



Actor-network, conflict and the commodification of planning: Role of traditional food markets in shaping the built environment

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the processes of transformation of the architecture and spatial character of a Nigerian city, in the planning and delivery of a sustainable built environment. It examines the inter-dependency or relationship between the traditional market space and the city which is constantly being challenged, adapted and simultaneously undermined by the city's rapid growth and modernisation. Therefore, the meanings attached to the market and its built environment has not only changed on several levels from the symbolic, sacred, religious use to commercial and mundane one but also has taken on new spatial forms in sustaining the life of the city due to the activities of the various actors which is predicated on their worldview. The paper provides a detailed examination of the geographical location of the old market built environment, in relation to the expansion of the city over time. It traces historical changes in the surrounding urban-scape of the market, in particular, the location of developments, many originating from the colonial period, and their impact on the life of the market over time. It relates, how these historical relationships are registered both topographically and spatially providing supporting visual material such as maps and developmental plans. This paper further expatiates on the understanding of negotiation and conflict that ensued during the interaction within the material environment of the city through the prism of the role of actors (government officials, users, planners, politicians) involved with the built marketplace in the study area. Analyses provided through interpretive anthropology which is synchronic in nature (focus at events in a slice of time) and those provided by Actor-Network Theory (ANT) that is diachronic (focus on dynamic events through time), i.e. anthropology focuses more on the "static" past whereas ANT focuses on the activities of the actants in "dynamic" or "real-time". The paper concludes that theoretical and cultural interpretation impacts the physical marketplace, its form, character, and spatiality; this must itself be understood as an agent or actant in the struggle, in as much as it both enables and constrains human activities.

1. Introduction

Traditional food-markets are an essential part of the cultural institutions of the city among the Yoruba, associated with myths, ritual, taboos and persistence of customary values (Akintoye, 2010; Asiwaju, 1976; Falola, 1991). In this regard, the main market is a strong signifier, at one level providing cultural sustenance to the king and the kingdom and at another level proving 'sustenance of life' for the entire city of Akure (Sewell, 2005). The traditional food market can be regarded as the realm of the ancestors, a meeting place to connect to the ancestors. In the African setting, traditional food markets occupy an important socio-economic segment of the society in the creation of wealth, support of family and communal life. It is also vital to the provision of important services contributing to the overall development of African urban centres (Ayittey, 2005; de Ajayi, 1998; Redclift, 1988; Smith, 1998;

Volgyes, Lonsdale, & Avery, 1980). Lefebvre suggests in his book 'production of space' that space is produced and reproduced as an outcome of social, political and economic struggles (Wood, 1999, p. 119). Such changes have consistently been reported in the literature to have led in the expansion of the city resulting in changes of land-use type and result in ecological and environmental issues (Huang, Xu, Liu, Lu, Zhang, & Sun et al., 2019; Brown & McGranahan, 2016; Ianoş and Jones, 2019; Marshall, 2015; Mehaffy, Elmlund, & Farrell, 2019). Consequently, the size of cities together with their social, environmental, and economic characteristics must be given ample consideration to mitigate the effect of inequality and achieve coordinated sustainable urban development goals (Jia, Liu, Lieske & Chen, 2020; Yue, Zhang, & Liu, 2016). Understanding this principle serves as the basis for examining the issue of contested authorities in the operation of the markets in Sub-Saharan Africa (Lefebvre, 1991; Lefebvre & Goonewardena, 2008).

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Sustainability impacts the physical marketplace, its form, character and spatiality. Sustainability plays important role in urban food production (UFP), urban (re)development and market network; it is important to state that policy recommendations would serve in the review of government policy and practice (Goldstein, Hauschild, Fernández, & Birkved, 2017; Olsson, 2018; Sanyé-Mengual, Orsini, & Gianquinto, 2018). Food policy and urban system are closely intertwined with the sustainability of all other basic urban infrastructures, (such as transportation, housing, water and waste management). Local policy issues need to increasingly reflect environmentally sound urban food systems as part of the drive to realising the agenda of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sanyé-Mengual et al., 2018; Olsson, Kerselaers, Søderkvist, Primdahl, Rogge and Wästfelt, 2016).

Food markets are places of commerce and general exchange of foodstuffs, goods and livestock (Kusakabe, 2010; Ligthelm & Masuku, 2003). They also serve as places of social interaction, where communal and associative activities occur among various segments of the society (Middleton, 2003; Raschke & Cheema, 2008). Cities are the engine of cultural change. Cities are also places of refuge, a dense collection of diverse people with shared institutions and infrastructures, central amongst them is the food market and informal open spaces (Krehl & Siedentop, 2018; Madanipour, 2019; Madanipour, Knierbein & Degros, 2014). The market forms part of the urban infrastructure in the study area and promotes social cohesion. The life of markets may be regarded as a parameter to measure the 'healthiness of urban life' (Humphrey, 2004, p. 282; Aweto, 2003). However, Steel (2009) asserts that the invention and vitality of the city have much to do with the supply of food through the market as 'a place' (physical entity) and as 'a process' (a network of food supply; see Baulch, 2001; Berry, 1993; Bingen, Serrano, & Howard, 2003; Clark, 1994). Hence, food markets play a vital role in urban life; they can be regarded as essential fibres of traditional society in Sub-Saharan Africa and other emerging economies of the world (Madichie & Nkannebe, 2010; Beckert & Dewey, 2017; Marinara Isabella, 2019). Humphreys (2004: 280) refers to the 'agora', which is the marketplace of the ancient Greek city, as "the central focus of the life of the city".

Similarly, markets found in developing countries are indicators of the cultural and commercial life of the city. Traditional food-markets have been referred to in the literature as "selling at the gates of the city", suggesting that the earliest markets served as entry points into urban settlements (Boardman, Hornblower, & Ostwald, 1994, p. pp28, p. 128). Nwokeji, (2010:64) and Polanyi (1963:32) refer to African markets in Dahomey "as a port of trade and point of trade". Dahomey is the pre-colonial name for the present-day Benin republic in West Africa. Bohannon and Dalton (1968) and Tandy (2001) classified traditional food markets among the Yoruba during the pre-colonial Nigeria, those operating as (i) periodic (cycle) and (ii) non-periodic (non-cycle) systems. In addition to this Mills-Tettey and Fadare, (1991:192) suggested that classification of Yoruba markets in the post-colonial era can be based on (a) their functions (in terms of commodities sold), (b) time of operation (whether daily or recurring at regular interval and (c) nature of their growth.

It is clear from events that the original intention of those in power to replace Akure's main traditional marketplace with a 'modern' alternative was confounded by the aspirations of the inhabitants of Akure, market sellers and users. Does the question then arise as to why this happened? Why did the politicians and professionals challenge the form and character of Akure's traditional market in the first place, and why did local people and market sellers who use the traditional market reject the idea of the 'modern' market and refuse to relocate? While these events (see Table 1) may at first appear to be a consequence of quite straightforward practical problems of location or a simple lack of consultation they were an outcome of complex undercurrents, conflicts and negotiations when two worlds collided, that of tradition and modernity. This represents, on one hand, the world views of the elite and

Table 1

Government's urban redevelopment plan and market space development timeline in Akure from 1996 to 2020.

Year	Urban Redevelopment and Market Projects
1996	Proposed relocation of the old central market by Military Governor Anthony Onyearugbulem
1997	The new market built in the outskirts near Shagari. Relocated but trader refused to move
2000	Destruction by fire of some segment of the old King's market (Oja Oba).
2005	Agagu civilian government commissioned its rebuilding into an ultra-modern market through a consortium named Sunshine International Venture Limited (a joint venture of Spring Bank Plc and the Ondo State government and Akure South local government.
2010	Proposals for new neighbourhood markets to replace old markets in Akure and Ondo State by the Mimiko government (see figures 6 and 8b).
2011	The building of new neighbourhood markets in Akure (namely Caring Heart Neighbourhood markets at Isinkan and NEPA junction – a short distance from the main market (see figures 5 and 8b).
2012	Architectural and development proposal by Mimiko Administration to replace the 'new' main market built by Agagu government in 2005, only stopped at the proposal stage not implemented because of cost considerations (refer to figure 7).
2020	The state government with the current economic realities are seeking Public-Private partnership (PPP) for the siting of food markets in the other major towns in Ondo state

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork.

the political class that desired to modernise the state capital through urban clearance and redesign of the spatial character of Akure city. And on the other the views of those that hold the traditional market as sacred and culturally significant. The result was a development that did not make sense for anyone, neither the politicians, the professionals, the market sellers nor the city's inhabitants in general.

This paper represents an attempt to uncover the underlying basis for this outcome, the interests of the actors involved in the process of commodification of urban space, negotiations and struggles that took place over Akure's marketplace, both 'traditional' and modern.

2. The study area

The traditional food market is actively used as a vehicle for understanding the processes of transformation of the architecture and spatial character of a city, in the planning and delivery of a sustainable built environment. It examines the inter-dependency or relationship between the traditional market space and the city which is constantly being challenged, adapted and simultaneously undermined by the city's rapid growth and modernisation and the conflicts that ensued, with a specific focus on the city of Akure. On the world map, Akure can be found on latitude 7°15' East of the Greenwich Meridian. Akure, in the present dispensation, is the capital of Ondo State, Nigeria. It is situated 204 km east of Ibadan, 168 km west of Benin – City and 311 km North-East of Lagos and it is also regarded as one of the North-Eastern Yoruba districts (Akintoye, 1971, pp. 9–12). Akure doubles as the Local Government headquarters and was made the provincial headquarters of Ondo province in 1920. Olaoba (1995) recorded that the residences of the King (Oba's palaces) of the Yoruba are regarded as the matrices of Yoruba culture, which in essence implies that everything around the palace symbolizes the cultural ebullience of the Yoruba people.

2.1. Who are the Yoruba?

The Yoruba people are mostly found in the Southwest part of Nigeria and spreading East to Southern part of Benin Republic and the northern part of Togo (Asiwaju, 2004; Eades, 1980; Smith, 1988). The Yoruba numbered more than 20 million at the turn of the 21st century. The Yoruba has existed in "City-like" settlements before the advent of the European to Africa (Mabogunje, 1962, Schwerdtfeger, 1982, p. 317;

Bascom, 1951; 1953); with highly organized social systems of sophisticated culture and a strong kingship institution fully established (Eades, 1980; Ikudaisi & Odeyale, 2019). All Yoruba lay claim to a progenitor called Oduduwa, which gave it the essentials of its culture (Smith, 1988). The Yoruba enjoy a high rating in terms of anthropological interest value, as early as the 11th century. Testimonies to this are artistic works and artefacts of astounding finesse and excellence were found in an archaeological context in Ile-Ife and other parts of Yoruba land (Olupona, 2004; Asiwaju, 1976; 2001; 2003 and 2004). Based on oral interviews with prominent chiefs and available tradition or mythology, Akure traces its beginnings to the 11th century and is closely tied to Oduduwa, the common ancestral lineage of the Yoruba race.

However, Anthony Asiwaju in his book on *Western Yorubaland under European rule 1889–1945: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonisation* asserts that the Yoruba as a group of people constituted a geographical, cultural and historical entity, that claimed common origin from Ile-Ife. He explains, the Yoruba “spoke mutually intelligible dialects of the same language and possessed similar political, social and religious institutions” (Asiwaju, 1976, p. 9). However, several scholars have documented the political and socio-cultural history of the Yoruba, from its inception, and the significance of its cultural unity among the various kingdoms that constitute the Yorubaland before and during colonisation (Atanda, 1970a, 1970b, 1973; Asiwaju, 2006; Awe, 1973; Boscom, 1955, 1951; Crowder & Ikime, 1970; Peel, 1978; Smith, 1988). Although the Yoruba people displayed rich cultural unity, they operate a system of political decentralization. The decentralization of political power led to their inability to present a common front against ‘continuous invasions from powerful neighbours’, especially during the Nineteenth century. This situation of political ‘helplessness in the face of hostilities’ was exploited by the European hegemony through intervention in local politics leading to colonisation and partitioning of Yorubaland in 1889 (Asiwaju, 1976, 2001; Englebert, 2000; Rothchild, 1986).

Akure is one of the major towns of the Yoruba (see Figs. 1 and 2) that have historical, cultural and commercial links with other parts of Yorubaland and beyond (Akintoye, 1971, pp. 9–12; 2010; Falola, 1991 and 1999). The history and culture of Akure are closely linked to that of its kin and kith in other parts of Yoruba land (Akintoye, 1971, pp. 9–12). The choice of Akure, in Southwest Nigeria, for this study is based on the following reasons; it is a typical example of a Sub-Saharan African city that has experienced rapid urbanisation in the past 50 years. Second, the city had grown from a medium-sized agrarian town to a major metropolis, and third, it has led to socio-cultural transformations and developments through the influence of colonisation, neo-colonisation and more recently the effects of globalization.

3. Research Methods

This paper is based on a case study approach that involves the use of different complementary methods, of which participant observations was carried (in 2014, and revisited in 2019) out along with ‘open-ended’ interviews during the field investigations. Also, questionnaire administration was conducted to unravel the life of the local community of market users in the city of Akure. Sizeable numbers of the questionnaire were administered to the target population (carried out in 2014 and revisited in 2019), to elicit primary data; with 75.6 per cent response rate from the respondent i.e. 400 questionnaires are distributed for administration, but 303 questionnaires are fully administered and collated. Because the questionnaires are done face-to-face, in reality, it took the form of what can be regarded as “structured interviews” and that accounts for the high response rate. The survey and interviews (see Table 2 and Table 3) conducted highlights some observations and conclusion of the relationship between the actants, different stakeholders and their response to modernizing policies involving the marketplace and its role in shaping the city development or transformation.

3.1. Target population and choosing the sampling method

The researcher considered the study area (Akure) as having the threefold configuration, namely Core Zone - which consists mostly of the old family quarters and buildings; Middle or Intermediate Zone - which consists of vernacular buildings constructed about two to four decades ago; Outermost Zone or fringe area, which consists of relatively new buildings found at the periphery of the city. Therefore, the target population in this study is derived from this threefold-zoned area (see Fig. 2). In addition to the questionnaire, the interview sessions employ purposeful sampling method or snowballing technique as the overarching approaches undergirding the field investigation. Purposeful sampling involves selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth investigation that helps to illuminate the question under study and elicit views not necessarily captured by the questionnaire. The responses from the interview session yielded rich qualitative data useful in analysis and constructing the theoretical understanding of the transformation of the marketplace through the prism of the ANT and the interpretive anthropology.

4. Theoretical considerations

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) can be defined as a unique approach to social theory that presents a way of thoroughly exploring the relational ties within a network (Latour, 2005). The network has to do with the associations formed or created by actors as they (actors) define and distribute roles and mobilize or invent others to play these roles (Law & Callon, 1988, p. 285). Cressman (2009) observe that ANT provides the researcher with a tool to better understand the complexities of our heterogeneous world that is applicable in the study of the traditional marketplace such as those found in Akure, thus underscores its importance to the study presented in this paper. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is different from all other social theory approaches by its consideration of both human and non-human actors as equal within a given network (Harman, 2009; Latour, 1987; Law, 1994). The identity of both the human and non-human actors is defined by their interaction with other actors (Callon & Latour, 1981). ANT studies the complex relationships that exist between actors (or actants) by ‘following the actor’ within a network (Bijker, 1997, pp. 3–35; Latour & Woolgar, 1986). Hence, an actant can be anything provided it is granted to be the source of action (Latour, 1996). According to Callon (1987), actor-network is simultaneously an actor whose activity is networking heterogeneous elements and a network can redefine and transform what it is made of. ANT considers the primary actors as network builders, through whose eyes they interpret the process of network alliances and relationship. The delineation of an ‘analytical range of study’ requires the drawing of artificial boundaries discovered in a continuous search for realities within the ‘confused overlap’ of networks and endless translation and negotiation that happens both human and non-human actants (Law, 1992). In other words, we can say that the “settlement of an actor-network is not defined *a priori*”, but emerges from the complex, open set of relations and from the characteristics of the elements that are part of the actor-network” (Cordella and Shaikh (2006:11).

It is necessary to clarify the relationship in theory between ANT (Actor-Network Theory) and sociocultural anthropology and how the combination of a theory is useful in constructing my research argument, analysis and methodology that this paper is based. The key distinction between ANT and anthropology lies in the interpretive nature of the anthropology versus the constructivist nature of ANT as well as the inclusion of non-human ‘actants’ in the latter perspective. Interpretive anthropology sets out to discover how groups of people ascribe meaning to the world in a given context (Geertz, 2000a; 2000b; Levi-Strauss, 1968). It considers the ‘lifeworlds’ of groups as large, although not exclusively, discrete entities. Therefore, anthropology is useful for examining beliefs, values and practices that have remained relatively stable over some time, not the processes of change that happen when

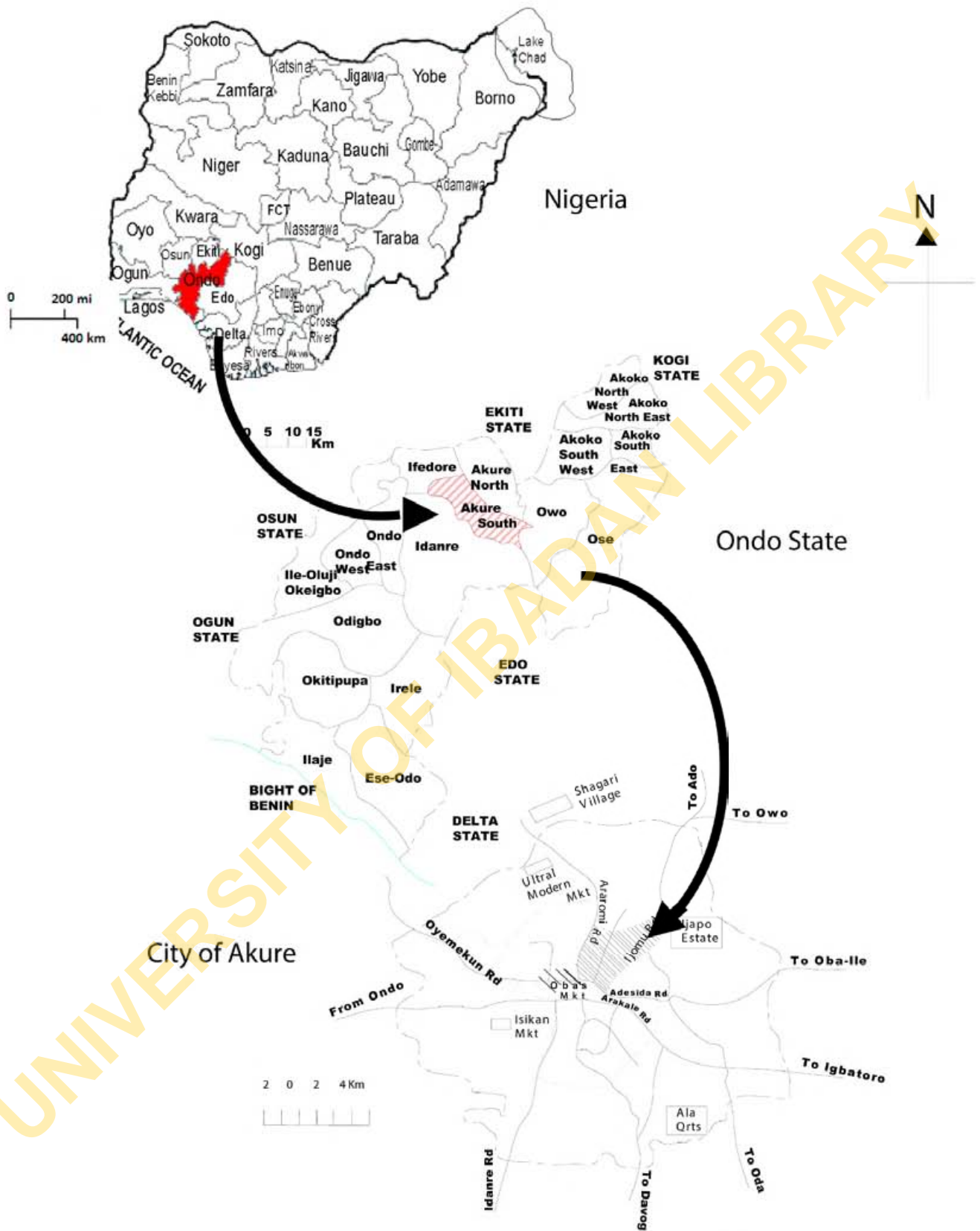


Fig. 1. Akure Map Showing the Study Area. (Source: Adapted from [Owoeye, 2006](#)). Also, see Fig. 2 – show details of the traditional city centre/core zone in Akure and the location of the traditional marketplace.

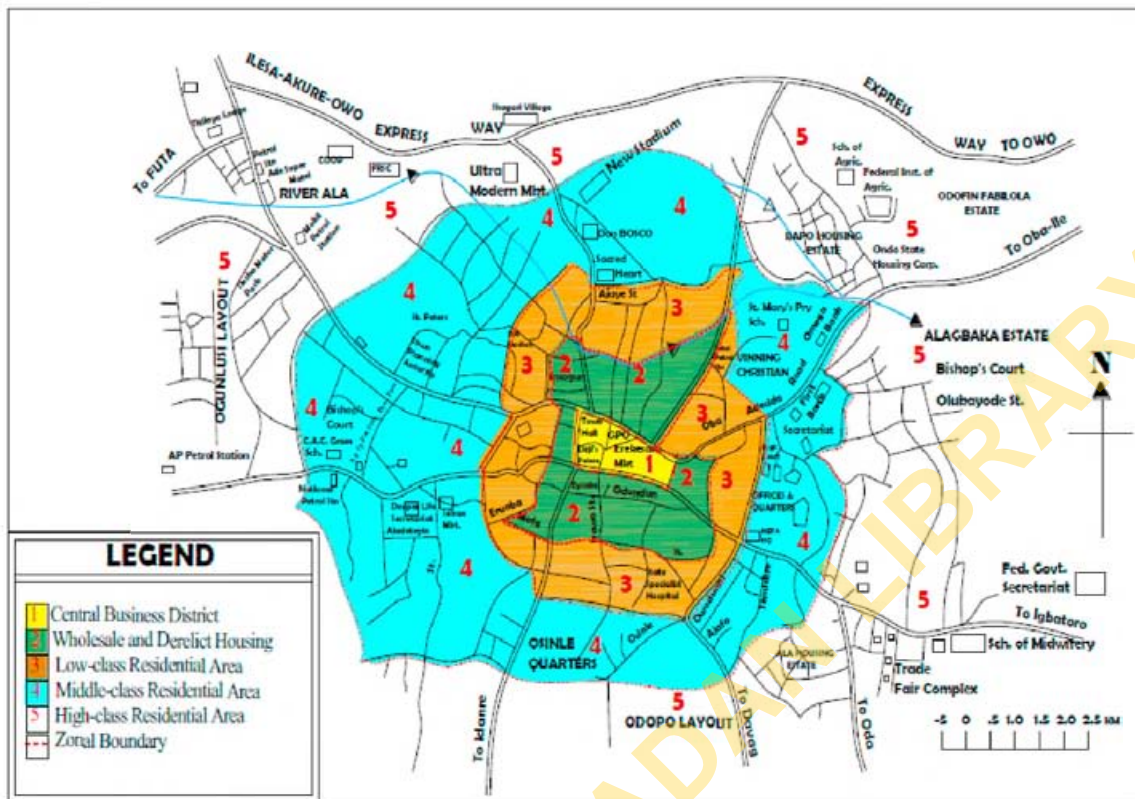


Fig. 2. Map of Akure Urban Area showing the City Core and the different neighbourhood. Source: Adapted from Ondo State Surveyors General Office & Ministry of Urban and Housing Development.

Table 2
Comparison of Percentages of Survey's Respondents to the Percentages of similar Age groups in Akure LGA Total Population.

Age group	Frequency of respondents in the survey	Percentage of respondents in the survey (%)	Population number of Age groups in Akure South LGA Census	Percentage of Age group (%)
0-11 yrs	2	0.6	74974	20.80
12-18yrs	39	12.9	91635	25.44
19-30yrs	195	64.4	75768	21.03
31-50yrs	42	13.9	83487	23.17
51-60yrs	4	1.3	17635	4.90
60yrs above	12	4.0	16769	4.66
Total	294	97.0		
No response to age	9	3.0		
Grand total	3031	100	360,2682	100

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork.

groups come into conflict. ANT explores how meaning is actively constructed through processes of negotiation between actants and is, therefore, best suited to examining dynamic and changing contexts, such as when tradition and modernity collide (Latour, 1996). Here, groups or actants do not inhabit discrete lifeworlds. Their lifeworlds are emergent, continuously created and recreated within the network that exists between both human and non-human actants. Activities within the network is a complex phenomenon, shaped by the connections or alliances between heterogeneous human and non-human actants (Hosseinifarhangi, Turvani, van der Valk, & Carsjens, 2019). Analyses provided through interpretive anthropology are synchronic in nature (focus at events in a slice of time) and those provided by ANT are diachronic (focus on dynamic events through time), i.e. anthropology focuses more

Table 3
Classification of the Target Population showing Akure Districts about the Zoning Formation in Fig. 2.

Zones	Classification	No of Respondents to Questionnaires/ Structured Interviews	% of Questionnaires	Districts/ Neighbourhood in Akure represented in the survey
1 and 2	Traditional Core Area	93	30.8	Ilisa, Odopetu, Ilemo, Oke Aro, Irowo, Isolo
3	Middle District	170	56.3	Isinkan, Obanla, Aafin, Imuagan, Ijomu, Idiaagba, Eru-Oba, Oritagun, Ijemikin, Odo Ijoka, Araromi/Odo-Ikoyi, Eriqian Oluwatuyi
4 and 5	Peripheral Districts	40	12.9	Oshinle, Iloro, Ayedun
		303	100	Arisoyin, Gbogi, Owode, Awule, Other settlements and villages: Oda, Aponmu, Ipinsa, Iwoye, Ajipowo, Igbatoro, Adofure and Isagba.

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork.

on the "static" past whereas ANT focuses on the activities of the actants in "dynamic" or "real-time" (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009, p. 7; Kearney, 1995, pp. 547-548; Temple, 2007, p. 263). The tools provided by interpretive anthropology helps in gaining insight into how various actants in the built marketplace, live and interact

Table 4

List of the existing 'modernise' traditional markets and 'new build' neighbourhood markets in Akure City (compare with Fig. 8a and b).

Projects	Cost of Contract	Contractor	Project Completion Date
1. NEPA neighbourhood market Adekunle Ajasin, Akure (M2)	N400 million	Ondo State Direct Labour Agency	2010
2. Isinkan neighbourhood Market (Phase 1 and 2)* (M3)	N210 million	Ondo State Direct Labour Agency	2010
3. Arakale (Cashhold) Neighbourhood (M5)	N80 million	Johnson Construction Limited	2011
4. Renovation of Isolo Market- (M4)	N100 million.	Ondo State Direct Labour Agency	2011
5. The Akure International Auto market (M7)	Initial cost of N450 million increased to N550 million.	Ondo State Direct Labour Agency and Ondo State Asphalt Company (OSAC)	2010
6. Proposed Remodeling of Oja Oba Market (M1)	Estimated to be over N500 million	Ondo State Government	2012

* Isinkan neighbourhood Market has no parking space. Some concerned professional in Ondo State Ministry of Physical Planning also pointed to lack of proper planning on the part of the designer and deficiency in the construction due to lack of rigorous supervision.

together to shape the city. Hence, a diachronic narrative can be defined as describing or depicting change through time, a standard form of history writing, a synchronic narrative, on the other hand, describes or depicts the relations within a system at one particular moment in time (Sinton & Bednarz, 2007, p. 41). Therefore, this paper utilizes both the synchronic analyses (provided by interpretive anthropology) and the diachronic insights offered by ANT.

This paper rather questions the established approach to the study of the built environment that focuses on the description of the physical aspects of its development. It embraces the notion of unravelling the cultural, social and anthropological meaning of the urbanity and contributory factors that led to societal transformations within the urban space usage or arrangement that is often misunderstood, ignored or altogether forgotten. It further argues that to achieve a holistic sustainable built environment for the future of cities and urban centres (especially in the developing countries), there is the need to understand the backgrounds of 'soft issues' or predisposing ideas. These soft issues or predisposing ideas constantly engage the notions of the production of urban space and contested space, which can be actively seen, in the activities and role of food. Foucault's discourse theory and writings come into play here, that certain acts which are potentially quite different may find new ways of being grouped under a single phenomenon to create a different result. It is this evolving process that is of interest to this study. In alluding to Foucault's theoretical discourse, it is essential to note that various processes and social institution are engaged in the construction of urban spaces that are mediated through food production especially as evident in Africa. Foucault's theoretical analysis is a pointer to the fact that some of the socio-economic developments witnessed in Sub-Saharan Africa are rather the effect and not the cause of its present state (Culler, 1997, pp. 1–17; Foucault, 1980; Odeyale, Sodagar, Temple, & O'Coill, 2011). This underlying and unseen phenomenon needs reconsidering because of its wider implications for society's holistic development (Ikudaisi & Odeyale, 2018; Odeyale, Sodagar, & Temple, 2010).

4.1. Research gap

Several studies of the built environment and food market in Nigeria had focused on physical elements at the expense of social/cultural

aspects and failed to a critical look at the underlying factors that threw up some of the challenges identified in these studies (Adeyinka, Kuye, & Agbabiaka, 2016; Balogun, 2014; Lawanson, 2007; Oduwaye, 2009; Olorunfemi 1999; Omole, 2010; Omoleka, 2003; Onyemeluke, 1974). Balogun (2014) examined the problem of waste disposal of two traditional markets, Oja'ba and Oje in Ibadan, south-western Nigeria without critical looking at the various socio-cultural factors that are deeply rooted in the world view and life-world of these actants and users of these two traditional food markets. Omole (2010) and Olorunfemi (1999) considered food markets in Akure and emphasized on the physical attributes such as mode of transport, consumers' income, sex, age, occupation, markets distance, location and item(s) on sales among others. These articles are examples of overly narrow approaches to the study of the traditional food market, to which the present article is an answer. The focus of these articles are on the physical parameters/technical aspects of the market but failed to provide insight into the prevailing traditional norms and expectations that underpins the behaviours and interactions in these markets sphere. This study provides these missing aspects or insights and aimed to address these research gap that is necessary for understanding the dispositions and actions that bind those actants together.

Also, there is a lack of understanding of how the marketplace and food in the historical past have contributed to the formation of the present urban landscape and how it may well shape its future. This lack of understanding is evident in our manner of urban lifestyle and the present unsustainable ways in which food activities were carried out, which has contributed to the deteriorating nature of our towns and cities (Steel, 2009; Alexander, 2009; Odeyale, 2010; Fudge, Smook, & Sougareva, 1996; Garnett, 1996; Freibauer, Mathijs, Brunori, Damianova, Farault, Gomis, O'Brien and Treyer, 2011; Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Robinson, 2018; Krehl & Siedentop, 2018). My interest in cities and how they are transformed or evolved over time formed the thrust of this study. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, describe food, clothing and shelter (architecture); as a physiological requirement for the survival of human being (Maslow, 1943; Kendrick, Griskevicius, Nuberg, & Schaller, 2010; Doyal & Gough, 1991). Also, Steel (2009:3) observed that architecture and food are intricately bound together. Therefore, there is strong connection between food and architecture (shelter) or sustainable food production activities (producing, selling and consuming food) that take place in the context of physical market (Bocock, 1993; Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; Gordon, 1990).

However, these aspects were not fully explored in the literature concerning the transformation of architecture and urban space especially in the developing world (Garnett, 2000; Gertel & Samir, 1999). Studies found in the literature focuses on the food-related activities in the developed countries (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989; Burgess, 2003; Chimbowu & Gumbo, 1993; Falk and Campbell, 1997; Fine and Leopold, 1993; Greenhow, 1994; Heap & Kent, 2000; Steel, 2009; Zetter et al., 2006). It is important also, to reiterate that discussions about the urban food production in the literature have been focussed on the physical or operational aspect; there is a lack of insight or thought on the socio-cultural, historical and anthropological angle as to its role in shaping sustainable urban landscape (Adeyinka et al., 2016; Armstrong, 1993; Bammeke & Sridhar, 2004; Edwards, 2000; Gandah, Stein, Brouwer, & Bouma, 2000; Bammeke & Sridhar, 2004; Smit, Ratta and Bernstein, 1996; Smit, Ratta, & Nasr, 1996). Failure to grasp its role has led to a loss in the quality of urban space in some of the planning policies and programmes in many developing countries (Dickinson, 1998; IIED, 1998; Harris, 1985, p. 289; Tonkiss, 2013; Ianoş & Jones, 2019).

4.2. Society and the compositions of heterogeneous networks

People and society are the compositions of heterogeneous networks derivative from confused overlaps (Latour & Woolgar, 1986, p. 152; Law, 1991, pp. 21–45, p. 10). To understand the complex nature of the modern world and its innovations, it is sometimes necessary to study

great successes and heroic failures (Bijker, 1997, pp. 3–35). Social structures do not exist as individual discrete entities on their own, but they exist based on a “network of heterogeneous arrangements”; such “heterogeneous glue” that binds together society (Law, 1991, pp. 21–45, p. 16; Star, 1991). However, to entirely describe social changes, a range of issues must be given consideration; economic, political, and technological aspects (Latour, 1987; Law, 1991, pp. 21–45, p. 7; Mulkay, 1974; Jacobs & Manzi, 2013; Jacobs & Manzi, 2017).

Law (1991:10) described the interrelationship between technical and social issues; by making the following assertion “what appear to be social is partly technical, what is usually technical is partly social. In practice, nothing is purely technical and nothing is purely social”. Sociology is always driven by the concern for by the science, technology and society studies (STS) group, as comprising of three overlapping aspects; first, the character or essence of knowledge (addressing the problem of epistemology) (Bijker and Law, 1994). Second, the character of the society (addressing the problem of heterogeneity) and thirdly the character of distribution (the problem of spread or diffusion) among the classes of actors that shape it (Law, 1991, pp. 21–45, p. 6; Latour, 1987; Hughes, 1993; Middlemiss, 2014). Fellows and Liu, (2003) argued that paradigm describes the theoretical framework which includes a system by which people view events, providing insights into views adopted and approaches to discover.

Existing paradigms tend to change or modified when there is a need to justify a new finding that cannot be explained by the existing framework. Practitioners in the building industry, such as the architects, engineers, industrial designers and theoreticians in the academia had sought to explain what constitutes the ingredients of a successful sustainable urban design (Power, 2016). Understanding the phenomenon of city transformation requires unpacking the various human actors and material objects that are part of the heterogeneous networks that extend beyond the immediate physical environment (Cvetinovic, Nedovic-Budic, & Bolay, 2017; Mandeli, 2019).

5. Results and discussions of research findings

This section of the paper attempt to present the research findings and analyses interview data collected from key participants and questionnaire respondents. The analysis of the data provides an overview of the respondents' perceptions and understanding of the food market as a ‘cultural space’ and offers detailed insight into the data in terms of the attendant conflicts, blurring of boundaries and spatial contests in Akure's marketplace and its attendant implications on the attendant built environments. The following themes emerge and shape the analysis and interpretations of the data, which included: negotiating tradition and modernity; reinterpretation of traditional market space; social cohesion and perception of spatial transformations of the marketplace; preferences-market seller's attitudes, seasonal changes and food price; and discrete groups, identities and their sociocultural ties to Akure's traditional marketplaces.

5.1. Negotiating tradition and modernity: reinterpretation of the cultural space in the food markets

This sub-section discusses the attitudes of the interview participants and the questionnaire respondents as a result of their views on the impact of tradition and modernity to food marketplace activities. These elements were identified from the data and include the significance of the market to the traditional institution, the relevance of the market to the daily life of participants in the city; planning and architectural design of markets and urban renewal drive of the politician that affected the spatial configuration of the food market in Akure. Participants (market seller, government officials, and buyers) during the interviews and survey agreed that the market development in the central of the city had transformed the Akure's urban landscape, resulting in some intended and unintended consequences. The politician and government

official stated that they embarked on the urban renewal effort to promote the city's sustainable development, but it is clear that it does not work out as planned.

One of the participants described the rebuilding of the food marketplace structures as having the “old system giving way to modern ways of putting up food market; which is part of modernisation and development” (respondent 19). Another interview participant described the changes in the food marketplace, “it has changed in terms of building (physical structure of the market). More markets are being built and these markets are looking better (architecturally) than the former ones” (respondent 10). Another respondent also pointed out that “the entire city has really changed due to the proper improvement done to the food market” (respondent 8). However, the question is at what ‘cost’ are these changes to the social and communal life of city dwellers? The urban renewal activities were intended to present clean and ‘modern’ architectural buildings for the food marketplaces and supporting infrastructures, which are invariably based on ‘their’ (the middle class) definition of modernity.

For instance, the intended consequence of new market structures led to an unintended loss of the ‘cultural space’ that was present in the spatial arrangement of the traditional market in the past. Apart from the social cost issue, the remodeling of the market also impacts of the cost of the stall, in the word of one of the interview participant, “the present administration or government is building new market structures. I observed that the lock-up shops and the concrete sheds are too expensive for ordinary market women (respondent 27). Another participant agreed with this when he said that “market structures erected in the new ones include lock-up shops are radically different from just open shed that we have in the past. These new lock-up shops are too expensive for ordinary market sellers to afford” (respondent, 32).

5.2. Social cohesion, environmental issues and perception of spatial transformations of food markets

The food marketplace presented a ‘lived’ culture that is given expression to, in the discussions of the interviewees. Four themes that are related to this were identified from the data: concern for traffic congestion during a peak period when the market is in use; market improvement programme of the government; roadside selling and display of food.

The perception of the transformation of food markets by users is important to understand how they feel about the changes around the markets and to what extent it has impacted their life. Some of the interview participants stated that there seemed to be a situation with human and traffic congestion in the market, which is a clear consequence of urbanisation. One stated that the “main market is too tight especially during the peak periods and towards the main approach to the market. It leaves little room for people to move freely (and that) government should do something about this” (respondent, 25). Also, Fig. 3 shows 57.1 of the survey participants were extremely concerned, 11.6% fairly concerned and 12.2% concerned about sanitation and cleanliness of the food market environment. One of the respondents stated that “market sellers should take care to ensure the cleanliness of food and their environment; especially the meat sellers, to cover the meat with cellophane/plastic bags, this is important to avoid diseases and epidemics” (respondent, 15). Other participants agreed with the need to dissociate the unhygienic manner from the rich cultural space of the traditional food market space in Akure's urban centre. In sum, the participants desired to see some compromises being made on the design of the food market built environments that are healthy, neat without eroding the traditional and ritualistic qualities of the market space.

5.3. Experiences and reflections of the under-represented groups – hawkers, traders, the working poor in comparison with the middle class

The traditional arrangement of stalls in the Oja-Oba market is quite

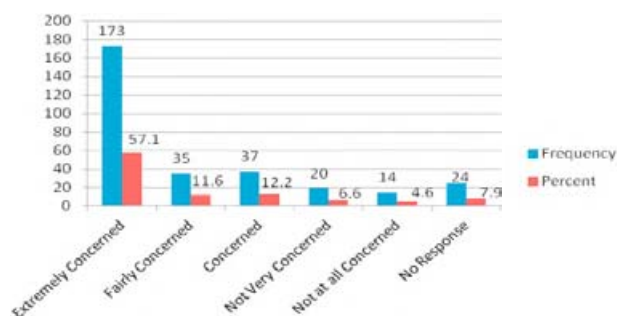


Fig. 3. Concerns for cleanliness of food and food markets environment. Source: Researcher's field work.

informal, primarily taking the form of groups of open tables or simple wooden sheds with corrugated iron roofing (see Fig. 4). A new set of lock-up shops with an open stall on the ground floor was provided by the local government authority in 2005 in conjunction with the then state government (see Figs. 5 and 6).^{1,2,3}

The stall is to cater for the garri⁴ sellers, another set for the meat, rice, vegetable, fish and chicken/turkey sellers and another set to the provision traders, i.e. sellers of milk and other processed food drinks and rice. The reconstruction of the markets in Akure is viewed by the government as a modern intervention and one of the key projects in their urban renewal policy statements. Interviews conducted during the field survey demonstrate that many middle-class respondents do strongly support the view that this 'modern' on-going construction in Akure marketplace is desirable, a sign of progress:

The government should subsidize market lock-up shop rents. The rent cost, when compared to the structuring of the spaces, is good. Also, the easy availability of parking spaces for a vehicle in the



Fig. 4. Typical open stall arrangements in Akure's traditional market. This is old Isinkan Market (M3 as shown in Fig. 9b and Table 4) before it was demolished and rebuilt ('modernised') into a neighbourhood market. Source: Researcher's Field Work.



Fig. 5. New Neighbourhood Market along Arakale Road, Akure (M2 as shown in Fig. 8b and Table 4). Source: My Ondo State available at: <http://myondostate.com/w3/aregbesola-to-copy-mimiko-vows-to-build-international-market-with-770-open-stalls-392-lock-up-shop/>.



Fig. 6. View of the Oja Oba market (M1 compare with Fig. 8b and Table 4) built by Agagu government. Researcher's Field Work.

neighbourhood market is encouraging. (Respondent 153).

There are no drainage and parking spaces in the old Oja Oba market, it always looks messed up each time you go especially in the wet season. Human traffic in the Oja Oba market caused by non-shop owners - Shanty structures cause a nuisance, this is absent in the modern market structure of the current Mimiko government (Respondent 183).

The present (central market) Oja Oba market is choky, close to the main road. It has no parking space. It is always block - especially the access road and difficult for pedestrians to walk. Sale of goods is done indiscriminately. Open shelving and hawking of goods. These problems are absent in the new market built by the new government, thank you, Governor. (Respondent 196).

In terms of hygiene, markets have changed for good in the past one year in Oja Oba. They are neater, especially through the effort of the present government in their urban renewal effort. We need more space to park our car during shopping at (central market) Oja Oba. (Respondent 250).

While middle-class shoppers may see the modernisation of the market as desirable, many of the traders and working-class people, for whom the stalls were intended, see things differently. Conversely, the following quotations from the survey provide criticising of the new lock-up shops and stalls that the middle class found desirable:

The new market structure and stalls provided by the current government in Akure is beyond our reach as average market seller ...

¹ Total number of respondents.

² Total population in Akure South Local government (study area) from Nigerian National Population Commission (2006)'s priority census tables, available at: <http://www.population.gov.ng/images/Vol%2003%20Table%20DSx%20LGA%20Pop%20by%20SDDistrict-PDF.pdf>.

³ Sinton and Bednarz (2007) expatiate on the 'anthropologist Clifford Geertz's method, which has been described as a thick description of a culture, is an example of synchronic narrative. Influenced by both geography and anthropology, the Annales School of history rejected diachronic narratives of the flow of events in favour of a description of long-term systems of spatial and cultural relations.

⁴ Garri is the local name of processed Cassava tuber when transformed into a dry powdery foodstuff. It is popular among the Yoruba.

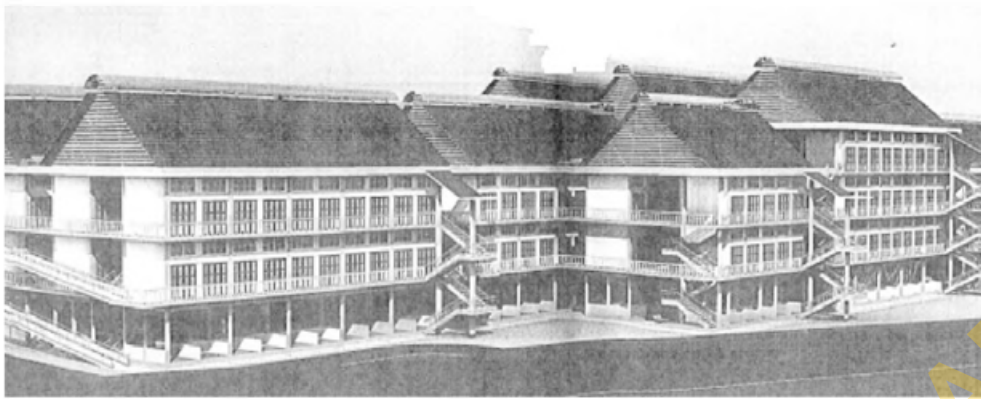


Fig. 7. Another proposal for Akure Main Market (Oja Oba Market (M1), one of the options submitted to the State government for considerations. Evidence of proposals for modernizing the market place that was even more radically distant from the traditional type of market. Source: Modern Habitat Design Group Akure, 2011.

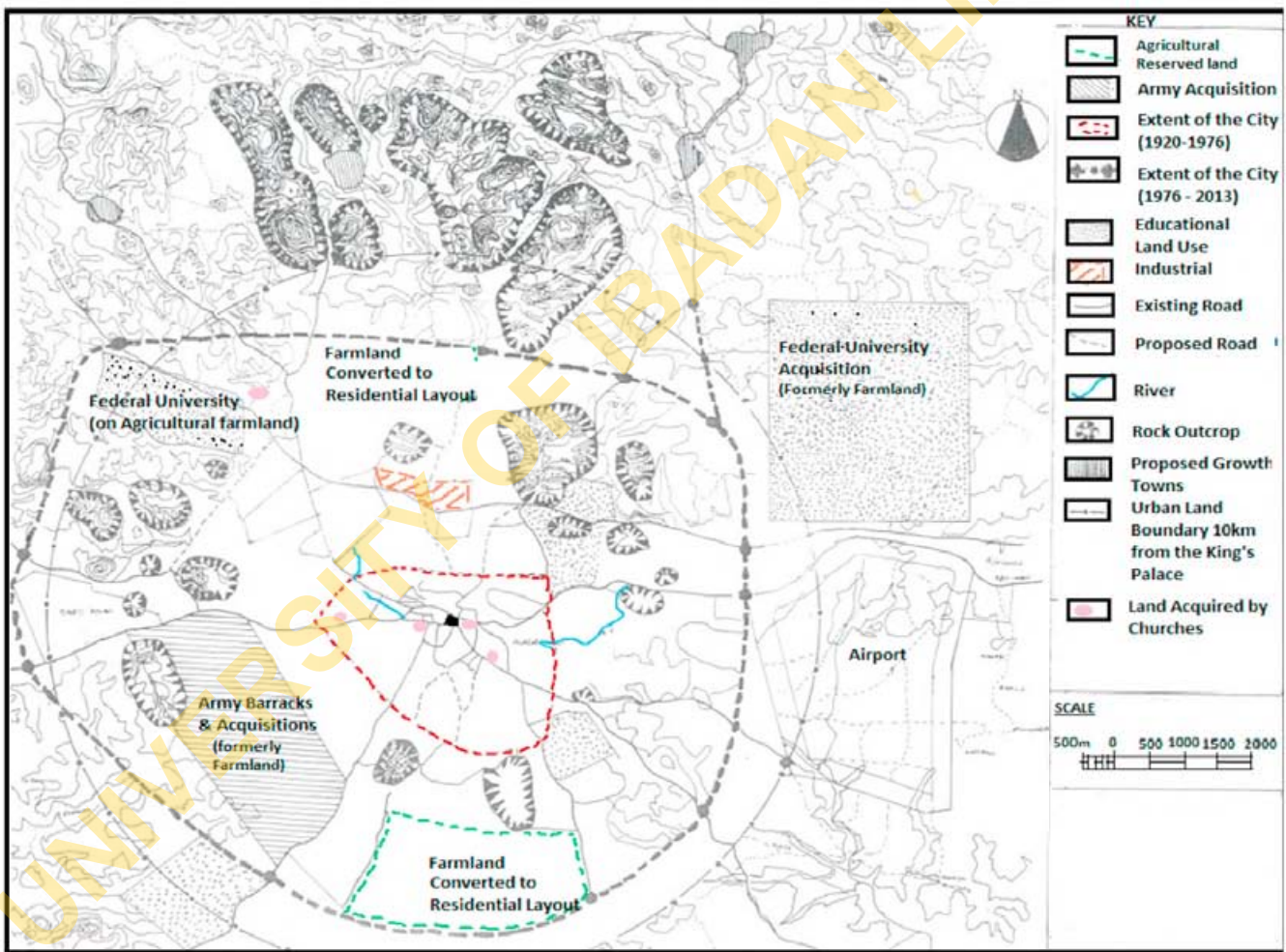


Fig. 8a. Topographical and Geographical location of the old markets, concerning the expansion of the city over time, affected by rapid urban development and government sequestration of land for military and education purposes. Source: Field Research and Maps from Surveyor General Office Ondo State Ministry of Lands and Environment.

generally, present market stalls are decent (Respondent 49).

Nowadays the local government is taking steps to remove hawking from the streets and roadside marketers ... are being gradually driven away. How do they want those people to eat and fend for their families? The government should concentrate on providing jobs for the youths that are unemployed instead of constructing 'fanciful market structures',

car parks for the rich and bus stops that we don't use. (Respondent 72).

I noticed that in the market there is the presence of stores instead of stalls. The government feel they can make more money from the stores rather than the stalls. This is rather unfortunate since the need of the market sellers is compromised on the platter of economic gains rather than what they need to make their selling experience more ideal.

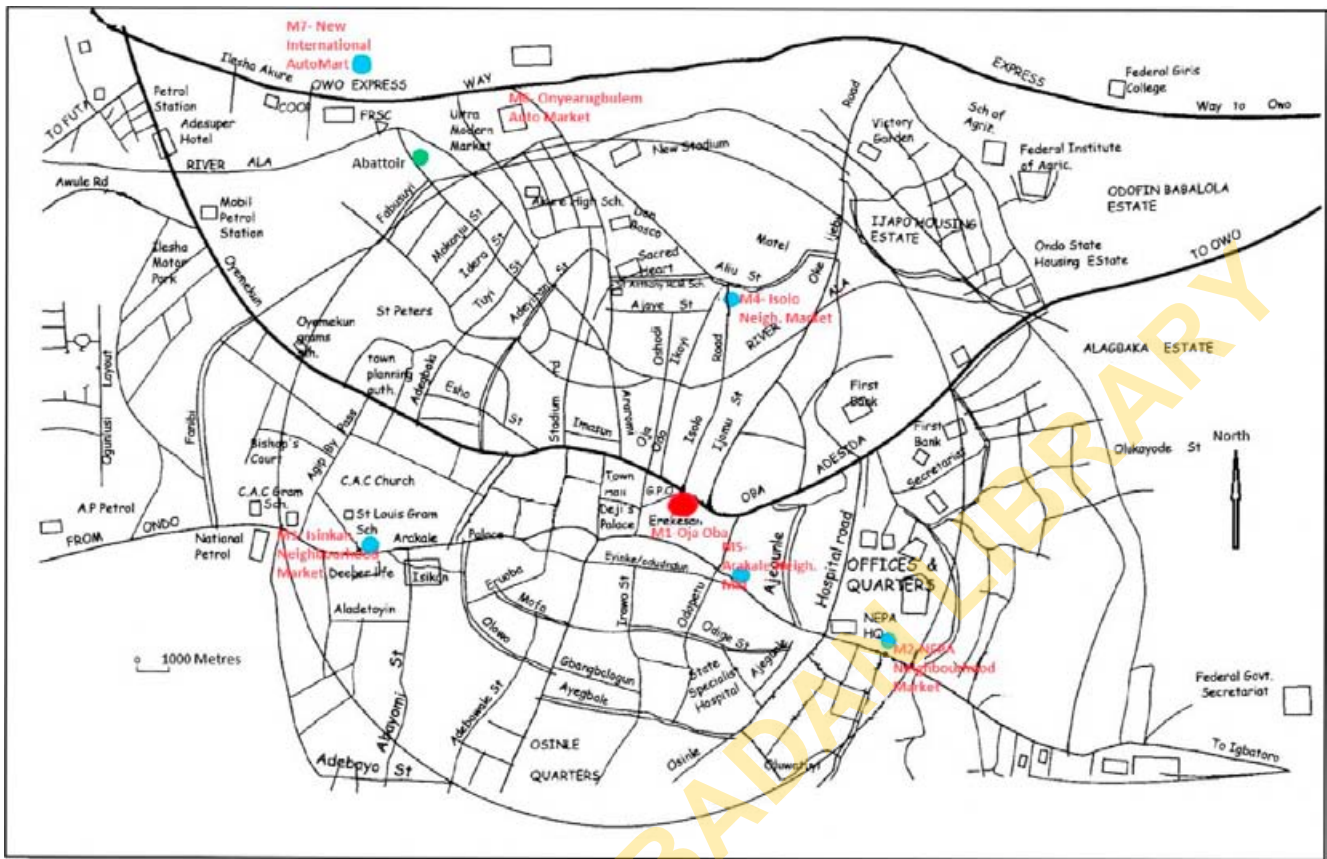


Fig. 8b. Traditional Market Oja Oba (MI) and the New Neighbourhood Markets in Akure City, Compare with Table 4.7. Source: Field Research; (Map adapted from Ondo state Ministry of Lands and Environment, and Fakere & Fadaminro, 2012).

(Respondent 115).

The market has really changed now compared to the past” I don’t like the change, for instance, the turning of the market as we know it from an open space into ‘lock-up’ shops and concrete stalls is making foodstuff very expensive and it is impacting adversely on us low paid workers (Respondent 100).

More recently, as already mentioned, the government has constructed an entirely new complex of three-storey buildings built within the Oja-Oba market (see Fig. 6) and compares with Fig. 7 that remain an unbuilt proposal. In some ways, this can be seen as a victory for traders and ordinary market users, in that it demonstrates that the authorities have finally abandoned the idea of relocating the market. However, the proposed design equally betrays a fixation with surface appearances. The proposal is hailed as ‘modern’ and progressive’ by its advocates, but it does not reflect the preferences of traders in terms of basic considerations like accessibility and affordability. It is also seen as a contributor to the erosion of market traditions by shoppers and traders who still identify the traditional market space as an essential part of the character and cultural life of Akure city.

Box 1 highlights the views of one of the respondents, a trader, who typically rejects the official interpretation of the push for market modernisation in general, presenting it a middle-class preoccupation and as anathema to both traders and ordinary market users. Her statement is an example of the ordinary trader’s views that suggest alternative voice on the market restructuring in Akure. Here modernisation is condemned not only because it is seen as unaffordable and impractical, but also because of the way it erodes traditional, informal arrangements necessary to the social and cultural life of the city.

The traditional market welcomes everybody; it does not discriminate, in the sense that traders can come and spread their goods out for sale with ‘no strings attached’. And it is not just the selling that is

important; the nature of social interaction that takes place in the traditional market is a vital part of the daily lives of countless ordinary people, particularly the old. Many older people, traders and shoppers alike, have been coming to the Oja-Oba market all their whole lives, and are used to and expect to engage in the customary practices of the traditional marketplace. For many people, going to the market is not just about buying and selling. What also attracts them is the rapport that exists between shoppers and traders and the atmosphere that is part and parcel of traditional markets. Social relationships are forged, developed and maintained. In this sense, a visit to the market is more akin to attending ‘social club’. Hence demolishing the market or redeveloping it without reference to customary practices potentially destroys a significant aspect of the social and cultural life of Akure city, eradicating a vital organ necessary for the sustenance of the life worlds of the city’s many inhabitants.

In sum, there will always be conflict when government elites make decisions and take action based only on the tastes and desires they hold in common with the middle class. What is aesthetically acceptable to this alliance of actants runs contrary to what is wanted and needed by ordinary market users and traders. These elites fail to appreciate that much of what constitutes ‘chaos’ in their eyes, is a consequence of autonomy of action and spontaneity in market activity that most traders and many market users wish to maintain. They also fail to appreciate how long-standing traditions underlie seemingly chaotic arrangements in the marketplace and the extent to which this is still valued by other actants in the market network.

5.4. Symbolic, sacred, and Religious Meanings Attached to the marketplace

a) City centre as core of development

Box 1

Interview Extracts and Views on the Traditional Market.

Box 1: Interview Extracts and Views on the Traditional Market

"There is even another strange belief that the moment you are making the market more 'shop-like', the more expensive the food items being sold in such a market. That is why NEPA market (NEPA market is another market, located in the core zone of Akure, demolished and rebuilt into a neighbourhood market by the current Governor Mimiko administration) is one of the most expensive markets in Akure. Nobody goes there, it is only the 'pepper yo yo' [means a local girl that is behaving like a 'been to'; been to abroad] that goes there. You don't get this 'open market thing', the way it is in 'Oja Oba'. From when we are small - NEPA market is like ... for those 'pepper yo yo's'.

In the end what happened to that market? It was easy for the government to just demolish it because no one really has attachment for it. One of the things that are still keeping the Oja Oba market going is the sense of tradition".

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In the end what happened to that market? It was easy for the government to just demolish it because no one really has attachment for it. One of the things that are still keeping the Oja Oba market going is the sense of tradition".

Source: Interview extract

The historic market (in the centre of the city) is one of the main features that any visitor will see and has a close connection to the King of Akure and the traditional palace. Urban centres generally are the hub of commercial activities in the large cities of the world and they are variously referred to as the heart of the city. Most African cities, exhibit such characteristics of growing out of a city centre; there are examples such as Cairo, Johannesburg, Nairobi, Accra, Ibadan, Maiduguri, Kano and Kaduna. Such a centre of the city will have the concentration of banks, offices, shopping complexes, post offices, markets and all such like activities to reflect the changes brought about by westernisation, globalisation and modernisation. The city core, mostly in Yoruba urban centres, marks the beginning or source of development of the city. Mostly in Yoruba towns, the King's palace marks the origin or source of growth, with other development spreading out or surrounding it in a radial formation (refer to Fig. 2).

b) *Symbolic nature of the Traditional market at the centre of the City*

During the pre-colonial period, the main market of many ancient settlements among the Yoruba, such as Ibadan, Ile-Ife, Osogbo, Ado-

Ekiti, Abeokuta, Akure and Owo is often located at the centre of the city and co-joined to the King's palace. Traditional food-markets are an essential part of the cultural institutions of the city among the Yoruba, associated with myths, ritual, taboos and persistence of customary values. Considering the history of Yoruba people, there exists a special relationship between the King's palace and the traditional market. The history of the African past is expressed in oral accounts and comes alive in some of the practices still seen in the symbolic relationship between the palace and the King. Traditional markets in Southwest Nigeria are multifunctional serving as centres for trade, rituals and meeting places. Hence, the palace market in Yoruba land, and indeed Akure, serves as a repository for the expression of cultural continuity and even housed shrines, cemeteries and ceremonial grounds for the installation and burial rites of Kings, consequently its symbiotic relationship with the King's palace. The main market in Akure (popularly called Oja Obaliterarily meaning the 'King's market') is a signifier of traditions and symbol of historical discontinuity in terms of its contemporary value concerning secular and immaterial expressions of power in the shaping of the city as known today.

5.5. The commodification of planning and persistence of tradition on the marketplace

From the field survey that I carried out in Akure in 2014 and 2019, it is evident that the persistence of traditions accounts for some of the hidden issues that impact on the development and growth of the city, which are visible in the market and its activities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Scargil, 1979; Palen, 1987; Gumerman, 1997; Gilbert et al., 1994). In the words of Clifford Geertz (2000: 16) "the interpretive study of culture represents an attempt to come to terms with the diversity of the ways human beings construct their lives in the act of leading them" (Given, 2004; Lawson, Kearns, Egan, & Conway, 2015; Wiseman & Groves, 2000; Erman, 2016; Erman & Hatiboğlu, 2017).

The Yoruba mythology described life on earth as analogous to the market. Life itself can be seen in the light of parallels drawn from songs, 'chants', proverbs, allegories and oral traditions on market activities (Adediran, 1985, p. 594; Holdcroft, 1991; van den Berg, Hartig, & Staats, 2007), which can be inferred from the following two examples. First, "A ye lo ja, Orun ni le." (Translation: Life on earth is market. Heaven is home. Just like the trader comes to the market to trade and return home, likewise all human beings must of necessity depart this world one day and make the journey back to 'eleda' the creator). Second, "A gba ki wa l' Oja, K' Ori Omo titun wo." (Translation: If the elders cannot be present at the market, the situation goes wrong or the collective wisdom of the people at the market is a guarantee of a good future).

In the contemporary scene in Africa, constant mediation takes place between the visible and the symbolic or persisting tradition and customs which provides the framework or bedrock for what is socially acceptable or not. It is important to note that the beliefs and practices of different cultural groups in Akure, as they relate to food, influence their choices and have an impact on the market built environment. For example, the Yoruba have different preferences, beliefs and rituals concerning the production and consumption of food than the Ijaw. The Yoruba ethnic stock formed the dominant group in Akure. Akure, being the capital city of Ondo State in Nigeria, attracted several people from different part of the state, especially the youth; traders and civil servants that are of different ethnicities such as Ijaw and the Igbo from other section of Nigeria state. It is equally important to consider how the preferences and rituals of the middle class and elites in Akure differ from groups that might be more embedded in tradition.

The following questions then arise, what does it mean to belong to the middle class? What does it signify? The middle class in Nigeria tends to share common values and interest, such as interest in education, similar taste for western/imported goods and lifestyle. In the field study conducted in Akure during this research, it is quite straightforward to distinguish the middle class, based on their level of education, their income and where they live in Akure (what part of the city). Due to the distance to the main market (Oja Oba), they need to commute by car to the market for their weekly or daily shopping, leading to traffic congestion and large market patronage.

Hence, there is a need of car parking near, or within, the vicinity of Oja Oba market; a situation that has led to conflict with those less privileged in the society that does not need for vehicles to access the market, since they live within a walking distance from the market. The scene in Fig. 9 shows the crowd that patronises the food market before it was demolished. Whereas Fig. 10 shows the same market after it was rebuilt and appears to be less patronised in comparison with the former appearance in Fig. 9, this pictorial evidence suggests reduced acceptance of the so-called 'modern' approach to the rebuilding of food market structure and spatial configuration witnessed in Akure.

The evidence presented in Figs. 9 and 10, shows the transformation of the traditional market space by the action of the government officials which was based on their policy of modernisation. The change in appearance or transformation of the food market space suggests an imposition of the worldview of the elite on the lower class who found the 'clean' space, quite strange from the market spatial experience they are



Fig. 9. Traditional market in Isinkan, Akure, was demolished to make way for the 'Modern' Market below, shown as M3 on Fig. 8b and Table 4. (Source: Researcher).



Fig. 10. Transformation of the Old Market to New One. One of the Prototype Neighbourhood Markets in Akure Built Between Nov 2010 and April 2011 by the Current Administration in Ondo State, shown as M3 on Fig. 8b and Table 4. (Source: Researcher).

used to all their life. By this, the researcher is not trying to justify dirty market space, but it is important to look at the wider context of social cohesion that was experienced in the well-established spatial pattern of the traditional food market environment. By this the researcher is not trying to justify dirty market space as acceptable, the emphasis is on social cohesion and inclusion that is fostered by the seemingly disordered atmosphere. Perhaps, it will be a welcome idea to integrate the notion of a 'clean' food market space and structure without demolishing market buildings/stall or changing well established and traditionally proven spatial configuration of the traditional food market in favour of the 'strange' modern outlook.

5.6. The active role of non-humans

In considering the active role of non-human actants through the significance of dirt, traffic, congestion, physical differences between open and locked stalls, these will reveal diverse but connected social manifestations allowing deeper interrogation of the multiple layers of non-human actants (Sayes, 2014; Edward, 2016, pp. 1-7; Farias & Bender, 2011). For example, in Akure's Oja-Oba market (M1), there are several concrete buildings, each having groups of open wooden sheds or stalls, pointing to the effects of the physical differences between the open and locked stalls. A set of stalls was provided by the local government authority to Garri sellers, another set to meat, rice, vegetable, fish and chicken/turkey sellers and towards the open space area, in front of the open stalls, the provision traders, (i.e. sellers of milk and other processed food drinks and rice). The re-designing and rebuilding of the main market with lock-up shops and new stalls may sound viable, but the physical location and low cost of the existing traditional stalls make

them commercially competitive and financially attractive to traders. The majority of market traders cannot afford to pay for the new structures, and responses in the interviews undertaken indicate their dissatisfaction with the new arrangements.

Also, concerning traffic congestion during a peak period when the market is in use; market improvement programme of the government and roadside selling and display of food. The perception of the transformation of food markets by users is important to understand how they feel about the changes around the markets and to what extent it has impacted their life (Farias & Mützel, 2015; Farias & Bender, 2011). Some of the interview participants stated that there seemed to be a situation with the vehicular parking, human and traffic congestion in the market, which is a clear consequence of urbanisation. One stated that the “main market is too tight especially during the peak periods and towards the main approach to the market. It leaves little room for people to move freely (and that) government should do something about this” (respondent, 25).

For instance, the wealthy and educated also describe the market as dirty, whereas the poor see the environment as less threatening. Other respondents among the educated, wealthy and middle class express the desire to see more vehicular access, and parking space within the market. Some of the elite desire that refuse disposal should be radically dealt with, suggesting relocation, demolition and urban clearance give way to modern structures by advocating that effort needs to be applied by the market associations. A summary of the kind of improvements the more educated, the wealthier and professional classes wish to see include radical changes to how transactions are carried out in the market, one of the respondents suggest that “the way majority of the market sellers conduct their business which needs a touch of a modern idea, I feel they should stop insulting buyers that try to negotiate or bargain with them” (respondent 20). In further contrast, the less educated and the poorer respondents were less concerned with the appearance of the market structure and improving vehicular access, but want to keep, or maintain, the social interaction and cultural lifestyle engendered by the traditional spaces in the market. One of the respondents stated, “We sell everything needed in this market (Oja Oba). The new market structure and stalls provided by the current government in Akure is beyond the reach of the average market seller, generally present stalls market in Oja Oba are decent” (respondent 49). This suggests an attachment to the familiar traditional and inexpensive space for trading.

Such views, as expressed above, are an indication of conflicts between the local market sellers who sees nothing wrong in their environment regarding them as natural, as compared to the educated shoppers, who on the other hand are delighted to visit the traditional markets but do not like the ‘dirt’. This study does not suggest that an unhygienic environment is a virtue, but as the proverbial statement goes, “it is not wise to throw bad water and the baby away”. Many a time, in resolving situations like these, it requires a careful balance to avoid taking measures that go to the extremes. Such extreme measures can be seen in Akure in the case of the government’s decision to replace the traditional main market with a three-story ‘sanitized’ structure. This is done to mitigate the dirty ‘unhygienic’ environments.

Officials may use the term sustainability to justify their decisions, and may even adopt renewable technologies in market improvements, but it has always been and remains marginal to their concerns. When they use the term sustainability, generally it is conflated with modernisation, principally the desire for an environment that is “beautified and attractive”, attractive not only to “investors”, but in particular to that alliance of elite and middle-class actants who are most in sympathy with the view that traditional markets are ‘dirty’ and ‘disordered’ places. The middle-class respondents clearly expressed a desire for markets to be modern, clean, and well-served by facilities. One respondent remarked that “I do not like the general appearance of the market, especially the mud in the ground whenever there is rain. I believe the government is trying to rebuild and redesign the markets in Ondo state”. Another

observed that the market is “choky, close to the main road. It has no parking space. It is always block – especially the access road and difficult for pedestrians to walk. Sale of goods is done indiscriminately. Sustainability should be about what works for the people, the economy and the environment (Breuer, Janetschek, & Malerba, 2019; Spahn, 2018; Wanamaker, 2018). But government officials use the term sustainability to justify their preferences for a ‘modern’ environment, with all that the word connotes in terms of ‘attractive’ new buildings, shops and stalls that are ordered and controlled, supporting facilities and, most significantly, vehicular access. It is this image that appeals to the average middle-class shopper, not the idea of a market that is ‘sustainable’. This section has shown that dirt, cars, and the physical properties of the stalls actively contributed to the story of the market, interacting with different human actors in different ways.

The question that remains unanswered or we need to ask is who is speaking for other actants in the debate over sustainability, the hawkers, the traders and the city and State’s working poor? Sustainability is really an official discourse, and not one that is in everyday use amongst the population at large, and particularly not amongst the working poor. In actuality, there is no overt battle taking place over the concept or discourse of sustainability. These actants tend to fight their battles on other ground. Most often, as we saw previously, it is a counter-image of tradition itself that hawkers, traders and the working poor normally cite in opposition to the modernisation agenda of the middle-class and elite, that and the representation and regulation of formality and informality in market space and practices.

6. Conclusion

Since Akure’s built markets are places filled with actants, the research suggests that socio-economic/political interactions are ‘translated’ differently in the world of politicians and ordinary citizens. For instance, through the application of ANT, the analysis of data compares the role and views ascribed to food-market activities in the study area by policymakers with the view that market sellers construct themselves. The former construct market sellers as ‘backward’, ignorant of the workings of modern market requirements, whereas the sellers construct marketplace activities as rooted in traditional norms, myths and loyalty based on informal associations. Research findings from this study show that the character of the marketplace within the city is not simply an outcome of rational decision making, but is driven by the cultural preferences and diverging social interests of ‘actants’ as they negotiate the process of change between tradition and modernity and make choices. This paper shows that the contributions of specific actors, (such as buyers/consumers, government officials, politicians, landowners, market stall holders or sellers, hawkers, market stalls, dirt or traffic congestion) have impacted on the local network and by extension the global network. The built marketplace in the study area reveals a multi-actor network, in which the most ‘powerful’ middle class and elite actants engage in the process of translation, problematisation and mobilisation of resources in shaping future sustainability agendas. The actions of these powerful elites (politician, policymakers and some professionals) were clearly defined by their beliefs as revealed statements and actions.

Author’s statement

The revised manuscript is hereby attached to this submission for your kind attention. I am very grateful for the constructive suggestions and comments offered by the two reviewers. I hope they will find the revised manuscript to be more structured and elaborated as required. I took note of this summary in the reworking of the introduction and concluding sections. I introduced a clearer structure based on the Guide for Authors as suggested by reviewer 1 and 2. I also introduced sections on Research Methods and the Study Area The suggestions are thoroughly addressed in the revised manuscript. I have added detailed information

and new figures and diagrams to explain the topographical and cultural transformation of the study area over time. A new section on Symbolic, Sacred, and Religious Meanings Attached to the Marketplace. The suggestion is also carried out in the body of the manuscript.

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