the dirty eyesores they have been known to become in the city. The fact that markets can also be a reliable source of revenue for the local government should also be mentioned (Nchito ,2003).

In as far as the colonialist felt that segregated residential areas and different standards of environment were acceptable within the city, this is and should no longer be the case. The city planning is based on a structure plan which is however not being adhered to. Planners within the city mostly concentrate on rezoning land and trying to control development. The presence of a planning authority is not evident in terms of city organization. Development control measures are often not followed and most bye laws tend to be outdated and do not suit the current socio-political and economic environment. What is required is a strong Institute of planner which can help to bring sanity to the process of planning within the city.

Conclusion

From this analysis it is clear that there is a need for markets within the low density areas of the city. The current shopping centres within these areas do not provide all the goods that are required by residents. What is also evident is that illegal markets have mushroomed near and around most of these shopping centres, a strong indication that the centres are in themselves possible locations for markets. Some of these centres have vacant buildings which could be used as in door markets. The current situation is reducing revenue for the council since traders are trading illegally.

The planning process within African cities must be relevant to the people who inhabit these cities. Lusaka is inhabited by many different types of people with many needs and planners need to plan city space in a way that will encourage harmony. Segregation should be a thing of the past and planners must help colonial cities shed of this undesirable heritage. Integrated shopping is one way this can be done.

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