

OSHODI

Replanners' Options for a Subcity

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OSHODI is the interface between time and the interchange between destinations; the meeting space for people between places, the living stage where a collage of scenes are acted and played out without a script. Oshodi is the playwright's envy, the planner's blurred vision, the administrator's ineptitude and a police nightmare; the pick pocket's dream, the lay-about's vineyard, the transporter's gambling arena for time and passengers, and the jousting space for sellers and buyers.

Oshodi is multifaceted: offerings of transportation nodes; col-

lage of market places on the spread; montage of cooking and eating spread in the arena. With the exception of the Djénne grains and the Mopti market on the banks of the Niger in Mali, it is probably the largest continuous open market in the West African region. It is the envy of the retailer who is cultured on making profit through volume sales. Oshodi holds a tempting fascination for students of urban design.

As the most graphic expression of the concentration of potential buying power compressed into one space, the Oshodi market lies fallow and the potential of the place as a

vital and vibrant node for the interplay of people, goods and service remains thoroughly unexplored and undeveloped. So is the Yaba/Iddo/Oro/Tejuosho node and the Iddo/Oyingbo node. Even though the railway links all three over a stretch of distance, the three differ significantly in their geometry and geography, and their potential for development.

The outer ring road west (1978) above and across the Agege motor road and the railway that runs parallel to the motor road at grade at Oshodi emphasize the difference further. As an expressway, it also functions as a local and distributor road. Like the Badagry expressway (1974) and the Lekki peninsula expressway (1983), the realities of our culture, as should be expected, has overwhelmed design intentions (Aradeon, 96).¹

At Oshodi, the highway traffic on the outer ring road west is brought to a slow drag as the Molues and Danfo buses joust for space and passengers who scramble for a leg room and foot hold in the moving bus. The buses transform the exit lane into multiple lanes as they negotiate their descent to the lower Agege motor road level. This confusion on wheels is further aggravated by the procession of lines of buses from Mafoluku on the service lane heading west in the wrong traffic direction. These buses descend through the rear to join the ring of passenger bus terminal on the move from the other direction.

For the average passenger on his way to the international airport, the experience at the Oshodi segment on the expressway can be unnerving and disconcerting. If the view of the millions of milling heads is jolting, the intrusion into personal anxieties by the go-slow traffic hawker and mechanics can be irritating.

The Railway/Its Impact on the Landscape

The coming of the railway line reinforced Oshodi. It transformed the economy of Oshodi into an important market place. Like Ebute Metta to the south and Agege to the north, Oshodi was and continues to serve as the train station. Today, the station has lost its scale as a public symbol to Oshodi, the market place. However, most local train stop at the old station appears as an intrusion in the market place. Pedestrians crossing the tracks simply walk up from one side and down the other side through train cars. The magic of the approaching trains induce a linear alignment of human activities along the coaches. For the long train ride up country, food service to the passengers is more sophisticated and expensive. Iced cold soft drinks, iced cold 'pure water' and plantain chips in cellophane wraps and meat pie have now replaced the traditional food items sold through the passenger train windows. As each train departs, the railway tracks are appropriated once again into

the market space as the orientation spine and the pedestrian right of way.

Oshodi/The Urban/Suburban Transportation node

Today, Oshodi the peripheral area that lay beyond the municipal limits of the colony of Lagos had by the beginning of the 1970 decade emerged as one of the food distribution centres critical to the survival of the Lagos metropolis.

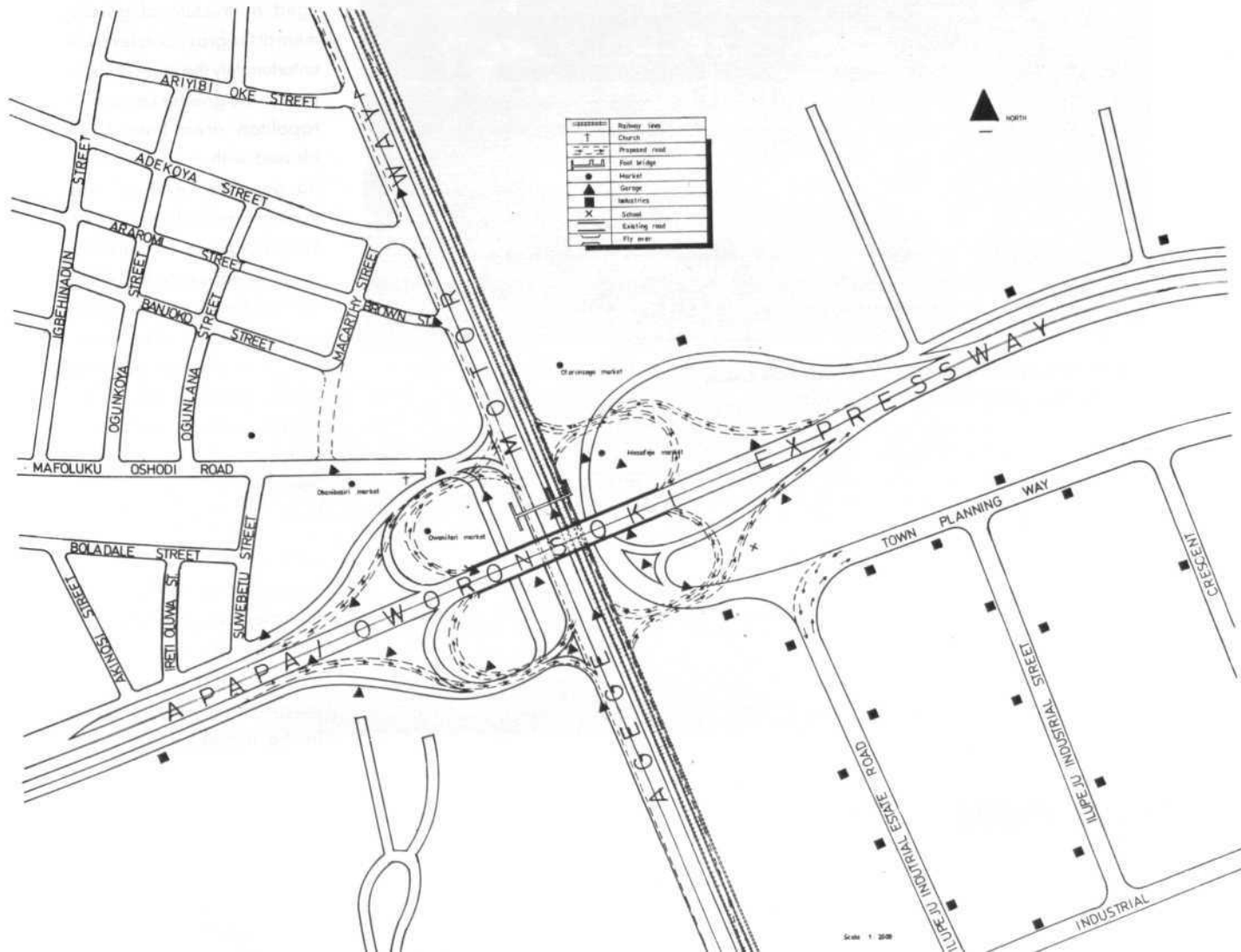
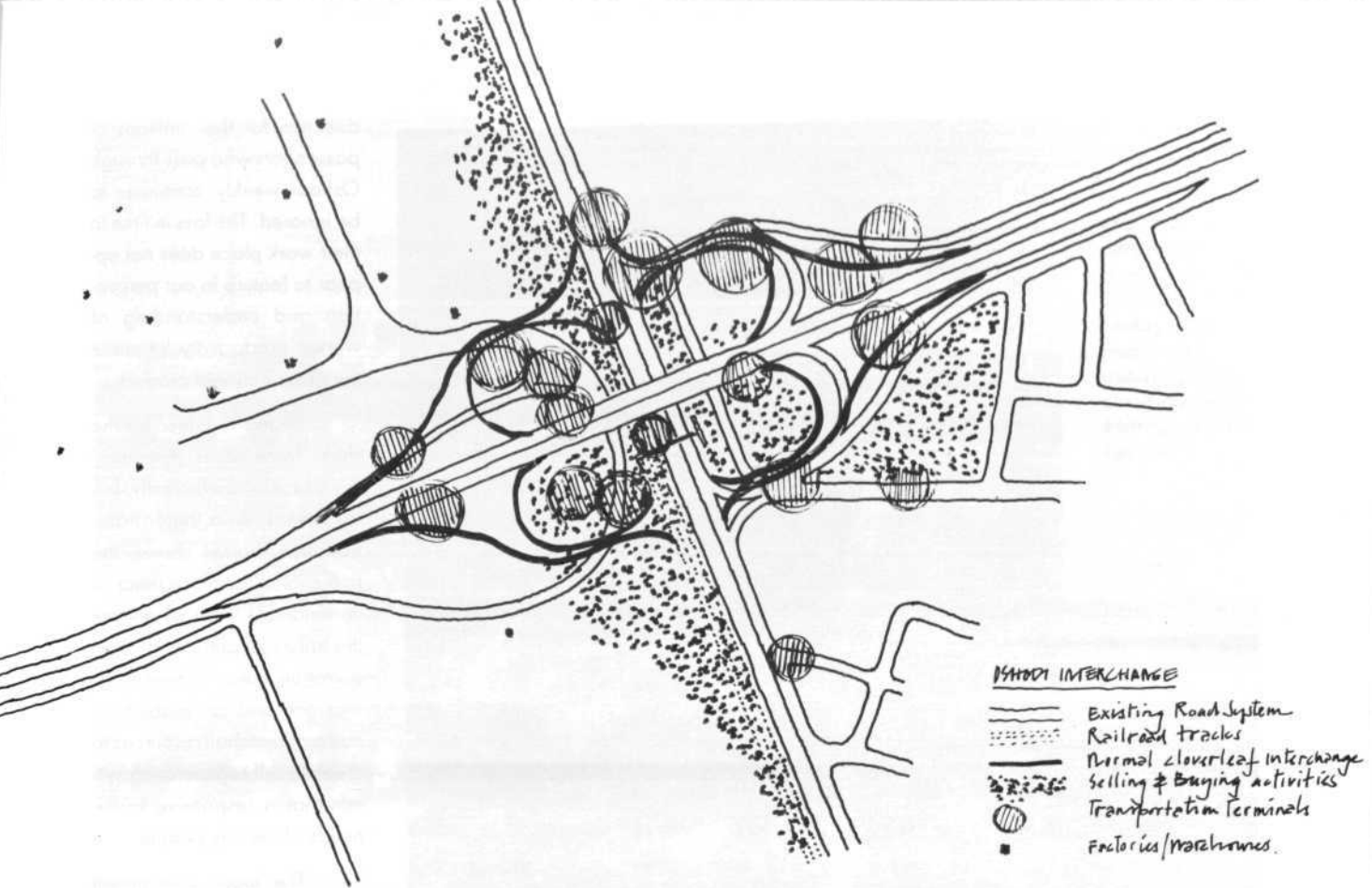
Like most nodal places in metropolitan Lagos, Oshodi, the public space suffers the pains of dysfunction due in large part to its complex and overlapping functions: train station, the urban and suburban bus stations (several stations spread all over the place), goods transportation station; markets, etc., The functioning of the place appears to hinge on mutual but exclusive respect among the institutions and associations whose authority and or jurisdiction impact on the place. The aborted cloverleaf interchange system respects the right of way of the Nigerian Railway corporation but ignores the logic of the flow of vehicular traffic. The Transporters Association, (Taxis, Molues and Danfo buses) collect daily taxation from their members for the use of the place; also, the local government council collect levies from the sellers. The expanding and interlacing ribbons of selling activities on the cloverleaf interchanges linking Agege motor road and the Mile 2 - Oworonshoki segment operates under the control of the local government council. The levies collected and the revenue generated from these ribbons of selling activities is hardly plowed back into keeping the public place clean and functional. The interlaced ribbons of sellers and their wares create sensory excitement and the functional chaos generated at the cloverleaf interchanges.

The necessity of creating a functional and humane changeover place of

The base drawing for the Oshodi interchange was prepared by Miss Tuke Kultu, who is currently working on her final year thesis project on Oshodi, the 'Transportation Node.'

Students in the department of Architecture at the University of Lagos have always been encouraged to work on thesis projects of public need/use and social significance in metropolitan Lagos: in 1976, Yaba Bus Terminal, (Mr. Aganga-Williams); 1995, Yaba Transportation Node, (Miss Abiola B. Fashina); 1976, The Lagos Ferry Terminal, Marina, (Mr. Bayo Amole), and 1981, The Oyingbo/Iddo Market Transport Terminal, (Mr. Chijiokhe Iloputaifeh).

This group of projects, of places and people, are part of the continuing study and documentation by the department of Architecture in Lagos of the urban culture of metropolitan Lagos since 1974.





Pedestrians and market on Oshodi rail track

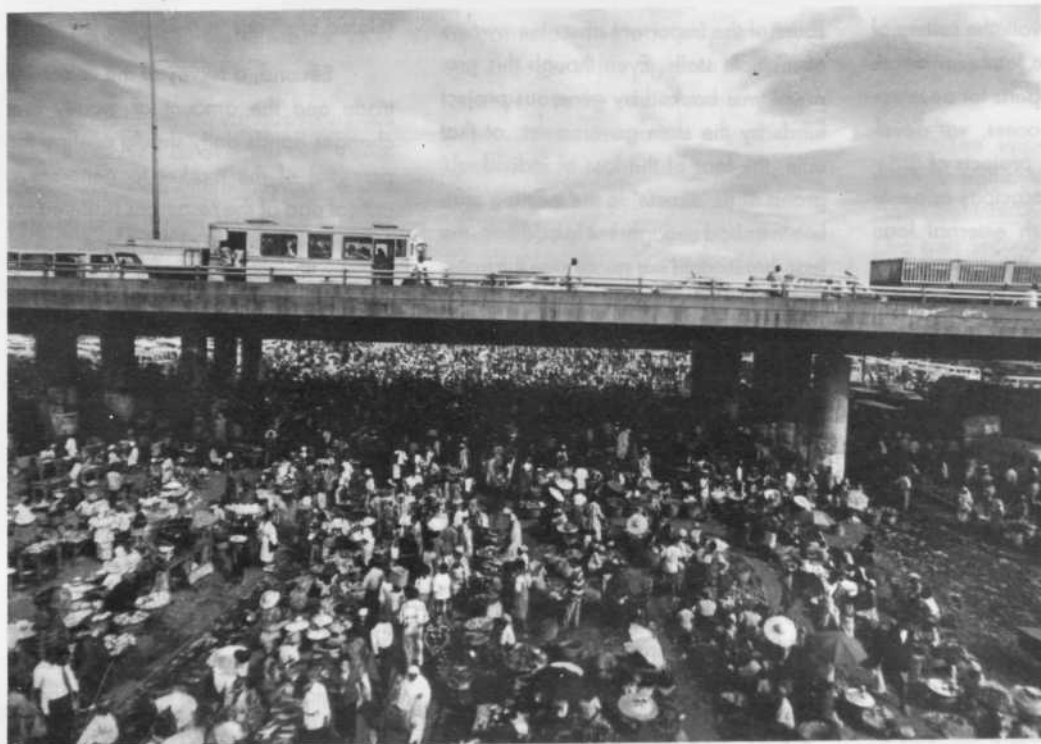
All Oshodi photographs by David Aradeon

direction for the millions of passengers who pass through Oshodi weekly continues to be ignored. The loss in time to their work place does not appear to feature in our perception and understanding of worker productivity let alone the gross national product.

Strung together by the sheer force of its dynamics, the place is inefficiently administered. As a major transportation/market centre, the potential of the place remains unrealizable. Oshodi mirrors the failure of our urban transportation policy if ever there was one and our inability to pull and marshal resources to create a self regenerating system that is responsive to the needs of the city people.

The local government council reform of 1990 envisaged a structure of government at the grassroots level but unfortunately the series of chairmen in the greater Lagos metropolitan area have been blessed with a unique vision 'to generate revenue.' The transformation of existing market places and the development of real estate for offices and shopping centres constitute the spectrum of this vision. In reality though, planting kiosks and shops all over the city sidewalks and public open spaces has remained their 'logo.'

Oshodi is the unexplored potential for development of human and local capital resources. It typifies our times and our landscape. After funding the civil war from our own resources, we began, in the middle of the 1975-



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1980 3rd plan, to cultivate the culture of dependency on foreign loans for development and foreign experts for development ideas. In this process, we developed a taste for public projects of grandiose scale and the voracious appetite for public projects with external loan component for which the government alone can provide the guarantee. This perception of development reinforced access to development dividends as one of the most important rationale for initiating and sustaining public projects. (Aradeon:83,386) ² Development projects were therefore more likely to be promoted, derailed, amended or abandoned for group/individual interest than 'in public interest'. For example several attempts made in the 1983-1986 to relocate the market at the Oshodi junction to a new location near the Aswani market was aborted due to the lack of cooperation from the association and

some of the important absentee owners of multiple stalls. Even though this proposal was backed by generous project funds by the state government at that time, the fear of the loss of individual/group of its 'access' in the existing markets was bad enough; but in addition, the fear that it could not guarantee the transfer of that 'access' to the new market location were so real as to estrange the support of the association from the relocation of the market 'in public interest'

First, a thorough study of Oshodi today begs for the physical separation of all the traffic types: railway, vehicular and pedestrian; the private from the public, the passengers from the goods. Also, all the traffic types from the selling and buying activities. As transportation nodes and a selling and buying place, the range of activities also need to be related into a place of different but inter-

related functions.

Second, a survey of the volume of trade and the amount of money that changes hands daily should confirm the potential of the market to generate a critical part of the resources required for the redevelopment of the place.

Based on its critical location at the intersection between the north-south and the east-west axis of the vehicular roads and the railway tracks, Oshodi should be restructured to serve as one of the regional terminals for the Lagos metropolis. The railway tracks should be reactivated for commuter service. The commuter railway lines should be extended to link and serve Mile 2, Apapa and Badagry on the west and the Oworonshoki corridor on the east. Local and regional commuter bus service should be pooled into a location within the terminus from their current segmented



garage/stations at the cloverleaf locations.

In addition, the various luxury bus services located all over the city: Yaba, Iddo and Festac where they continually clog up local traffic, should be brought into the terminal. The advantages to the travelling commuter, the possible relief from the traffic chaos in the city far outweigh the problems of administering the collage of private transportation systems, (the absentee owners and the drivers and the conductors) for whom the convenience of the commuter is hardly of primary interest. In incorporating the existing market activities within the terminal, the streets and cloverleaf interchanges could be freed from the current mixed and mixed-up use.

Development Issues

-The Railway in urban and national space

The railway line is a linear divide through the cities they transverse. With the decline of the railway as the collector and transportation system for agricultural produce to the ports at Apapa, the train stations also lost their symbolic function. By the second half of the 1960-75 decade road haulage of produce and goods by trailers had virtually supplanted the railways. The road transport tycoons had emerged in complete control of the transportation economy. By the beginning of the 1990 decade, the consumer structural adjustment programme had priced this service beyond the consumers' pocket. For the local consumers, the cost of road transportation within the urban centres and the region had become largely unaffordable. During festive holidays, road transport costs are exploitative.

In urban Lagos, the railway right of way is probably the longest continuous ribbon of private/public property, the largest real estate, the most visible and

the least responsive to development needs and changes in the city even though the railways is in the public domain. It provides vital service to the city and the communities throughout the country and with the tension power lines above, it dominates the landscape; nonetheless, the railway lines are the most sacrosanct private/public property.

In mainland Lagos, Iddo Island terminal from which the railway thrusts northwards, the tracks admit vehicular interruptions at three intersections: Apapa road, Tejuoso and Mosalashi. Between stations, the tracks function as pedestrian highway providing a far more protective route than the vehicular motor ways for pedestrian traffic.

At Oshodi, the interplay of the two different traffic patterns, fast moving and distributive vehicular traffic on Agege motor road and the fast moving traffic at the upper level had evolved partly in response to the railway line. The interplay of levels and the failure to link all the levels into a comprehensive interchange is one of the major problems that has characterized the tentative and timid nature of our approach to public places. Oshodi illuminates these problems rather succinctly.

The Railway in urban transportation network

In 1976 we had suggested the integration of the railway with the urban transportation system in metro Lagos. The creation of a transportation corridor on the spine of the railway line from Iddo to Agege was central to this system: on the line, the urban train would run from Iddo terminal which should now function primarily as a passenger terminal. The goods terminal would be shifted to a location beyond Agege. An elevated highway should be built above the railway track. At Iddo, a new two level suspension Carter Bridge would link two

levels of traffic: the Osborne Road/Adeniji Adele and Nnamdi Azikiwe spine.

The upper level would carry through traffic to the mainland, with cloverleaf intersections, one at Yaba/Idi Oro and second at Ilupeju. The urban train service would be extended to serve Surulere as part of the Iddo/Apapa wharf system. The urban train system would be extended to Lagos Island through the Marina, a walking distance to Tafawa Balewa Square, the centre of the Federal government system at that time.

In order to minimize the vehicular-pedestrian and railway traffic conflicts and interruptions at the intersections, the railway tracks should be depressed and the roads elevated at those intersections. This north south urban transportation corridor through the physical centre of metro Lagos, was proposed as the alternative to the then proposed Third Bridge section on the Lagoon. Supplemented by ferry service on the eastern coastline of Lagos, from Oworonshoki to Ikoyi and Victoria Island, the Danfo buses would run link services from the east and the west to the linear transportation corridor. (Aradeon, 76).³

The Railways in the larger Regional Transportation network

As in each of the national space, the railway transportation system in the West African region is dominated by the north to south linkages pattern. With largely unreliable scheduling, the various airlines provide the most effective transportation linkages in the region at costs far out of the reach of more than 90% of the region's population. The station wagons provide the road transport system along the coastline from Lagos through to Accra. The cross border transport operates largely at the mercy of officials whose system and personal style

of control often cause excessive delays. The structural adjustment had priced the imported automobile beyond the reach of all but 5% out of the region's population. Even the price of our petroleum products is becoming a dream. Today, we mostly have to work eighty times as hard to earn the single dollar which we then transfer to buy the second hand cars, spare parts, clothing and shoes from Europe

If ECOWAS were to become an economic region in reality, the transportation system would have to be planned to facilitate a closed system of north-south and east-west movement for people, goods and services. A public funded and refurbished railways appears to offer the most functional, cheaper alternative to the road transportation system.

The railways, like the Commission for National Monuments, Museums and Monuments, is a public institution we have inherited from the colonial system whose mission and role within the scheme of the making of the nation-state we either did not fully understand or fully appreciate; if we did, we had not succeeded in redefining to fulfil our national objectives, if indeed these are definable. (Aradeon:96). Otherwise, how do we explain our neglect of the railways for moving people and goods? How did we allow the potential of the railway yards all over the region including the technical creative and replacement systems to decay? Or, how do we understand the action of the leadership in Sierra Leone which tore out its railway lines and system about 20 years ago because the World Bank advised that it do so?

If ECOWAS is to emerge as a regional economic entity, the railways, its urban and regional transportation potential must constitute one major part of the structure of linkages for moving people, goods and services; the trains that run currently on the north south direction must be made to also run in the east west direction as well. In addition, it

must provide an important part of the urban transportation network in each social and political space.

Secondly, each existing Railway Works Yard and its built-in capacity for engineering replacement parts must constitute the second fulcrum. The human resources that complemented that system up till the 1960-1970 decade must be rehabilitated as a basis for rebuilding the human capacity for re-engineering the system.

Thirdly, the iron ore potential of the Nimba mountains in Liberia and Guinea can provide the ore for the steel mills in Nigeria and elsewhere to keep the regional steel mills in continuous production for train tracks as well as steel plates. With these, the region can then seriously embark upon an industrialization programme at two complementary levels:

(a) the production of rail lines in the steel mills and the fabrication of passenger trains should bring about the rapid development of steel fabrication industry and promote the train as a viable, stable and cheaper alternative to road transport system for long distance travel in the region. The new system will enable the legion of our women traders the comfort of long distance travel on trains with the added advantage of journeying with their cargo.

(b) A reactivated railway workshop will provide the initial push for the steel fabrication industry. This should fuel and energize the private sector initiative for the production of steel products for machine parts, household utensils and body building for the molue.

The scale and scope of the transportation network and systems possible in this region cannot be achieved without some level of public participation even though the culture of private investment in public utilities, transportation, etc. is yet to take root.

Looking at examples elsewhere, it is likely that private investment at the scale that would transform the public urban and regional transportation into an institutional system is not feasible without massive and continuous public funding.

Even in North America where private enterprise pioneered the railroad system in the frontier period of social and economic space, the entrepreneurs sold out to the city and state when the public transportation system became less profitable. In Europe and in America, the city, state and interstate public commissions provide public transportation systems primarily as a public service. The emerging peoples of the ECOWAS sub-region can expect no less from their governments.

In addition, a regional transportation system based on the inter-linkages between the roads and the railroad network is the only system that can provide the one major catalyst for meaningful economic and social change in the sub-region. **GR**

Notes

(1) Aradeon, D. 1996 Forthcoming. 'Nigerian Architecture, traditions and change' in EZUMEZU: Essays on Nigerians Arts and Architecture. A Festschrift for Demas Nwoko

(2) Aradeon D. 1983, 386: 'Public learning and participation in the Development process' Habitat International, Vol. 7, Nos. 5/6 pp. 385-394.

(3) Aradeon D. 1976. Daily Times, Lagos.