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## **Layering of a spontaneous city over planned one, case of Nairobi's Central Business District (CBD)**

### **Abstract**

*Most cities have experienced layering of planned city by spontaneous one. In most cities, for example Nairobi, within the central Business District (CBD), this has taken the form of open-air markets. In most sectors of the CBD, activities of this occupy shopping as well as pedestrian streets. Within these, foot traffic is forced to fight for the only remaining space with passing motorcars.*

*There appears to be a strong connection between preferred choice of open-air market settings and human traffic flow. They are likely to be found along and/or next to those motorways with reasonable number of human traffic. These would be motorways that lead directly to some of the popular residential and/or transit points.*

*From available data it would appear that in the development of open-air market, re-developing of open places in the CBD and some of the motorways to accommodate this development could only enhance its activities within the CBD.*

### **Introductory Background.**

To a great extent, physical planning of Nairobi has been informed by ideological concepts (Nevanlinna: 96). This has resulted in two cities that exist side by side. There is the squalid one to the east, and a wealthy centre and selected well-kept suburbs to the west. In Nairobi, modern technology exists side by side with primitive living conditions and in complete contrast.

Nairobi's Central Business District has three sectors. There is the government one with all the public and administrative offices; the retail one to the east of Tom Mboya Street; and the business sector. Motorways of different grades link the CBD to the several suburbs around the city. According to Nairobi City Council sources, more than fifty percent of original renters in the CBD has re-located to the quieter and relatively secure suburbs.

An interesting development along some of the motorways within the CBD is the high level of open air market that continue to take place along the walkways and/or shopping streets. From as early as nine o'clock in the morning, both the pavements and shopping streets become vibrant with

traders and buyers. With evening approaching streets become more vibrant. Goods that are sold are no longer the informal but cheap industrial goods from Far East and China.

Without concrete solution, open-air market will continue to haunt this city. As early as 1961, attempts by individuals in city hall to solve the problem were never fully supported (Nevanlinna: 96). No legislation has been put in place since.

The 1948 proposal by Thornton, Silberman and Anderson that would have contributed to a change in the landscape of Nairobi was never implemented (Thornton, White, Silberman: 48, Nevanlinna: 96). Lack of fully implementing the plan has contributed to the city problem. In the 1948 proposal improvement of motorways and articulation of open settings that would supplement the city lifestyle were proposed.

### **Research Method.**

The aim of this research was to develop a theory between settings that are popular with open-air market and city residents who are part of the CBD. Attempts by the council to locate open-air market from CBD to settings that are far removed from major movement axis have been unsuccessful.

Firstly sampling was carried out to identify motorways within CBD that were popular with settings for open-air market activities. The guideline was also revised during this. Secondly, was the grounded theory examination that was carried out to find out about two things: First was how those that were active in the open-air market had responded to early moves by the council to re-locate them to alternative settings. Second was to identify level of interaction between sellers and the passers-by that would be on foot (Leedy: 97). Third was to identify data on buyers.

Combined methods were used to collect the data (Leedy: 97). Archival was used to find out the response of authorities over the years to problem of open air market; Both discussions and observation strategies were used on selected sellers and members of public; and photography was used to capture scenic photos. Combined method helped to maximise similarities and difference among information obtained.

Data was broken down for example destination of each of the motorways and location of every urban open place and relationship of this to popular motorways established. Within each selected motorway, scale was attached to density of those on foot. High density was attached to motorway with lots of human traffic; and low for those where traffic was lowest. For each of the motorways, level of activities was identified. Finally, different factors were compared and categories made (Patton: 90). The aim of this research being to develop theory, relationships are presented as propositions.

### **Open space typology.**

There were three types of open spaces as per use. Over time, some had been adapted to provide for different kind of use. Following uses were identified:

- i. Car Parking: This included those next to; Uchumi Supermarket; High Court; Railway Station and Jamia Mosque. Only the last one was private and was managed by the neighbouring mosque, the rest were council property. Jamia Mosque and High Court open places were located within the business and government sector respectively. Both the Mosque and the Council management ensured that the respective setting were only being used for car parking.

Local council had entered into agreement with curio sellers to use part of Uchumi Supermarket on Saturdays. In turn before leaving the place curio dealers would ensure that their settings were tidied up. This place was located between the business and government sector of CBD and next to Aga Khan Walkway and Harambee Avenue.

The railway station parking located in front of the station was large and ambiguous it had no defined use. It provided for Car Parking; a public transit point for vehicles to the south east of Nairobi and scattered open-air market settings that dealt in diverse products.

Jevanjee Garden provided ground for relaxation and is also dominated by evangelism. Features included; a monument to celebrate the garden's founder; soft landscaping and hard ground walkways. Although public the garden is under a trustee and is controlled through two entrances. The location of this garden is within the edge of business sector but it is removed from major direction of human traffic.

Kenyatta International Conference Centre open grounds was meant to be used for celebrating events. It could was accentuated to accommodate both flow of activity from the centre and from outside. Entrance to the centre was controlled through two gates.

The General Post Office Gardens were semi-private. Access was controlled by design through accentuation of terraces and fencing that were not very dominant. Features here included gardens and a water fountain.

### **Street Typology.**

The CBD was laid out in gridiron form with these being used to create different levels of motorways. Through hierarchy of streets, the CBD is physically linked to its suburbs. Motorways with direct links include dual, Jogoo Road, Race Course Road, Muranga Road; Forest Hill Roads; Uhuru Highway and Hailie Sellasie Avenue. Those that feed human traffic to these included Hailie Sellasie Avenue; River Road; University way; Ronald Ngala Street; Aga Khan Walkway; Tom Mboya Street and Accra Road. There are also several feeder roads and alleys.

Both Jogoo and Racecourse road are dual carriageways. Jogoo Road links the CBD to high density residential suburbs that are in eastlands and Racecourse to North East and some of the northern suburbs. North-east suburbs include high density suburbs such as Mathare Valley and Medium density ones for example Pangani. During rush hours both the two roads would be filled with human traffic. Open air market activities would be taking place within some settings of these (Fig 1).

Fig. 1. Open air market in shopping/pedestrian street with foot traffic being forced into main road.

Both Muranga and Forest Roads links the CBD to medium and low density residential sectors to the north and north west. The former also links up to some of the high density residential sectors. Both during morning and after work, large number of people would be noticed to be trekking along Muranga Road.

Uhuru highway links the CBD to residential suburbs in the south east and south west. The former is a medium density sector of town while the later links up with the medium and low density residential sectors. Both during morning as well as in the evening, there would be some crowd of people trekking along the road. After six o'clock this would slow to a trickle.

Haile Sellasie Avenue links the CBD to the southern suburbs. This is both high, medium as well as medium density residential. From as early as six o'clock in the morning huge crowd of people would be trekking along this avenue to the CBD.

In general it was observed that both during early hours of morning and late after five, there would be crowds of people trekking along the motorway. Also along these motorway there would be some level of open air market activity. There were those who would continue with their movement and others who would stop for while to purchase haggle over prices and/or purchases.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations.**

Main objective of the research was to identify possible connections between the pattern of an open air market that is located within the CBD and some of the urban elements for example motorways and open places. From data, open air market formed along those motorways with high human traffic. They would be leading to popular destinations for example residential sectors or transit point.

Second objective was to establish any relationship between open places within CBD and selected motorways and how the setting of the later was likely to enhance the use of open place as likely setting for open market activity. Locations of some of the open places were removed from popular motorways. As far as open air market activities were concerned they were hardly of any value.

Firstly, this research would recommend for the local council authority to adopt specific policy on open air market within the CBD. This could be prescriptive. Rather than being allowed to develop in the streets, there is a high possibility that some existing or new open places could be accentuated to accommodate this. Secondly, it necessary that the council accepts the reality of urban poverty. Some of the developments along the motorways could be direct result of this. Accepting the reality of urban poverty becomes the first step in solving the problem of open air market within the CBD.

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