

Urbanisation and Market Growth Trends in the Yaounde Metropolis

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Abstract

The need for the creation of more market spaces to respond to an increasing population demand has arisen strongly in Yaounde. Not only are they needed to meet up with demand but also to curb shopping distances as the city sprawls; accommodate seeking traders and ameliorate the trading environments. The main thrust of this paper is to examine the impact of rapid urbanization on the demand for the creation of more markets in Yaounde. Field surveys by questionnaire and interviews were the main tools of data collection. The study established an intricate relationship between urbanization and the creation of markets in Yaounde. From 1984 to 2013, there was a 63.6% increase in the number of markets in the metropolis. Over 76.9% of markets surveyed started in unplanned locations and were later relocated. Most of the markets were created in the 1960s and 1970s. This study suggests the need for the implementation of strong decentralisation policies to reduce urbanisation rates and lessen pressures on social and economic infrastructures in the cities and equally the planned creation of markets at urban growth fronts in the city.

Keywords: urbanization, Yaounde, markets, growth trends, infrastructure

1. Introduction

In the cities, markets are the unquestionable platforms for obtaining basic needs like food and clothing. Ample access to market facilities is paramount to achieving these needs (Adekunle et al, 2011 in Jahangeer et al, 2013). Throughout history, cities and markets have sustained each other. While the former provides location, demand, and social context, the latter provides sustenance, profit, and the cultural verve to the former (Bestor, 2001). Africa is generally becoming an urban continent (Simone, 1999). For the last two decades, African cities have been experiencing an urbanisation rate of 3.7% annually. As cities in the developing world continue to grow and urban poverty increases, more people rely on urban markets for survival (Gombay, 1994). This is because urban Africa lacks the productive base to provide formal work to their growing numbers (Simone, 1999). Hence, if the population of cities continues to increase rapidly, it will be unreasonable to assume that the provision of infrastructure would multiply in proportion (Robert, 1969). In the absence of formal sector employment, markets seem to be the easiest entry points for new in-migrants in African cities to connect to the urban economy. That explains the bazaar like nature of city high streets and the multitude of peddlers and hawkers roving city streets and neighbourhoods. Since 2000, Africa has become the second fastest growing economy in the world after Asia. Most of this growth is consumer-led (Hattingh, Russo, Sun-Basorun & van Wamelen, 2012; Hatch, Becker & Zyl, 2011). Consumer spending in Africa is expected to rise to over 1trillion dollars in 2020 (Hatch, et al. 2011).

Market places in most of Africa originated from local demand and supply and not from planning (Uzuegbunam, 2012). This is the scenario in the market landscape of Yaounde *par excellence*. During the colonial period, inhabitants of the then village 'Yaounde' exchanged goods through trade by barter at festive periods called the 'Abok'. Crafts were exchanged for food, and food crops were exchanged for food crops (Sakou, 1982). The burgeoning population of Yaounde necessitated the creation of more marketplaces and the rise of spontaneous ones. This was also noticed by Franqueville (1974) who posited that the growing needs of the rapidly expanding population of Yaounde have resulted in the creation of several market places in the capital, some of which have become quite large like those of Mvog Ada and Mokolo among others. The conditions for the creation of a new market depend mainly on the expressed need of increased population (Tracy-white, 1995). This paper posits that rapid and unplanned urbanisation in Yaounde has also created room for rapid growth in unplanned markets.

2. Spatial Context and Research Method

Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon is located between latitudes $3^{\circ}47'$ and $3^{\circ}56'$ north of the Equator and longitudes $11^{\circ}10'$ and $11^{\circ}45'$ east of the Greenwich Meridian. Figure 1.1 shows Yaounde in the Centre Region of Cameroon.

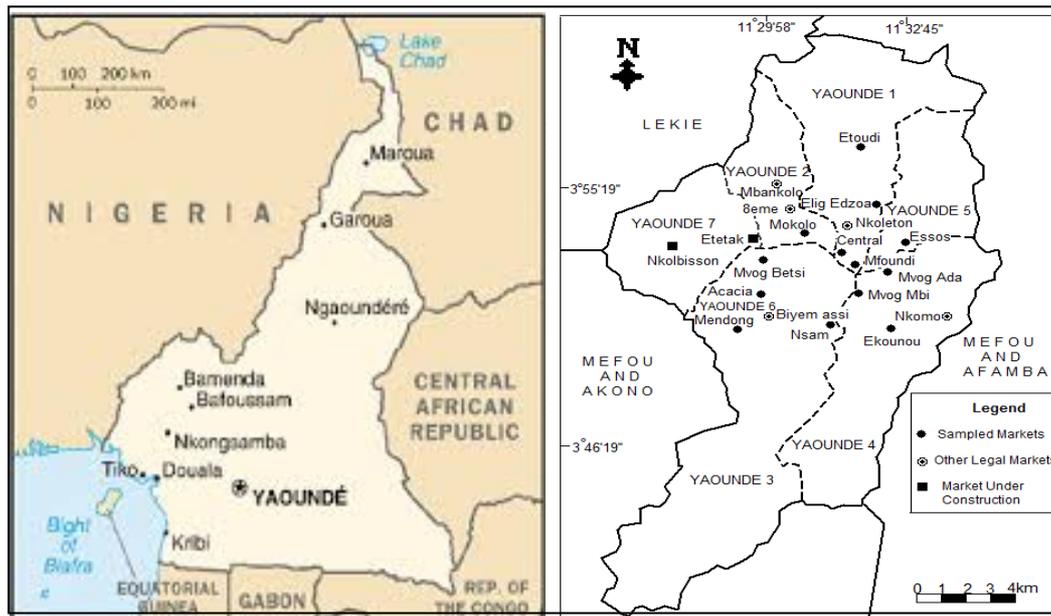


Figure 1. Location of the Yaounde in Cameroon

Yaounde is administered by the City Council instituted in 2004. As part of its urban landscape planning role, the missions of this local administration include the provisioning of communal equipment and infrastructure, creation of markets and organisation of trade fairs and the maintenance of hygiene and sanitation. Over time, the fulfilment of these missions has become daunting mainly because of rapid growth in the population of the city and inadequate planning policies. The population of Yaounde grew from 318,700 inhabitants in 1976 to 649,000 in 1987; 1,237,500 in 2000 and stands at about 2 million inhabitants presently (1976, 1987 and 2005 National Population and Housing Censuses). This population has been projected to reach 2.8 million by 2020 (PDU, 2008). Like population, the surface area of Yaounde increased from 240.98 km² in 1980 to 287.98 km² in 2001, giving a population density of 153 inhabitants/ha (PDU, 2008). In a study on employment and the informal sector, (EESI-2005) cited in the PDU (2008), the service industry including commerce employs over 78.70% of the active population of the city while secondary and primary sectors employ 19.00% and 2.20% respectively. Commerce therefore constitutes a crucial livelihood of a majority of Yaounde dwellers.

Population data was obtained mostly from the first, second and third population and housing censuses in the country, whereas the Yaounde City Council furnished documentation on Yaounde markets and their growth in time and space. An important and useful strategic document was the City Master Plan, published in 2008. It provided present and projected locations of markets in the city.

Survey techniques were employed to get stakeholder (traders and customers) perspectives on market locations and development in Yaounde. Market directors, presidents as well as staff of the Yaounde City Council were interviewed to understand the considerations in the creation of markets in the city as well as infrastructural provision in these markets. In addition, 282 questionnaires were administered to customers in the main markets of the districts of Yaounde except the Yaounde VII which has no official market, being the last district to be created in Yaounde. From the responses, market catchment areas or spheres of influences were estimated. These were illustrated by desire line maps for perishables and high-order goods and services.

3. The Theoretical Context

In public service allocation, the driving consideration is for an achievement of equal access for the entire targeted population. This is also an evident consideration in the central place theory of Walter Christaller who attempted

to model the occurrence and spacing of settlements or trading areas. Considering that consumers were inclined to obtaining their goods and services from the nearest centres as a cost minimisation measure; and that some centres offered only low-order goods (convenience stores), not requiring people to travel far to procure them, while others offered high-order goods and services (superstores) requiring travel over longer distances, Christaller theorised that the sphere of influence of a market was governed by the range of the goods and services sold on the one hand, and on their market thresholds on the other. He described the range of goods as the maximum distance people were prepared to travel to procure goods and services, and the market threshold as the minimum population that can sustain the market for particular goods and services. The range is a function of the cost of movement expressed in terms of distance covered at which a consumer or trader will still gain from a transaction. This is best described by the distance decay function by which the intensity of a distribution fades away from its centre (Fig. 2). Where a distribution ends in space also marks the limit of a profitable market area for both the customer and the seller.

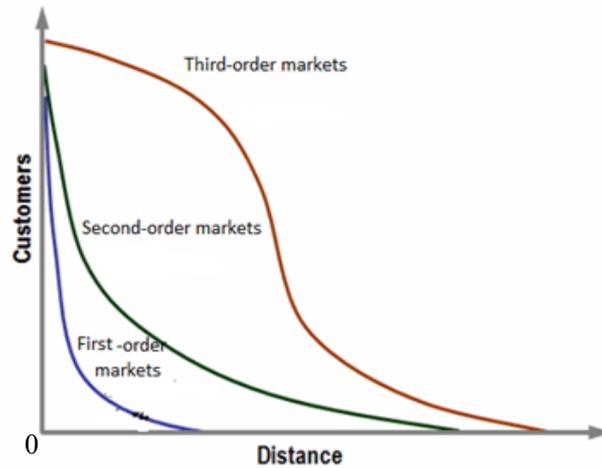


Fig. 2 The distance decay graphs for markets of different orders

Rotated around the centre (0), each graph produces a circular shape representing the spheres of influence of the market, or the market area. The most efficient market areas were found to have hexagonal rather than circular shapes. While this ensured that market areas did not leave out any geographic spaces (Fig. 3A), it also prevented overlapping influences occurring where some customers would have more access to markets than others as figure 3B shows. The overlapping areas were divided into two equal parts to produce hexagonal market areas as illustrated by figures 3C & D.

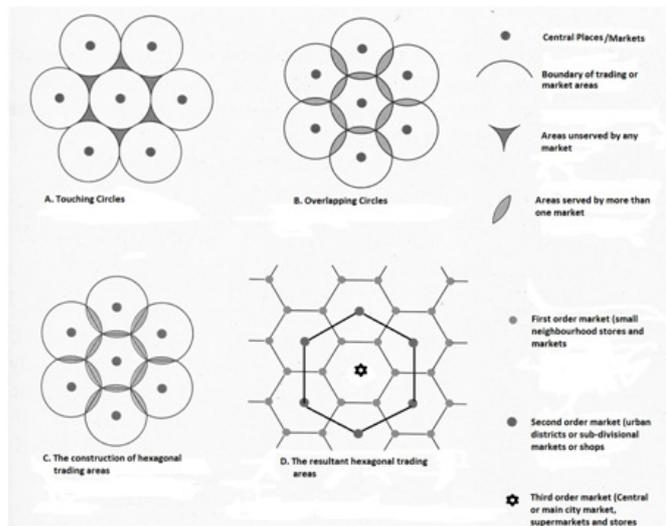


Fig. 3. The development of hexagonal market shapes

Source: Adapted from Waugh, 1995.

Christaller's hexagonal trading and service areas have influenced service delivery planning in different countries profoundly (Shannon, 1974), and still do today. The hierarchy of markets from convenience goods (neighbourhood stores), to grocery (district markets) and to superstores (central or main markets), depicted by the model fits into a real life situation, though not with perfect hexagons. This hierarchy is also evident in Yaounde where the Mokolo and Central Markets are highest or of the third order; the district markets, second order, and the numerous neighbourhood stores and markets, first order. Although the model (hexagons) does not fit into any known existing urban landscape, it remains an important guide for conceptualising service delivery planning in which accessibility and equity principles are outstanding.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Urbanisation and Creation of Markets

In Yaounde, the relationship between the process of urbanisation and the creation of markets is fairly proportional. The population of Yaounde increased from 58,000 inhabitants in 1957, to 165,000 in 1969. In 1965, there were three permanent (Central market, Mokolo and Mvog Mbi) and three periodic markets (Nkol-Eton, Melen, Mvolye). In 1973 the Nkol-Eton, Mvog Ada and Melen markets emerged to become important, while that of Madagascar, Dakar, Jamot, Ngoa-Ekele, and Mvolye were known to be less important (Franqueville, 1976). These trends are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. The evolution of population and official markets in Yaounde, 1960 to 2008

Period	N ^o of years	Population	Percentage change	Number of markets	Percentage change
1960 – 1969	10	58 000 165 000	- 184	3	-
1970 – 1979	10	165 001 706	- 313 90	3-6	100
1980 – 1989	10	313 707 252	- 649 106	6-11	83
1990 – 2001	12	649 253 500	- 1 237 91	11-18	63
2001 – 2008	08	1 237 501 524	- 1 817 47		

Sources: The MINPAT, 1978); MINPAT, 1992; and BUCREP, (2010). Population and Housing Censuses; Franqueville (1984) & field survey, 2013.

The population of Yaounde has doubled virtually after every decade since 1970. It grew by 90 percent in the 1970s, doubled in the 1980s, and grew by 91 percent in the 1990s. In like manner, the number of markets in Yaounde increased by over 100 percent in the 1970s; 83 percent in the 1980s; and 63 percent in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2001, the urbanised area of Yaounde quadrupled to 159.19 km² with a population of about 1,237,500 (PDU, 2008). The 2005 Population and Housing Census put the population of this city at 1.8 million. As well as resulting in greater space consumption, the number of markets also increased from eleven in the 1990s to eighteen today. Whereas the creation of new administrative subdivisions in the city region also necessitates the creation of new markets, the rapid rate of urban sprawl and the dominance of trade in the informal sector have also been responsible for the evolution of numbers of markets in the city. The Quarterly Bulletin of the Gauteng Province (2012) explains the growth of retail trade in terms of supply of retail space, a stable economic environment and the rise in disposable incomes. The evolution of the urbanised area of Yaounde and the location of its markets since 1984 are illustrated in figure 2.

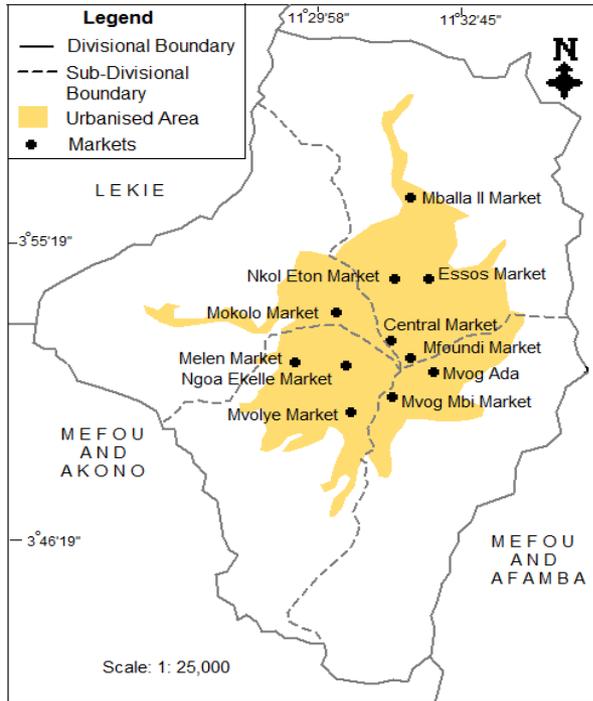


Figure 2a. Markets within the urbanised area of Yaounde in 1984
Source: Franqueville (1984)

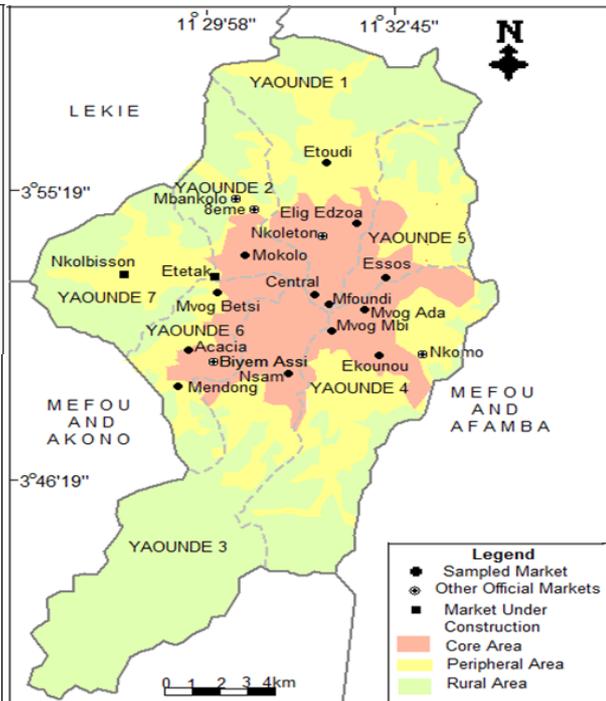


Figure 2b. Markets in the Yaounde Municipality in 2013
Source: Adapted from PDU (2008)

The Essos, Central market, Mfoundi, Mokolo, Mvoga Mbi, Mvoga Ada, and Nkol-Eton grew into significant markets in 2012. While there has been a tremendous increase in the number of markets in Yaounde, some have been dissolved (Ngoa-Ekele, Melen and Mvolye); while some have been created and are under construction (Nkolbisson and Etetak). The Mballa II market which was very important in 1984 operates today illegally (Franqueville 1984). Figure 3 shows the evolution of markets from the colonial period to present. Most of the major markets were created in the 1960s and 1970s.

Figure 3 Shows the evolution of markets in Yaounde from the colonial period to present.

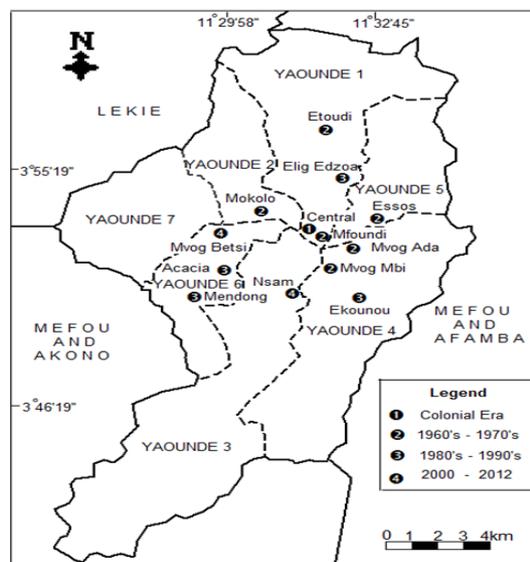


Figure 3. Spatial evolutions of markets in Yaounde
Source: Fieldwork (2013).

4.2 Market Creation and Relocation in Yaounde

Prior to the relocation of markets in Yaounde, their creation was purely spontaneous. The rapid spatial extension of the city increased distances to the Central Market which is also oldest in the city, created in 1911 (Sakou, 1982). In response to the increasing distance, women began operating spontaneous markets especially around junctions like those of Mvog Mbi and Biyem Assi (former location of the Acacia market) in the 1990s. This is also the case of the Essos market which started between 1966 and 1968 with a woman who was selling perishables at the Mongo Beti College junction (Ngo, 1985). Consequently, this attracted other traders. According to Sakou (1982), the sale of perishables at the former Central Market site attracted meat and fish vendors. Free entry into the market favoured the integration of people who traded in hardware and building material (*quincaillerie*), beauty products and clothes. Over time, female caterers realised the need to take care of the nutritional requirements of traders. At this stage of the development cycle, the name of markets was adopted from the neighbourhood in which it was found. This is the case of Mokolo Market in the Mokolo neighbourhood.

These markets soon became very attractive for municipal revenue collection. The revenue generated by municipal authorities from these markets was ploughed back for the construction of more market stores, stalls, and sheds. That is how traditional markets evolved into municipal markets, managed by the Council, through a market director.

The increase in city population and the demand for markets was not accompanied by a proportionate rate of market creation resulting in the emergence of many informal and traditional trading spaces usually on busy streets and at road junctions. Each of these markets shown in Figure 4 receives about 3000 people a day (Vanessa, 2012). The Yaounde IV district has the highest number of such markets (28.6%), while Yaounde VII which does not have an official market has only 5.7% of spontaneous markets. The lack of an official market here could be attributed to its newness as an administrative unit (obtaining land to build a market takes time), and also its nearness to the influential Mokolo market where most of its inhabitants still prefer to shop. The informal markets in Yaounde are shown in figure 4.

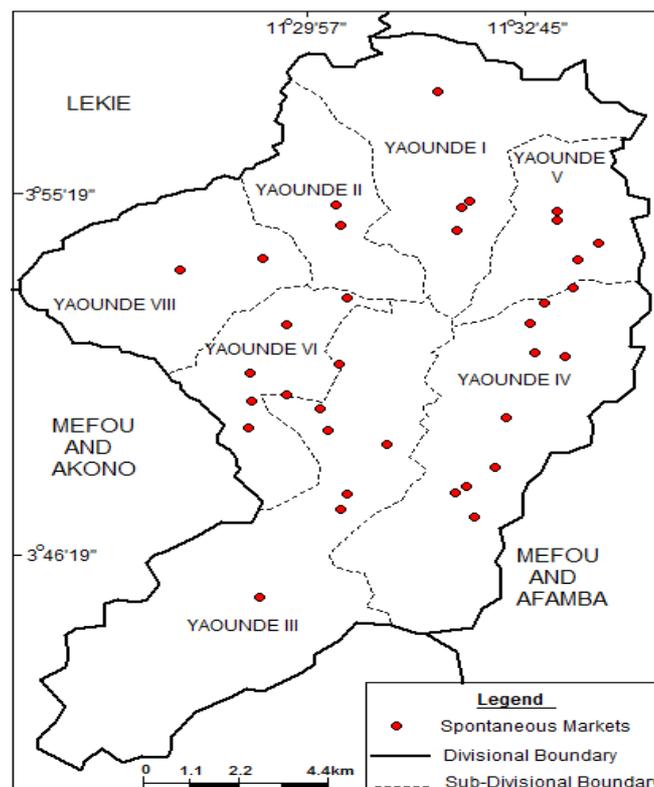


Figure 4. Spontaneous markets in Yaounde

Source: Vanessa (2012).

These informal marketplaces are often devoid of security. For example, in 1989, a lorry accident occurred at the former Biyem Assi junction (*Carrefour Biyem-Assi*) market. This was the immediate cause of the transfer of this market. At *Espace Eldorado* (former site of the Mvog Ada market), goods sold on the road were seized by the Council and donated to prisons and orphanages. The sale of fowls near Royal Hotel at the *Hippodrome* neighbourhood caused traffic congestion and contributed in degrading the aesthetics of this hotel. This engendered a reduction in the cost paid per room. In order to ensure sustainable urbanisation, 76.9% of markets surveyed in Yaounde were relocated as shown in Table 2. It is worthy of note that during the rehabilitation of the Essos road, traders who sold around the Essos mosque refused to quit. This led to conflict between traders and the construction firm, which necessitated the intervention of police officers (Ngo, 1985).

Table 2. Former and present location of some markets

Market	Former location	Date of transfer or creation	Characteristics of neighbourhood
Central Market	South of the former petrol station at central town	1928	Planned, accessible, located at city centre, general provision except groceries.
Mvog Mbi	Mvog Mbi Junction	1963	Unplanned, inaccessible, fairly indigenous, mainly groceries, poor market infrastructure.
Mfoundi	Former Marché des Femmes behind the Chamber of Commerce	1972	Planned, accessible, located at city centre, high trend towards groceries.
Mvog Ada	<i>Espace Eldorado</i> and Royal Hotel at <i>Hippodrome</i>	1972	Unplanned, inaccessible, poor infrastructure, general provision, constricted site
Essos	Essos Mosque	1973	Unplanned, inaccessible, poor infrastructure
Mokolo	Behind the Jamot dispensary	1982	Planned, congested, inadequate parking, inaccessible by car
Acacia	Biyem-Assi <i>Carrefour</i>	1989	Planned, accessible, mainly groceries
Elig Edzoa	Etoi Meki-Elig Edzoa axis	1994	Unplanned, inaccessible, general provision.
Mvog Betsi	Former Oyomabang and Melen markets	2007	Planned, accessible, dominantly groceries
Nsam	Former Slaughter House (<i>abattoir</i>) around <i>Brasseries du Cameroun</i>	2007	Planned, constricted, dominantly groceries

Source: Fieldwork (2012).

Most of the markets sell food stuffs. This may be the result of a high population of poor city dwellers whose primordial objective is how to survive each day. KIT & IIRR (2008) found out that food markets in Africa are probably the most vibrant in the world. The markets are generally open and transactions are left in the hands millions of small businesswomen and men who may either be travelling traders (middlemen) buying produce from the farms, resident wholesalers, retailers, hawkers, brokers or exporters.

The first wave of market relocation occurred during the colonial era, with the relocation of the Central Market in 1923. The first urbanisation plan of Yaounde was done in 1963. This engendered the second wave of market relocations which took place in the 60s and 70s. In this wave, the Essos, Mvog Mbi, Mvog Ada and Mfoundi markets were relocated to their present sites, while the Etoudi market emerged. In 1982, a second urbanisation strategy for Yaounde dubbed *Schema Directeur d'Aménagement Urbaine* (SDAU) was elaborated. Although the SDAU was not approved because of inadequate political will, it exhumed the nefarious effects of spontaneous market location and the need for urban renewal (PDU, 2008). This stimulated the third wave of relocation which happened in the 1980s and 1990s. In this process, the Mokolo, Ekounou, Elig Edzoa and Acacia markets were repositioned, whilst the Mendong and Ekounou markets sprouted. Furthermore, the fourth wave of reposition from the year 2000-2007 occurred so as to ensure efficient urbanisation. The former Melen and Oyomabang markets caused a lot of traffic congestion in their respective locations and as a result, they were transferred to the current site at Mvog Betsi. The construction of the Mfoundi canal also necessitated the relocation of the Nsam market. It is worth noting that the recent Master Plan of Yaounde (PDU) published in 2008 for the period 2010-2015 will continue to modify the trading spaces in the city especially as some spontaneous markets shown in Figure 4 will definitely be dissolved.

4.3 Urbanisation and Spatial Shopping Patterns in Yaounde

With an increase in urban space and a multiplication of markets, shopping preferences governed by distance and the type of articles solicited by customers have evolved. Figures 5 and 6 show the range of perishable and non-perishable articles sold in Yaounde markets respectively. *Desire lines*, straight lines drawn to symbolise the trip between the customers' neighbourhoods and markets were used to represent customers' spatial shopping preferences.

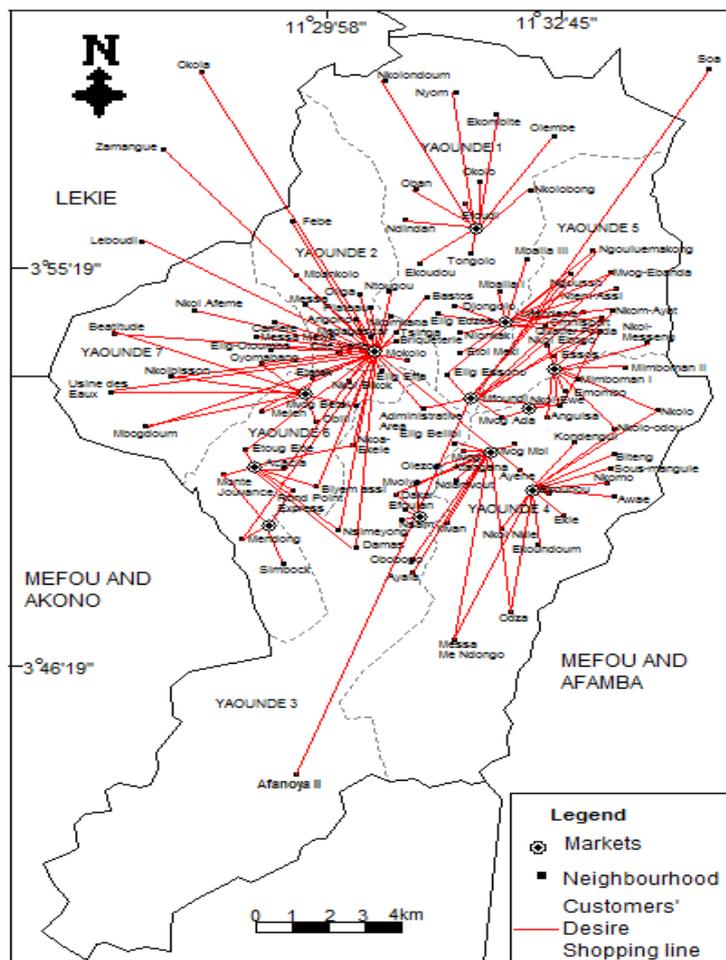


Figure 5. Desire line map for shopping of low order goods and perishables in Yaounde
Source: Fieldwork (2012).

As noticed in Figure 5, the catchment areas of markets in Yaounde overlap. Markets also compete for customers. For instance, the Elig-Edzoa and Mfoundi markets compete for customers from the Ngoussou neighbourhood. Inhabitants of the Oyomabang neighbourhood shop in the Mokolo and Mvog Betsi markets. Natural barriers like the Mfoundi River which separates Yaounde III from IV have deterred the population of the Mvan neighbourhood from shopping in the Nsam market despite their close proximity. In addition, the markets in Yaounde also draw many customers from out of the Mfoundi division, indicating the commercial influence of the city of Yaounde on its satellite towns and villages. Obala, Okola, Leboudi lie out of the Mfoundi but constitute part of the catchment area of the main markets in the city (Figs. 5 and 6).

The Mokolo market provides a wide array goods and services and thus attracts many costumers making it one of the biggest in Yaounde in both perishable and non-perishable articles. Furthermore, the prices of goods in this market are perceived to be relatively lower because it also has wholesale points. Another market with a wide customer catchment is that of Mfoundi. Customers from Soa in the Mefou and Afamba Division shop in this market. This market has proven to be very attractive because of its status as a major centre in perishables. Other markets such as Acacia, Essos and Mendong, which are of a lower order, attract customers over shorter distance. This is because they deal predominantly in perishables which are frequently bought. Thus, buyers are willing to travel only short distances and frequently to obtain them.

Figure 6 shows desire shopping lines for customers who set out to shop exclusively for high order goods such as suits, leather shoes, electronics, jewellery and furniture. The centrality and attractive character of the Mokolo and Central markets as well as the specialised nature of the latter have earned them a greater economic reach than other markets in Yaounde.

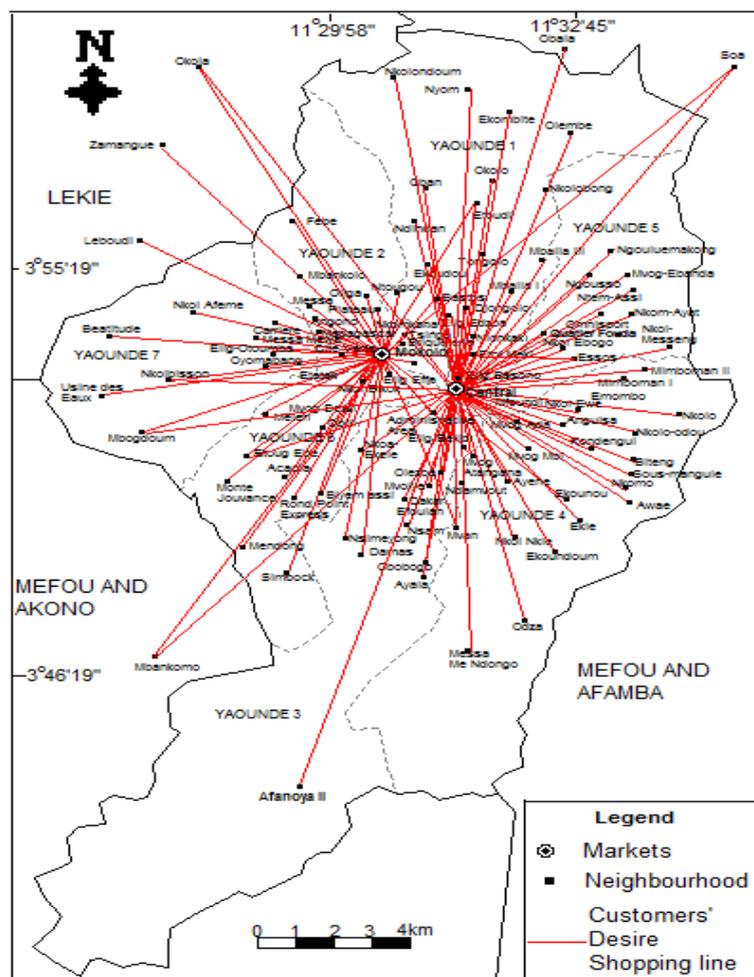


Figure 6. Desire lines for shopping of high order goods in Yaounde, 2012

Source: Fieldwork (2012).

Their catchments extend to the seven sub-divisions of Yaounde and beyond. About 90% of the articles sold in these markets are of high order (goods like leather, shoes, suits and electronics which are not bought on daily or weekly basis. Although the trade areas of these markets intersect, there is a dominance of the Central and Mokolo markets in the city. These show that the Central and the Mokolo markets have spheres of influences which go beyond the Yaounde city frontiers as figure 6 illustrates. The rest of the markets serve mainly the neighbourhoods in the city. The catchment area of the Central market is feeble towards the Western part of Yaounde because of the presence of the Mokolo market, while that of the Mokolo market is low towards the Eastern part of Yaounde.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Markets are indispensable to the functioning of cities in Yaounde and the world at large. The rapid urbanisation of Yaounde has been followed by an increase in the number and sizes of markets. However, these markets are still very congested and underdeveloped. Some attempts at modernising the markets are visible especially infrastructural development as evidenced in the cases of Acacia and Mvog-Betsi. Furthermore, the location of the Central, Mfoundi, Essos and Mvog Betsi markets are plagued by planning deficiencies that affect their operational efficiencies.

There is need for the policy orientation to favour integrated rural development programmes that will control rural exodus, a major contributor to rapid urbanization with its attendant pressures on social and economic infrastructures. This should reorient consumer-led market growth away from the cities reducing pressures on inadequate markets infrastructure. The Yaounde City Council authorities also have to consider developing shopping centres or malls away from the city high streets, in a bid to decongest the city centres. To take off efficiently, traders in such malls should benefit from tax holidays over a defined period as an enticement to set up at a site which may not initially be marketable. Notwithstanding the trend, the number of markets will continue to grow in the city of Yaounde as decentralization and market planning intensify. Markets strengthen the economic base of a town and sustain the tax base of the local authority. Therefore, in the era of decentralization, local governments will want to have not only more markets, but would like them to become organized in order to facilitate the collection of market taxes and tolls which their administrations depend largely on.

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