

Main characteristics of urban markets in Africa

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Abstract

Urban markets influence socially and economically in cities around the world, and imprint an obvious dynamic of development. However, their characteristics very often differ from one geographical area to another. Thus, this article, based on a literature review, aims to study the characteristics of markets in African cities. This research reveals that the characteristics of these markets on the African continent depend on their typologies and the arrangements made there. In terms of spatial distribution, each market is the center of a circle whose radius varies according to its importance and may be, depending on its size, a distribution or collection market. In general, they are characterized by two main types of market infrastructure, namely markets and shopping centers. In addition, the mismatch between the available space and the growth of the markets is at the origin of a remarkable spatial pressure and the interventions of the municipalities are generally very limited by the lack of technical and financial means.

Keywords: Markets, cities, Africa

Introduction

Urban markets influence socially and economically in the cities of the world, and print an obvious dynamic of development (F. Yatta, 2006).

In Africa, urban markets play an important role in the life of cities. The urban dynamic that markets bring about is a powerful factor that influences development, the economy, social and political relations, and the structuring of space (J. Igué, 2010).

Urban markets, by their function and role, are centers of attraction that attract and concentrate the population and economic activities of African cities. They are places of opportunity; their proper functioning makes it possible to generate growth and multiply the opportunities of the populations (African Development Bank, 2010).

Thus, both the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank consider that people's access to markets is of prime importance in the context of economic and social development programs in African countries. Because people depend on markets to sell their products and their work, to get supplies of all kinds of products (food and manufactured), to finance their investments with the income they earn there, and to insure themselves against certain risks. Markets, through the opportunities they offer, allow the economic development of the population, the financial autonomy of women and populations without access to formal jobs (E. Benicourt, 2014).

Moreover, FAO (2017) shows that the characteristics of urban markets around the world differ according to the physical environment, culture, prevailing economic policies and level of development achieved. In addition, C. Baron (2004) points out that African cities have been experiencing major and rapid changes since the early 1980s. According to the author, the current period indeed presents an originality insofar as most African societies are confronted with unprecedented urbanization with the strongest urban growth rates in the world, even if the rates of urbanization remain relatively weak. The increase in the size of cities raises new questions for urban policy. Emerging problems of local regulation in the face of a growing population in megalopolises, which results in the development of irregular housing and urban informality, analyzed by some as the symbol of urban disintegration.

In such a context, this article, essentially based on a theoretical study, aims to better study the characteristics of markets in African cities. Thus, the study respectively addresses the spatial distribution, the areas of influence, the typology and the dynamic arrangements of African urban markets.

Spatial distribution and areas of influence of African urban markets

Markets present themselves in different ways depending on geography, culture, politics, etc. It is therefore important to consider the spatial distribution and areas of market influence.

Regarding the spatial distribution of urban markets in Africa, it depends on political, economic and socio-demographic factors, etc. For example, during the colonial era in sub-Saharan Africa, urban markets were set up in the heart of conurbations, close to places of worship, administrative services and train stations, reflecting the desire to create a space in the center of the city bringing together major symbols of the city (P. Pacaud & F. Filippi, 2001). Thus in sub-Saharan Africa, the markets most often called “central market” are found in the city center, at strategic crossroads of marketing, transport and population movement systems and also in neighborhoods with high demographic pressure. This is the case of the Kinshasa market in Congo, where the market equipment accompanies the latter quite well; although with a delay, we are witnessing more and more the extension and densification of the population, with the exception of neighborhoods with a higher standard of living (S. Ayimpam, 2014).

Indeed, A. Poyau (2008) explains that the spatial distribution of markets in a city, according to the administrative division, makes it possible to assess the level of commercial equipment in each municipality. There is, in general, no balance between the municipalities for reasons which relate both to history and to the mode of urban development. This distribution, necessarily provisional, evolves as the city develops, and has an impact on the management of markets and the amount of revenue collected. An analysis on a national scale shows that the markets form a framework that participates in the organization of the territory. The fabric of markets in Africa is largely the result of the action of the administration (colonial or current), authorities and traders. Also the number of urban markets is growing, in relation to African urban growth. For example, in 1976, Abidjan in Ivory Coast had twenty-seven (27) markets, there were one hundred and twenty (120) in 2000. This development is accompanied by a new configuration of the urban commercial space. Market dynamics are inseparable from those of settlement and the national economy. It is also linked to the role of the actors who animate them.

Along the same lines, J. Chaleard (2002) points out that the spatial network of urban markets in Africa varies from one city to another. Beyond a simple location of the markets on a map, it is the crossing of the typological analysis of the markets with their mode of spatial distribution on the territory of the city which reveals the factors of balance or imbalance in the network of urban markets. Examining the network of markets, from one city to another, obviously reveals varied situations. But in general, a polarization of commercial activities on a large market or central market and its depressing effects on the network of secondary markets is frequently observed in African cities. The main markets are located in the center of a hexagon which constitutes its main area of influence. Each of these main markets attracts the population of the surrounding localities. Below, the secondary markets have a lower recruitment area. Moreover, at the regional level, the distribution of markets is not uniform. They are much more numerous where population densities are high.

As for the areas of influence of the continent's urban markets, the influence and attraction of these markets depend on two facts, according to the work of P. Cazamajor (1989) and C. Rubin (2015). It is the spatial distance that separates one market from another and the temporal distance that exists between market days. But also characteristics such as the size of the market, the physical characteristics of the buildings, the weight that each of the specialized sales sections has, the type of transactions carried out, the economic and social conditions of the surrounding neighborhoods, are some of the factors that relativize the effects of spatial and temporal distances. The area of attraction increases when the market places are far from each other. Proximity between markets loses its importance when a number of factors are involved, such as market specialization. Also the traditional or administrative borders do not modify the catchment area. However, the creation of a more modern market and the development of supermarket chains near an ordinary market have an influence on the influence of this market.

In general, each market is the center of a circle whose radius varies according to its size. For markets located in city centers, there is a development of economic activities in and around the markets. Although the city has several commercial infrastructures, the anarchic occupation of vendors outside the spaces intended for

commercial activity continues to prevail; some of them are characterized by dilapidation and narrowness (S. Kamara, 2008 & A. Bagbila, 1993). Thus the districts bordering the central markets very often gradually become the largest craft and service areas of the city (example: the central markets of Ouagadougou, Cotonou, Cairo in Egypt, Djibouti). The markets therefore become the places, or rather the sectors, in which one can buy everything in quantity or quality, have everything manufactured, but also have their hair done or treated, eat, etc. These sectors are the most active in the city, and those in which the most value is created (P. Pacaud. & F. Filippi, 2001).

Generally speaking, there is a relationship between the areas of influence and the typology of urban markets in Africa.

A typology depending on the areas of influence

The typology of markets in cities in Africa depends on their areas of influence in their spatial organization. Markets do not all have the same characteristics. They differ in layout, location, area of attraction, vocations, functions, degree of dependence, weight or importance, etc. It is the combination of these various factors that gives them their originality and typology (J. Michotte, 1970 & A. Bagbila, 1993). For this study, the typology (Table 1) will be based solely on the economic importance, the areas of influence and the geographical location of the markets.

Table 1: Types of markets

Criterion	Geographical position	Regularity of the market	Types of products sold	Forms of sales	Opening hours
Type of marchés	Central Market	Official market	Specialized market	wholesale market	Daily market
	District market	Informal market	Market of General	retail market	Weekly market
	Neighborhood or Streets market			Wholesale and retail market	Day or Daily market
	Border market or market town				Night or night market

Source: G. Henry & F. Poisbeau (2015).

This table presents the typology of urban content markets according to criteria related to the geographical position, the regularity of the market, the types of products sold, the forms of sales and the opening hours. Thus, in African cities there are initially central markets or large markets. Very often these are the oldest and most important markets in African cities. They play the role of wholesale markets and are often of ancient origin and rather small in size because they were established in the commercial heart of the cities. Their rights of way have been well circumscribed since their creation. Following the example of the Dantokpa market in Cotonou (one of the largest markets in West Africa), these markets are highly structured and organized, as is the case, among others, of the central market in N'Djamena, from Analakely to Antananarivo, from Bamako, Kinshasa, Douala, Dakar, etc. (EADI, 2008). These markets are densely built (Photo n°1 and n°2).

Photo 1: Dantokpa central market in Cotonou Photo 2: Ouagadougou central market



Source : B. N'Bessa (2010)



Source : Afric agency (2020)

As can be seen in photos n° 1 and n°3 which illustrate the central markets of Cotonou and Ouagadougou, these types of markets have very often closed installations (of the shop type) or hard sheds and represent the majority of sales facilities. Trade in manufactured goods is generally dominant there. They radiate throughout the city and participate in the distribution of commercial equipment in the rest of the city (S. Kamara, 2008). They are the main supply points for traders in the city, the country and sometimes several countries (D. Meva'A Abomo, 2006).

The second type concerns “zone” or district markets. Generally, they developed spontaneously on vast grounds, originally relatively far from the commercial epicenter of the city. Their limits not having been defined with precision, they extend in an anarchic way, mainly by adding makeshift sheds and precarious installations. Following urbanization, they are now surrounded by densely populated neighborhoods. Thus, due to the presence of these large markets, the habitat function is gradually being transformed in favor of the commercial function, mainly storage (G. Henry & F. Poisbeau, 2015). Like the Missèbo market in Cotonou, they bring together a large number of traders with an extensive range of retail, semi-wholesale and wholesale products (photo n° 3).

Photo 3: Missèbo district market in Cotonou



Source: H. Yao (2012)

In this type of market, the very heterogeneous buildings range from well-built shops to dilapidated shops. These markets often extend across the country or even the sub-region (P. Pacaud & F. Filippi, 2001). These markets are daily and there are small differences in activity from day to day. Some markets specialize in manufactured, luxury or food products (J. Chaleard, 2002).

Apart from these two types mentioned above, there are peripheral, street or neighborhood markets. They are groups of stalls and local shops, often precarious, whose influence does not go beyond the neighborhood. These markets are located near bus stations, a street or “night markets”, etc. (P. Pacaud & F. Filippi, 2001). Like the Saint-Michel market in Cotonou, they are poorly equipped markets where transactions take place

on a fairly small scale. Attendance in these markets is low (D. Ilboudo, 2012). The factors that influence the success of a neighborhood market are the population density, the size of the area to be served, the purchasing power of local consumers and the pre-existing commercial environment (G. Henry & F. Poisbeau, 2015). Finally, mention should be made of cross-border markets or market towns. They are the main supply centers for foreign products for the domestic and foreign markets of domestic products. Not only do they drain the production of the entire province or the country, but they also channel and redistribute those of the country to which they belong. The entire city behaves like a commercial center with an interregional influence. Its importance in this type of market stems from the quantity and diversity of the products it receives and redistributes (D. Alba Moya Luz, 1989, G. Henry & F. Poisbeau, 2015).

After having respectively addressed the spatial distribution, the areas of influence and the types of African urban markets, this study on the characteristics of these markets also deals with their development.

African urban markets: dynamic developments

The layouts of African urban markets are dynamic and vary according to needs. Indeed, according to A. Imorou (2006), the development of urban markets in Africa depends on the type of establishment (spontaneous, by administrative decree or according to a master or communal development plan). For markets set up spontaneously by the populations themselves, when the municipal technical services decide to develop them by maintaining them on their initial site without changing site; it is usually when they reach a certain importance. This is the example of the international market of Parakou in Benin, whose current site was a place of barter between foreigners and natives. This market has evolved following the demographic growth of the city. The evolution of this large market had not been made according to strict regulations before 1958, the year during which there was the construction of about fifteen hangars on the site. This primary development accelerated the growth of the market and constituted the starting point for the payment of taxes by its users. In 1992, through the experiences that the French Development Agency (FDA) had on the failures of markets moved from their initial sites, unanimity was finally reached on the construction of the new market (756 stalls, 275 shops and 3 bar) on the site of the former. It was in July 1997 that the allocation of places began.

For urban markets set up by administrative decree or according to a master or municipal development plan, D. Zongo (2013) notes that the site of implantation is chosen by the municipal technical services according to the plan of the municipal development and development. In general, these are markets that have been established spontaneously on an inadequate site or intended for the establishment of infrastructure other than a market, which for various reasons must be moved to an adequate site. The example of the livestock market in the city of Fada N'Gourma (Burkina Faso), which was on a spontaneous and undeveloped site in sector No1, has been moved to the site developed for livestock trading, in sector N°11.

Moreover, the logic of market development in African cities is an emblematic figure of the crisis in the management of urban spaces observed at the level of each country. This situation results from the contrast that city managers are not urban planners or weakly apply the advice of the latter. Decision-making tends to satisfy politics, in an outcome of technical skills in urban planning (D. Meva'A Abomo, 2006). The mismatch between available space and market growth is the source of remarkable spatial pressure. African urban markets are devourers of space. For S. Kamara (2008), this phenomenon is revealed in Dakar by the metropolitan market of Sandaga which spreads all its tentacles throughout the city center. Spatial pressure, flooding, pollution and fire risks are only consequences of these precarious and unhealthy developments. In terms of development and maintenance, the interventions of the municipalities are generally very limited by the lack of technical and financial means: the buildings are often dilapidated, the sanitary facilities are deficient or even absent and, in general, the market sanitation is insufficient. Maintenance is reduced to its simplest form and, in practice, the management of market sites is left to traders and their associations.

In terms of market infrastructure, in the African urban framework, there are mainly two types of market infrastructure listed at the level of African cities. According to S. Kamara (op.cit.) these are markets and shopping centers (super market). Shopping centers are new types of retail infrastructure recently installed in major African cities. They are places built and fitted out in which economic and social exchanges and certain services provided to populations are organized. A shopping center can group together several big-box stores, specialized shops, non-commercial ancillary services and sometimes public services (banks, travel agencies, tourism, consulting firms). According to the author, their size is variable and are real urban centers of activity. These infrastructures are the fruit of the rapid urban growth noted in the cities and whose

origin depends on diversified factors. Shopping centers are beginning to populate major African cities (Dakar, Lagos, Brazzaville...) as a business model that first saves space by building at height, and second, saves customer time to shop in town. Shopping centers are an organized set of businesses that undertake to follow a common policy of service, opening hours, reception and commercial action.

As for markets, according to UNCTAD (2004) and S. Kamara (2008), they consist mainly of shops, halls, sheds, built tables, stands, floor displays, cold rooms, etc. In terms of infrastructure, urban markets are generally characterized by insufficiency and inadequacy. This leads to the installation of some traders outside the markets either because they have not benefited from the shop allocation or because the shops do not respond to the types of trade they practice. The proliferation of precarious installations on the roads leads to considerable problems of organization, maintenance and cleaning of the markets. The commercial infrastructures of African cities are mostly in a dilapidated state, which means that there is an urgent need to relocate these infrastructures or to implement rigorous rehabilitation and renovation programs.

Conclusion

This study, which focuses on the characteristics of African urban markets, shows that markets present themselves in different ways depending on the geographical area, culture, policies, etc. Their characteristics in Africa depend on several factors such as the area of influence, the facilities and the typology of the markets. For the activities that take place in the markets, they vary greatly depending on the market, because they depend directly on the population served.

The development of African urban markets is dynamic and varies according to needs and depends on the type of establishment (spontaneous, by administrative decree or according to a master or communal development plan). In general, each market is the center of a circle whose radius varies according to its importance.

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