

Planning Challenges of Space Conciliation for Urban Planners: The Example of the Urban Node of Yaba, Lagos Metropolis

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INTRODUCTION

Environment can be defined as the sum total of the conditions within which organisms live; it is the result of interaction between non-living (abiotic) physical and chemical and also present living (biotic) parameter (Barrow, 1995). Many of the urban environmental problems lie in "unsound concepts of development and modernization" (Park (1980)). Like most of the urban centres of the developing countries, Lagos Metropolitan Area (LAMA) is characterized by rising population, unemployment, shortage of housing and infrastructural facilities. The nodal points of this urban centre which are usually areas of conflict of socio-economic activities include Oshodi, Mile 2, Oyingbo, and Yaba (Fig. 1). The planlessness and blight that such areas exhibit have thus become a challenge to planners, who face the issue of reconciling the competing factors.

Unfortunately, not much has been done to study the characteristics of these urban nodes. Yet, the knowledge of these characteristics is significant for understanding the nodes for effective planning of the areas. The present study therefore examines the characteristics of one of the nodal points, namely, Yaba bus stop. The paper also examined the planning challenges of space reconciliation for urban planners using the nodal point as a case example.

The Study Area

The Yaba area of metropolitan Lagos is located in the Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. This State was created in 1967 and is currently one of the thirty-six States of Nigeria. It has an area of 3,577 square kilometers. Lagos State occupies 0.4 per cent of the area of Nigeria. Its population in 1991 was estimated as 5.6 million people which accounted for just over five per cent of the 88.5 million people in the country.

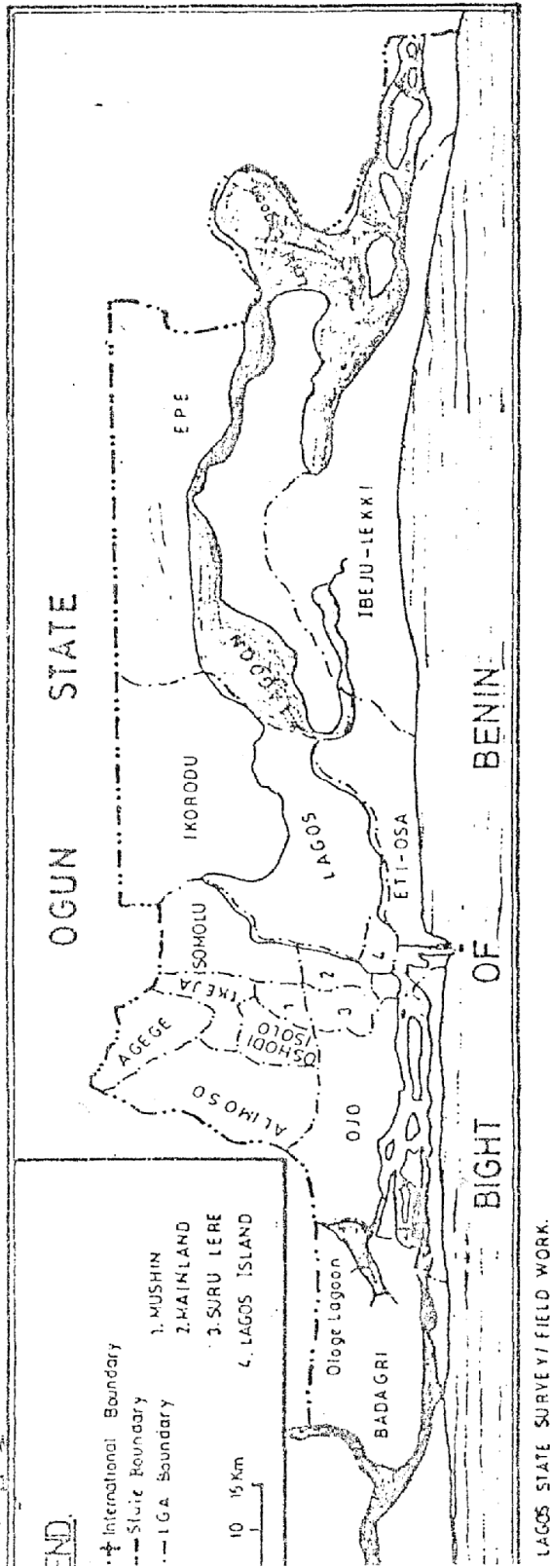
Yaba is located on latitudes $6^{\circ}25'$ and $6^{\circ}30'$ and longitudes $3^{\circ}20'$ and $3^{\circ}23'$. The area enjoys rainfall for about 8-10 months of the year due to its proximity to the Lagos lagoon. Mean minimum temperature varies between about 23°C – 26°C and maximum temperature between 23°C – 31°C . The region is located in the coastal rain forest area of Nigeria. The area is characterized by relative humidities of about 80-90% in the mornings and about 40–60% in the afternoons.

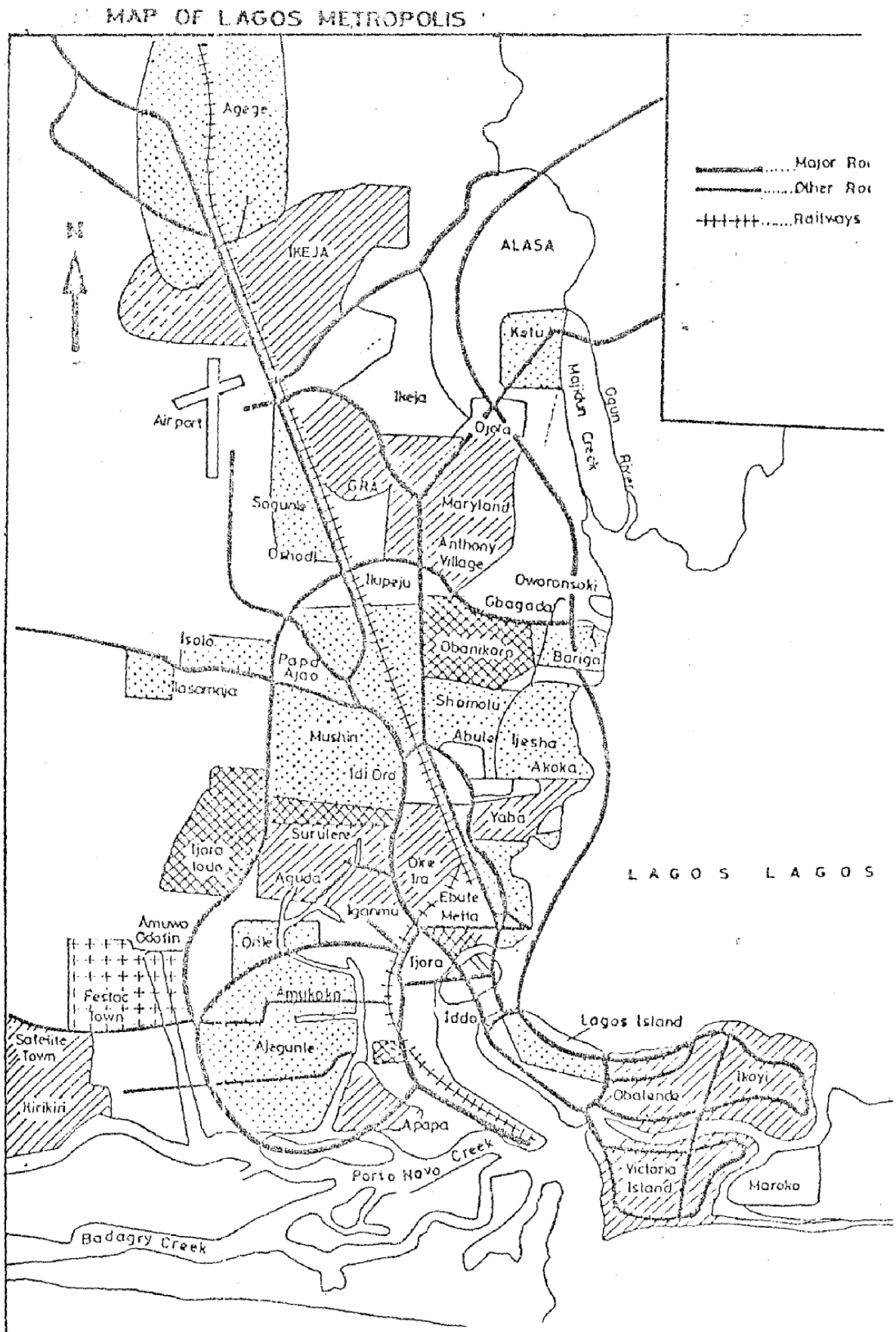
Yaba is centrally placed with respect to Lagos Metropolitan Area. It is characterized by medium density residential area and is a fast growing part of the Lagos metropolitan area with a rapid population growth occasioned by the concentration of trade and commercial activities there. It has a large concentration of the middle class and so has attracted many business concerns and other establishments, including schools, hospitals and markets. It has a very high concentration of educational institutions. Examples of these institutions are the University of Lagos, Yaba College of Technology and Federal College of Education (Technical). Other institutions in the study area include military and police establishments, government administrative and health establishments and parastatals. The area is also well known for the location of a very specialized health Research Centre, the Psychiatric Hospital, and Central Medical Library.

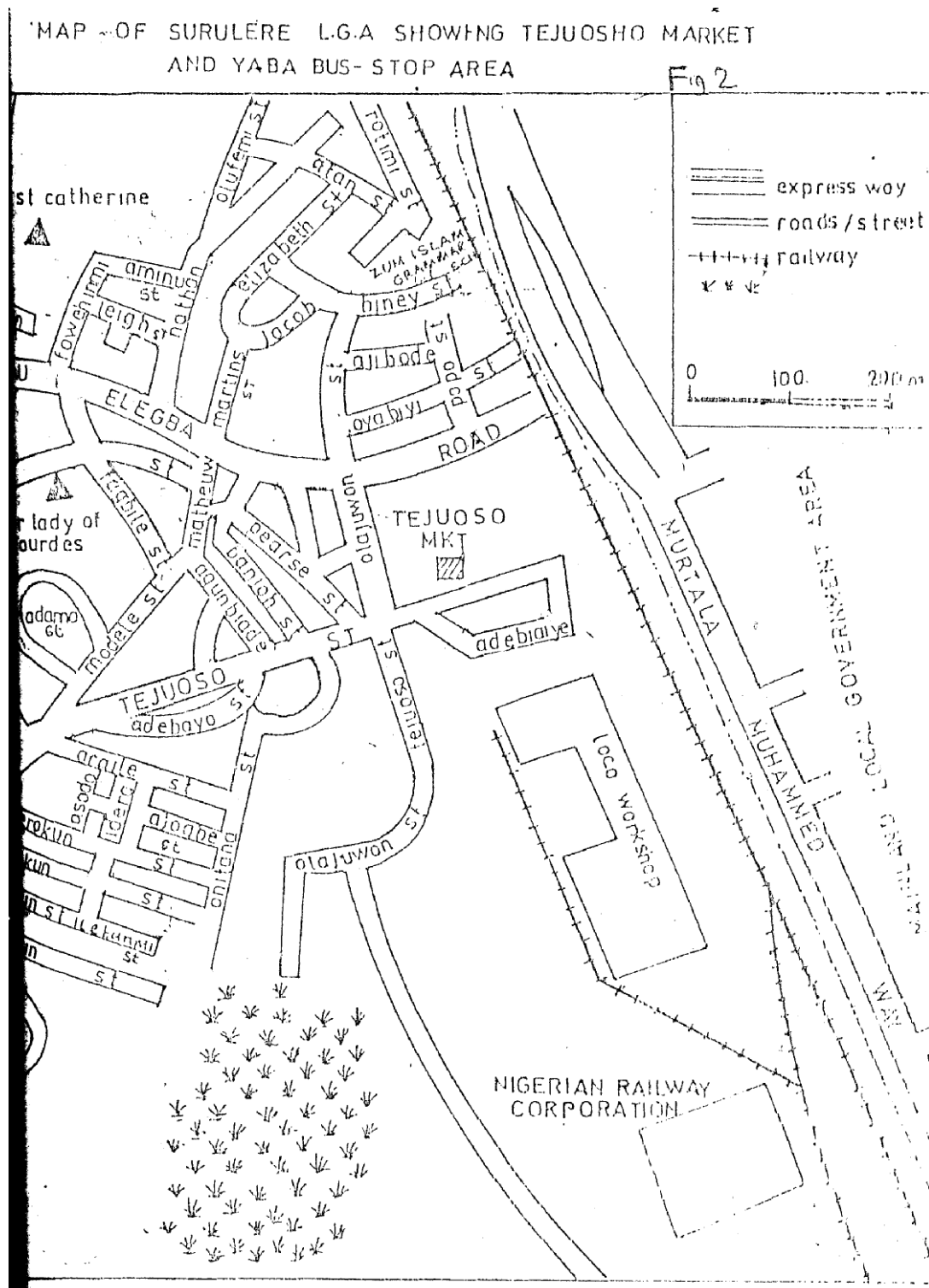
Yaba is linked directly to other parts of the metropolitan Lagos through Herbert Macaulay street, Murtala Mohammed Way and Ojuelegba Road (Fig. 2). Yaba bus stop extends from a stretch along Murtala Mohammed Way between Jihowu Bus Stop and Montgornery Road. It is directly linked to the Western Avenue through Ojuelegba Road from Yaba bus stop terminal which serves as the Yaba nodal point. It forms a meeting point for many roads and the railway line, with a train station located some 200 metres south of the bus stop. The Tejuosho market is located to the south of Ojuelegba Road.

The road network pattern in the study area is very restrictive as a result of the "grid" created by the medical compound and the rail-line. There are two entry points for those who must either conduct business in Yaba or pass through it. Sheltered walkways for pedestrians do not exist in Yaba. In spite of the fact that traffic wardens control traffic in some parts of Yaba bus stop movement is very restrictive to the extent that pedestrians have to pick their ways in the vehicular traffic in the area. Traffic control devices are very limited and these create bottlenecks and lots of problems for planning.

Fig.1 :MAP OF LAGOS STATE SHOWING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS.







The road network is characterized by absence of traffic signals facilities like street lights, road signs and designated pedestrian (Zebra/crossings). Equally significant is the fact that commercial bus drivers in the area are reckless and demonstrate unprofessionalism, which affect the free flow of traffic.

The original landform characteristic of Yaba included sand ridges and lagoons and creeks depressions, with sand ridges offering the most optimal site for settlement. The depressions are waterlogged, especially during the wet season, and drainage is generally poor. The table is high, generally near the surface. To the east of Yaba is the Lagos lagoon, which, through proper engineering planning can be utilized for water transportation, thus reducing the dependence on roads, which form the major transportation mode in Yaba area.

METHODOLOGY/ DATA ANALYSIS

The data used for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data comprise direct observations and field surveys. For this direct observation, features and attributes of the market and other trading activities, the road and rail mode of transportation were observed. The vehicular traffic flow from Herbert Macaulay, Mohalasi and Ikorodu road junction with Murtala Mohammed Way entering Yaba into Ojuelegba Road, and conversely from Ojuelegba Road into Murtala Mohammed Way were closely monitored.

Field work was done with the assistants for the actual counting of vehicles (private and public) at two major locations and at different times of day on two week days, and a day on weekend.

The survey also comprised the administration of questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were administered on market traders, commercial bus drivers and known as 'olues' are the most popular and they carry the most passengers in and out of the study area. Nearby residents who trek to the area account for only about 5% of the commuters.

During peak periods, private cars, and public buses are commonly found in the area, but public buses are commonly present during oil peak periods. In general, buses usually line in convoys in the unsheltered space designated as bus stops, the general appearance showing evidence of disorganized terminal point". Conflicts usually arise between the various buses and other users of the area. Pedestrian facilities such as bridges, zebra crossings and sheltered walkways do not exist in Yaba. Pedestrians have to pick their ways in the vehicular traffic in the area as earlier noted. The area normally appear like a maze or spaghetti.

The means by which a commuter get in and out of Yaba area varies according to the benefits derived from the available means of alternatives (trekking, taxis, motor cycles, mini-buses, big buses "911" and rail). The choice also depends on cost, convenience, safety and 'flexibility'. The motor-cycles represent the fastest means of getting in and around the area; but they are relatively less safe" as they easily have accidents. The taxis are by far the most comfortable and convenient means of commuting by road. They pick and drop passengers almost anywhere. Buses are the commonest means of commuting in the area, being the cheapest. They are also the least flexible because they run only on specific routes and stop only at designated bus stops. They do not operate by time-table or fixed rules; they stop at almost every bus stops along their routes.

FACTORS OF CONFLICTS

Barrow (1995) remarked that, humanity has exploited the earth's natural resources and modified the environment for thousands of years,... but notably today, the human actions and inactions on the land, housing the earth's natural resources has been on the increase, in part because of population growth and the technological changes, and partly as a consequence of the way the development has been allowed to take place.

A number of factors primarily incompatible uses (commercial, education, services) cause the conflicts which characterize the area. First, at the entrance to Yaba Bus Stop from Murtala Mohammed Way, there are three petrol filling stations. 'Secondly, as already noted, there is the Medical Compound wall which is located on the opposite side of Mohammed Way. Thirdly, there are the International Women Society (IWS) Nursery/Primary School and a shopping complex City Way Shopping Centre. Commuters are discharged along the front of these facilities. Besides from these incompatible uses of space in the area, (market, school, filling stations), the many vehicles entering the place (Table 1) create bottlenecks and pedestrian conflicts. All these activities are compounded by the problem of illegal stalls, street trading and hawking.

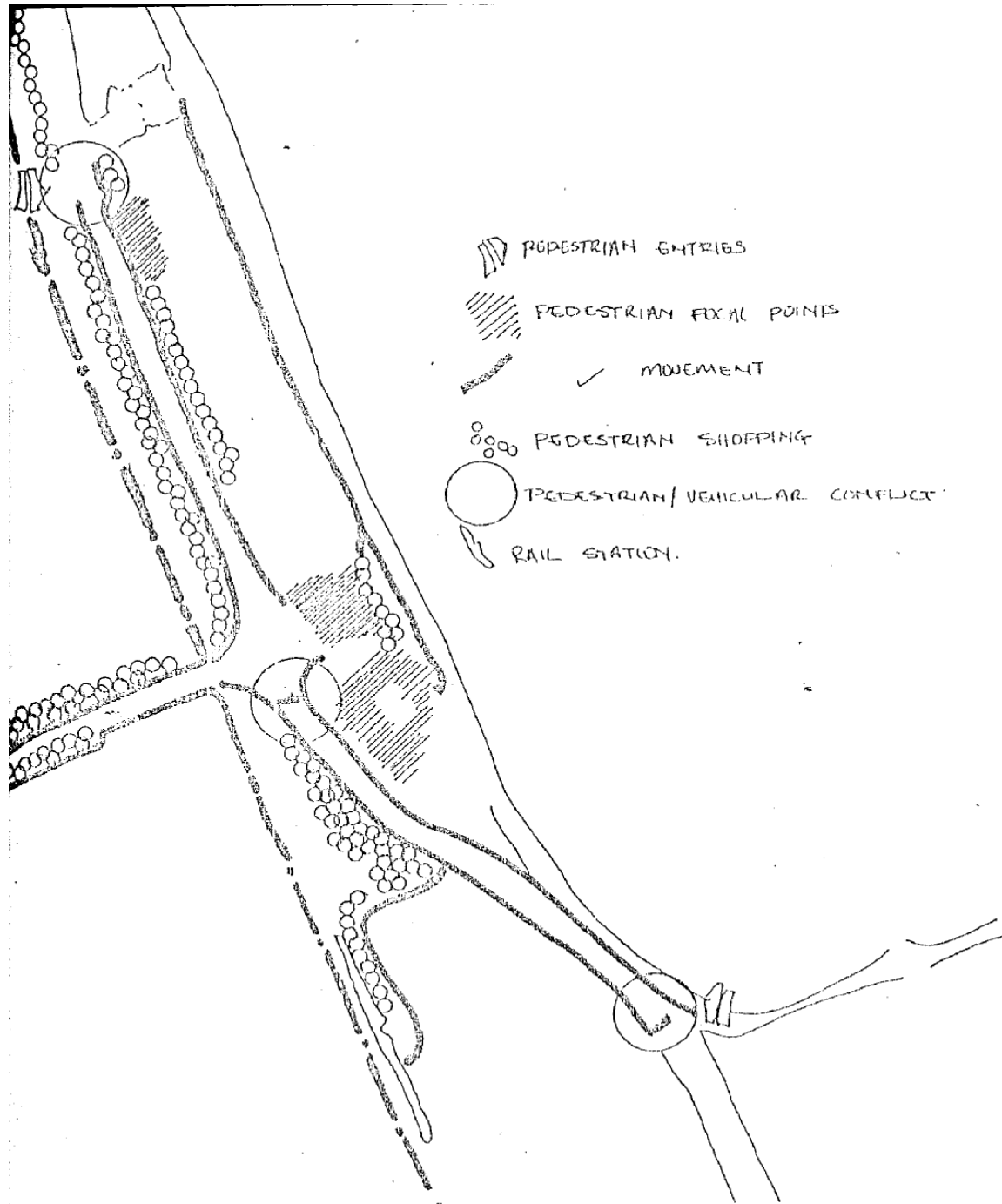
Vehicles entering from 'Taylor Street usually have a hard time aligning with vehicles coming from Murtala Mohammed Way. Consequently, vehicles enter the various streets illegally using the side-walks where available (Fig) or even going against traffic on the wrong way.

Pedestrians trying to get to the bus terminal also usually have problems moving around while cars park illegally on the limited illegal spaces, further creating problems of conflicts.

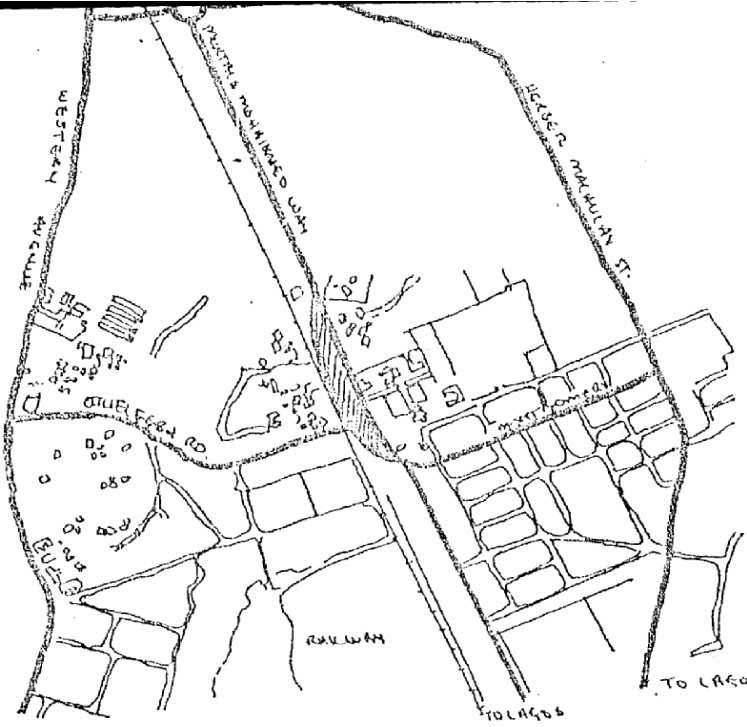
For example, in (Yaba Land use map) the stretch between point A and the junction of Ojuelegba Road, between the rail-line and the road are filled with illegal stalls and hawkers. Side walks on city way are permanently taken over by street traders. Pedestrians have no right of way in the mace of these activities.

A lot of conflicts also arise on the approach of a train, with everybody running helter- skelter when the railway gate crossing is to be closed (see Picture). Table I illustrates the traffic situations at some of the road junctions.

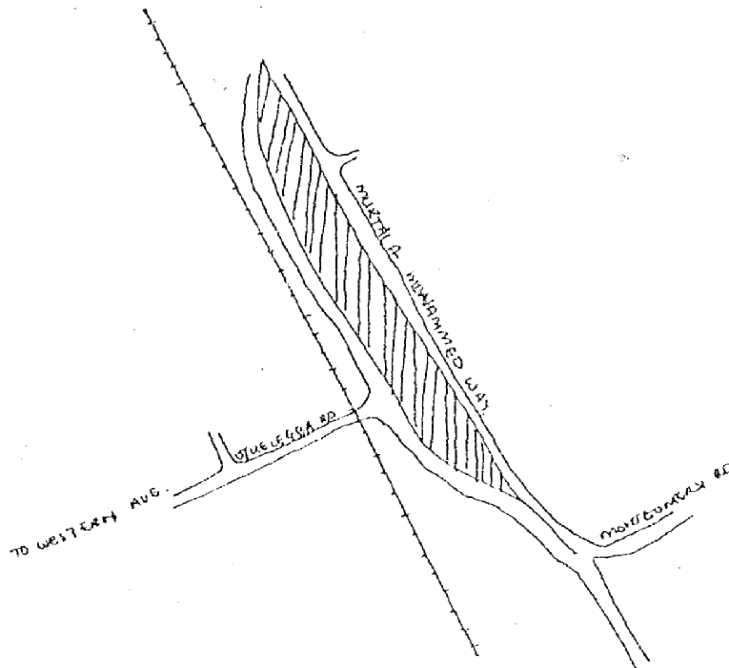
The stretch between points A and J is filled with market and the bus stop users, particularly those in the open for most hours of the day, under the scorching heat and high humidity. They are normally exposed to the unpleasantness of the harsh weather, with its negative impact.



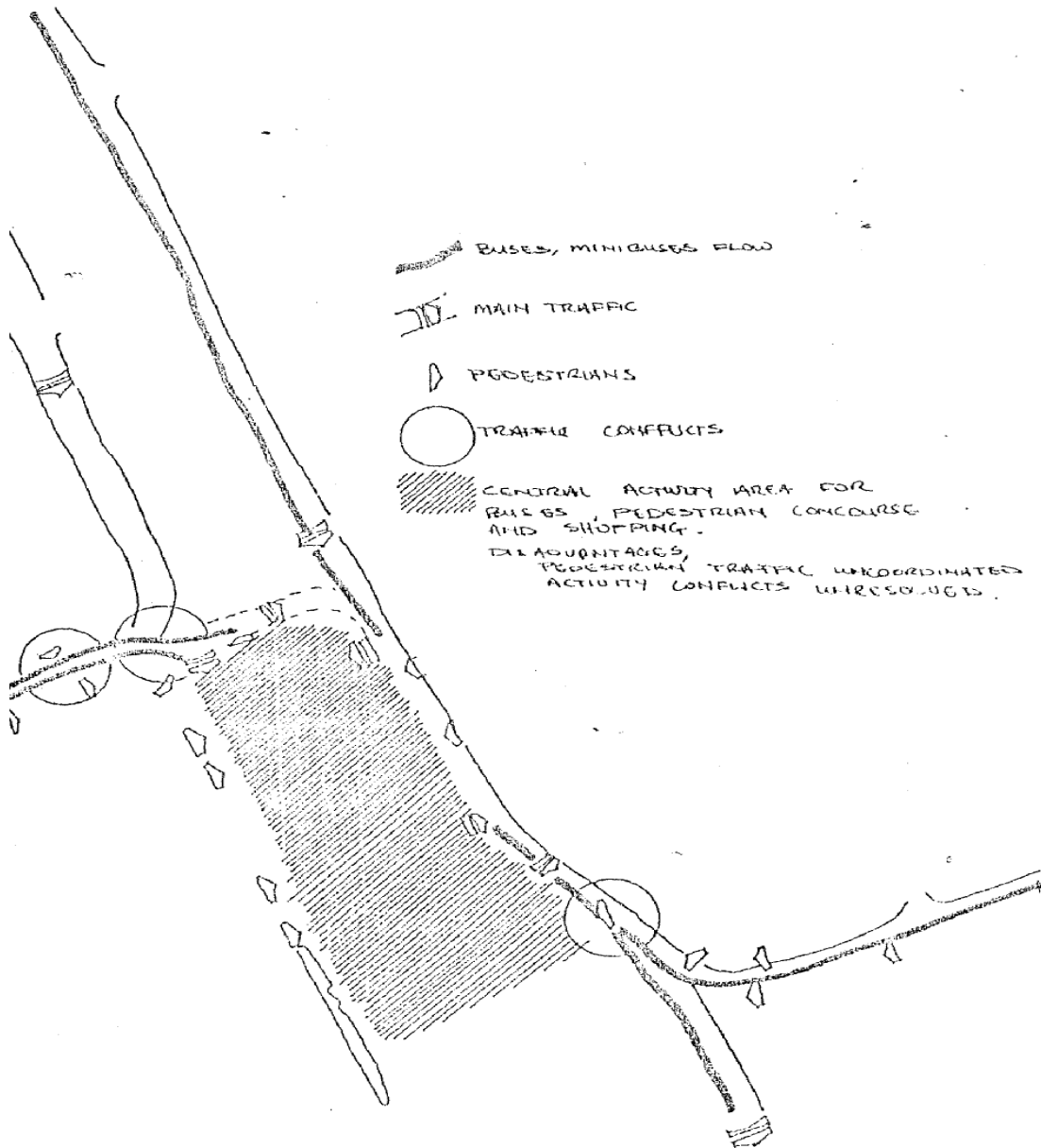
PEDESTRIAN-COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES



YABA MAJOR STREETS



THE SITE



PEDESTRIAN CONFLICT.

Table : Murtala Mohammed 'Way (Yaha) and Ojuelegba Towards Yaba

Period/Time (Hours of Date)	Entering Yaba from Murtala Mohammed Way - No. of Vehicles		Towards Ouelegba at the Rail Junction
	Friday 24/07/99	Sunday 26/04/99	
07—08	751	268	462
08—09	739	308	472
12—13	632	269	516
14—15	433	287	511
15—16	465	N/A	576

Source: Field Survey 1998

The above table shows the traffic at the peak hours (07-09 hours) and mid—day (12—13 hours) traffic at Junction J. An average of 751 vehicles/hr (or 1 2.50/min) crosses the junction and the railway during the rush hours on a week' day. This figure decreases on Sunday when market activity is less intense. The relatively high figures on week days indicate the fact that a lot of churches in the Yaba area within a kilometer radius. Such churches include the Yaba Baptist Church on Commercial Avenue, All Saints Church on Montgomery road, another Baptist Church on Ojuelegba road, the African Church on Saint Matthew Street, the Redeemed Christian Church opposite it, the Presbyterian Church on Murtala Mohammed Way, etc. and the ECWA Church on Montgomery Road and The Saint Dominic? Church at St. Agnes Bus Stop on Herbert Macaulay Street.

A survey of 500 respondents revealed that 79.7% of commuters use public vehicles to the Yaba area compared to 20.3% that use private vehicles. When asked if they would choose to come with their cars to Yaba assuming that they had one, 60% said they would rather still take the buses because of lack of parking space, theft, strain of driving, etc. They also said that buses are cheaper and that the roads are bad.

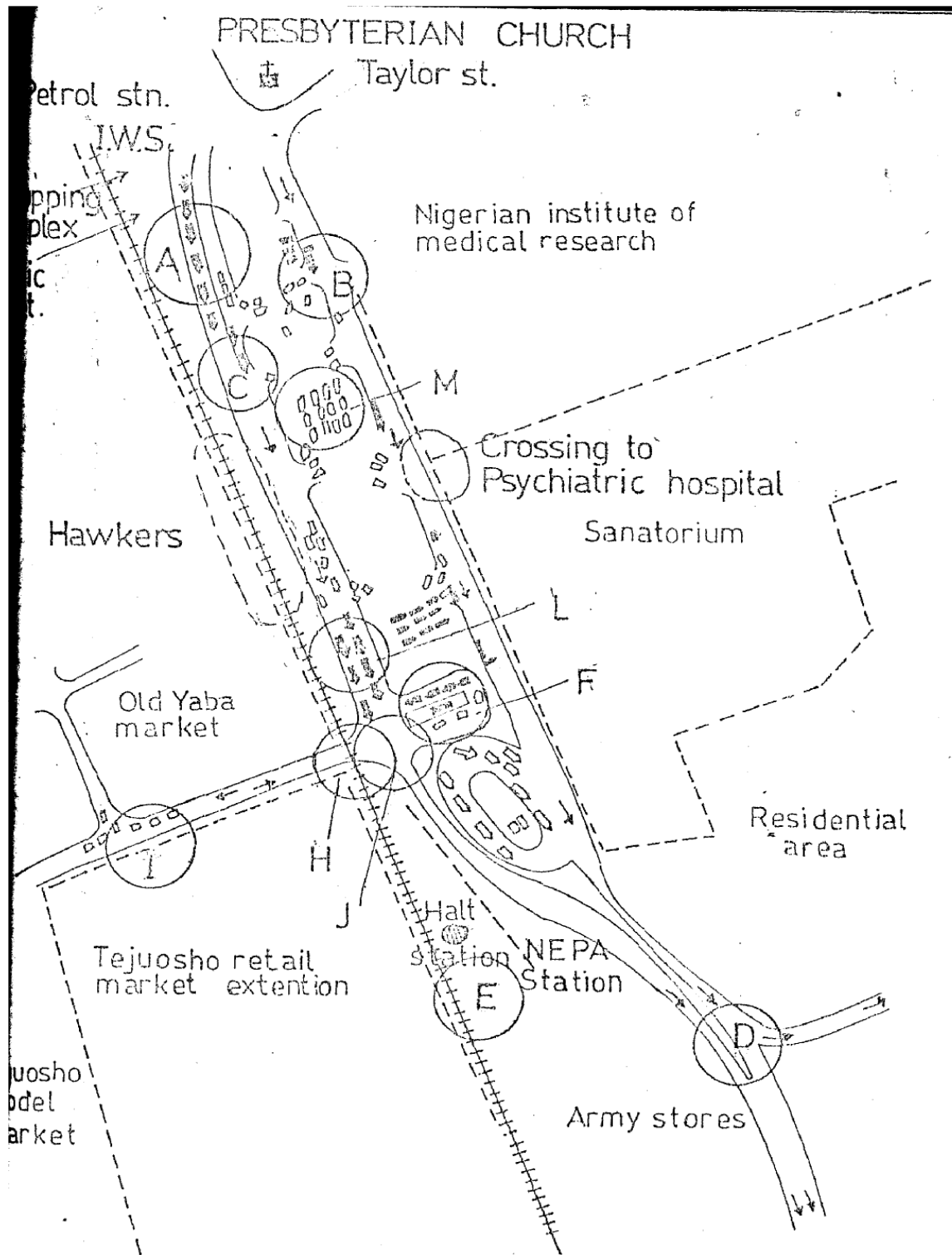
Reconciling Yaba Nodal Point

No doubt the Yaba area of Lagos metropolis is a typical example of' planning problem areas, with conflicts in urban land uses. The area thus poses challenges of space reconciliation for urban planners. The need to reconcile land uses including) those for transportation, commercial activities (including street trading, trading in market stores, markets, etc,... other land uses) is no doubt evident from the present confused situation in the area.

The major roads entering or leaving the node has no functioning traffic lights and adequate traffic signs, making the area to be dangerous for both motor vehicles and the people. Sidewalks are not demarcated for pedestrian movement. There are no hr stops or identified bus shelters to take care of commuters in adverse weather conditions. The wall fence on all sides and the rail track give a feeling of over-crowding and difficult, for reconciliation with other activities.

In separating the various land uses, premium must be given to the convenience and pleasantries of the pedestrian route and spaces. Traffic circulation and segregation can be a multiple of vertical and horizontal movements and can he best handled by "depressed below grade" (under pass); elevated above grade (over pass) and on grade. Each of the system can then be supported and connected by stairs, range, parking facilities. A central area (terminal) will be useful especially to house the various activities that is characteristic of Yaba node. The terminal must be attractive and must still he made to provide an opportunity for an array of existing activities (commercial. services, recreation and transportation, etc). The Port Authority Terminal in New York, the Gallery Mall in central Philadelphia are good examples where various modes and activities have been well-integrated. Space reconciliation in Yaba nodal point requires to learn from these planned areas.

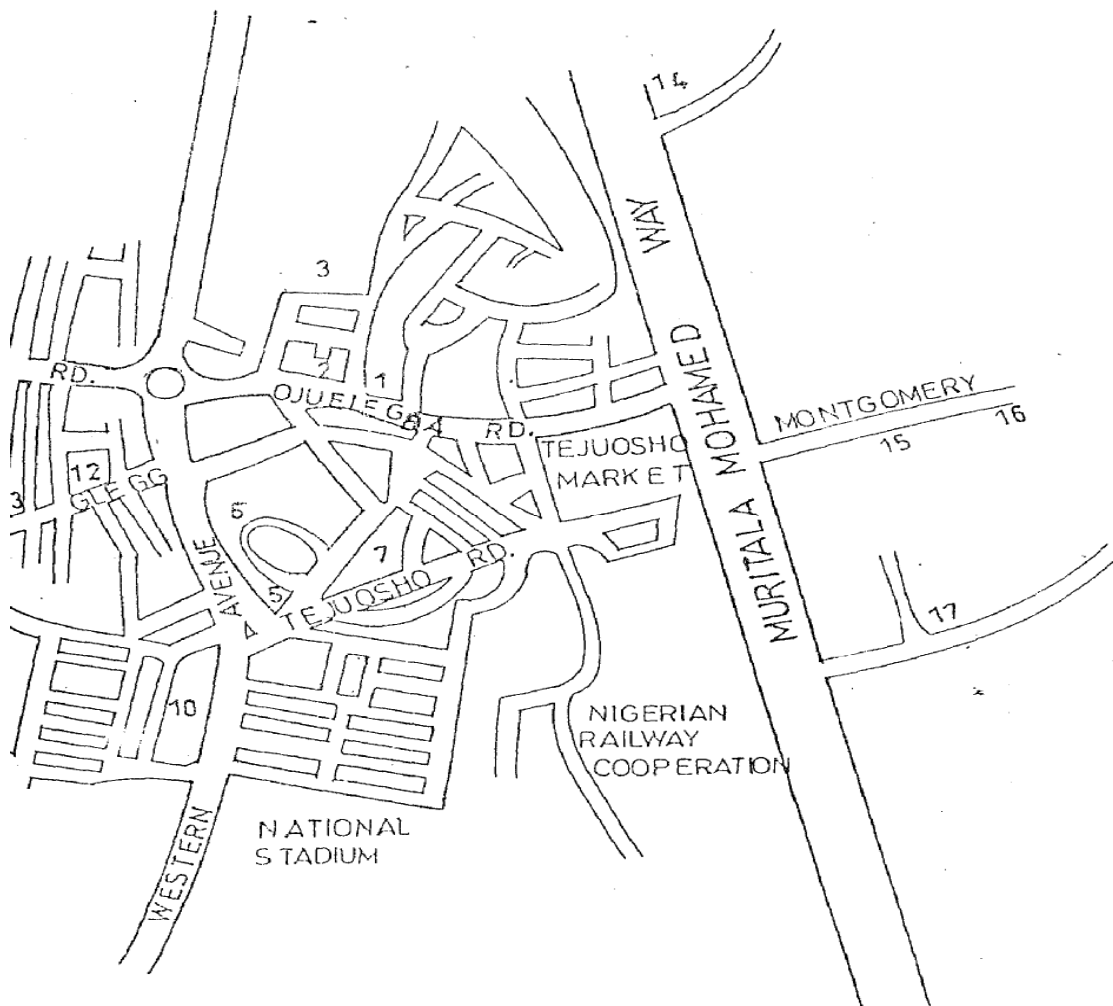
Uncoordinated planning particularly the inability of government institutions and organizations charged with the responsibility of providing transportation services to work according to well-defined objectives is equally responsible for the unreconciled land use. Their various roles are often duplicated. For example, in the area of road construction and maintenance, there is no clear-cut definable role between the roles of Lagos State Ministry of Transport and Public Planning and its counterpart, the Ministry of Works.



LEGEND

Mini Buses	Snack Bar	YABA-LAND-L
Bedford	Public Toilet	
Luxurious buses	Railway halt.stn	Scale 1:1200

north



The Dar-el Handasal report (1993) suggested the creation of a Metropolitan Area Transport Authority to be charged with coordination of transport policies programmes and activities of all agencies concerned with transportation provision, services and maintenance in Lagos Metropolitan Area, but no action has been taken.

The poor state of most roads in the Yaba area is also partly responsible for the problem of poor drainage (Fig. 7). These roads are characterised by inadequate design and alignments, poor construction and lack of regular maintenance, which are also significant factors to the Unreconciled” study area. Some parts of the study area are reclaimed lands and suffer from poor drainage systems, characterized by shallow drainage channels and blocked drains causing floods, when it rains and disturbing a smooth flow of traffic. Issues of topography, soil conditions and structure are not factored in the design of the roads by the state engineering department, especially with regards to the high inter—table that is characteristic of the area.

The near absence of alternative mode of transport with heavy dependent on vehicular movement on the narrow roads, is a big traffic generator. Equally significant is the poor driving habit of motorists. Most motorists are poorly educated and are not trained on how to use road and obey traffic signals and signs. The result is total disregard for other road users, which ultimately results in traffic congestion. An introduction of an efficient mass transit system and an adoption of alternative modes of transportation, particularly rail and water will reduce congestion considerably.

Street trading, which is characteristic of the nodal points of Lagos (Oshodi, Ohalende, Oyingbo, Mile 2, etc) is very apparent in Yaba. This is also an important traffic generator. Traders often display their wares on the road thus preventing the free-flow of traffic, especially in the evening hours when workers are returning from work. Alternative markets have to be provided and tough laws and penalties have to be instituted and implemented to prohibit street trading activities.

The lack of pedestrian crossing facility such as traffic light, zebra-crossing or pedestrian overhead bridge to and from the Psychiatric Hospital, Central Medical Laboratory and the Medical Library creates congestion and safety problems.

The Yaba bus stop (Fig 8) demonstrates the lack of arrangement and improper demarcation of bus

routes leading to commuter being confused as to where to board a bus for various destinations. The high use of the space between vehicles, commuters and hawkers with badly disposable polythene bags and other waste items produces a filthy and unsightly scene.

Reconciling the Conflicts of Yaba Node

The aim reconciliation is to return land to beneficial use or to prevent contaminants from causing damage on lands (Harris et al, 1996).

The various civilities have to be decentralized and the area needs to be well planned. Urban mass transit policy and the metro space reconciliation has no doubt become a challenge to planners in the area. An elevated bridge from Jibowu and Mosalasi may need to be introduced to provide direct access to commuters who have no business in Yaba such that towards Oyingho and who are just going through the area to other parts of Lagos.

The situation in Yaba nodal point has become very precarious and need urgent attention. Times are lost, people get robbed, environment get filthy and noise and smoke pollution, becomes the constancy. In planning the area, it is however significant to carry out such planning within the context of the Lagos metropolis especially in terms of land use and urban mass transit system. The narrow roads could be made wider to accommodate pedestrian, walkway must be provide, the drainage system must be covered although the slabs over these drainage systems should be movable for ease of maintenance. Both the state and the local governments should take active involvements towards rehabilitating the roads-network, its maintenance, installation of traffic signals and controls and ensure their proper maintenance. They must also ensure that adequate laws are made and enforced to ensure compliance.

Development of waterfront areas at Ilaje, Makoko/Iwaya for water transport should be explored for providing alternative water transport mode as a way of moving people away from Yaba. Eventually, the establishment of metro—line in the metropolis with Yaba as a major node will go a long towards alleviating the problem of conflict in Yaba and other important nodes of Lagos.

CONCLUSION

The nodal points of the Lagos Metropolitan Area constitute bottlenecks for the efficient running of the city. As a result, commerce, government activities and liveability of the city are hindered. Yaba, a typical node displays these characteristics and it demonstrates the significance for p1 planning.

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