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The role of public markets in urban habitability and competitiveness

Role of public markets

Carlos Balsas

Department of Geography and Planning, University at Albany, New York, USA

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine public market functions in three different continents (Europe, North America and Asia) and to identify a set of planning implications for their use in contexts of urban regeneration.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper presents a comparative analysis of four downtown market functions based on the LABiMAAM framework: [L]ocation; [A]ccessibility; [B]uilding; [i]nternal structure; [M]ain trading area; [A]menities and services; [A]nimation program; and [M]anagement structure.

Findings – The lessons learned suggest that centrally located public markets possess as follows: social functions aimed at guaranteeing food security, urban development goals that prevent the leap-frog suburbanization of the territory, walkability goals that reduce automobile dependence and welfare goals that support disenfranchised, usually minority, populations.

Research limitations/implications – Positive and dire implications are identified. The former are structured in terms of these five categories, namely, social, financial, macro-spatial, environmental and public space; while the latter tend to result mostly from the abandonment of the public good orientation associated with having a public market function in a central location.

Originality/value – This study results from the realization of increasing developmental pressures and widespread tendencies to multiply specialized retail offers in both traditional, and especially, innovative commercial formats. The findings comprise the identification of public policies aimed at augmenting the relevance of commercial urbanism and urban regeneration strategies.

Keywords Public policy, Food deserts, Commercial urbanism, LABiMAAM framework, Public markets, Urban habitability and competitiveness

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The dilemma at the core of this research is the fact that many public markets^[1] have experienced radical transformations, as their original construction more than 100 years ago (Balsas, 2017). Many public markets in the western world have been demolished, others have been adapted to different uses, still others have maintained their original functions while being expanded to accommodate modern and postmodern lifestyles and preferences (Spitzer and Baum, 1995; Zukin, 1998). While some public markets provide advantages (i.e. continuation of original uses), others have created dire consequences for cities, which have led to the eradication of basic socio-economic functions and the emergence of food deserts in

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central areas (Pothukuchi, 2004). Hallmark events have been implemented in many western cities with the main goal of increasing awareness of those cities' unique idiosyncratic attributes in a more globalized world. The conviction of those communities' leaders is that the higher levels of visibility will, ultimately, make those cities more competitive for investors, while also increasing their residents' quality of life.

The purpose of this paper is to examine public market functions in three different continents (Europe, North America and Asia) and to identify a set of planning implications for their use in contexts of urban regeneration. Two of the four case studies have hosted large hallmark events (Barcelona – the 1992 Olympics and the 2004 Universal Forum of Culture, and Macau – the 2005 East Asian Games), while the North American cases regularly host small events such as arts and culture festivals. The criteria for selecting the case studies resulted from the author's familiarity with those cities' urban dynamics and commercial development through extended residencies in all of them. This paper is based on the following research questions:

RQ1. How have public markets impacted their host urban neighbourhoods? and

RQ2. Are there lessons to be learned from successful and failed cases?

It is argued that in the twenty-first century, public markets have to complement their traditional retail offers with creative place-making strategies to enhance a community's competitiveness and increase its urban habitability (Johnson, 2002). This observation is made in the midst of increasing developmental pressures and widespread tendencies to multiply specialized retail offers in both traditional, and especially, innovative commercial formats (González and Waley, 2013).

This paper is structured into six parts. Following this introduction, Section 2 is the analytical mechanism and theoretical analysis of markets, with special emphasis on public markets and food deserts. This section aims to establish the theoretical background needed for the comparative analysis and discussion of the case studies later in the paper. Section 3 is the methodology section. Section 4 is an overview of the four case studies, namely, Barcelona, Albany, Tempe and Macau. Section 5 is a comparative analysis of results based on the *LABiMAAM framework*: [L]ocation; [A]ccessibility; [B]uilding; [i]nternal structure; [M]ain trading area; [A]menities and services; [A]nimation program; and [M]anagement structure. Section 6 is a discussion of positive and dire consequences of the evolution of market functions in urban areas. Finally, Section 7 is the conclusion and identification of lessons learned and implications for public policy.

2. Analytical mechanism

2.1 *The role of markets*

Markets have developed, as immemorial times; first, likely as places for people to exchange goods, and in a second moment for people to trade commodities and services for a set monetary value (Chung *et al.*, 2001). The most recent phase of this evolution takes place in the virtual world of new information and communication technologies and e-commerce. The market mechanism refers to a person's utility-maximizing behaviour and a firm's profit-maximizing behaviour as if through an invisible hand, to use Adam Smith's (1776) metaphor, goods were to be distributed in a way that no one could be better off without making someone else worst off. In theory, a market is a powerful allocation system that produces an efficient allocation of goods. However, reality rarely corresponds to such an idealized model and markets do not always produce the optimal outcome from a society's perspective. Market failures result from externalities, information asymmetry or monopoly

powers. Market intervention through public regulatory mechanisms is supposed to influence market outcomes for the public good.

It is believed that cities, as the visible outcome of gregarious tendencies toward the public good, are the off-springs of market interactions (Pirenne, 1973). Markets have evolved from regular exchanges in a variety of formats and in a variety of central places such as a churchyard, a town's common or a central square (i.e. *plaza mayor*) (Warnaby, 2013). Markets developed over many generations from outside locations where transactions occurred in the form of open-air fairs to indoor facilities, and now to the broadband wires connecting mainframe and a variety of computer networks. In fact, the pervasiveness of markets reaches almost everyone on the planet, be it in the form of personal and direct acts of trade or as the individual shares and stocks one holds, and which are managed remotely by somebody else, usually for a fee.

In the context of commodities and services in cities, in their most basic form markets comprise the supply of and demand for something, supposedly with innate value (Bestor, 2004). In spatial and morphological terms, a city entails three fundamental types of markets as follows: first, the pervasive commercial structure of a city in its atomized and widespread variety of stores and shops; e.g. the retail system of independent establishments and franchise stores. Second, the aggregation of a number of businesses in one particular location under the same roof, e.g. a shopping centre or a public market accessible to anyone willing to acquire commodities. Third, a market of bulk goods available only to certain retailers, e.g. a bulk grocery store or a wholesale market.

2.2 Role, transformation and relevance of public markets

The modern public markets in European cities have had their inception mostly in the nineteenth century (Pérez *et al.*, 2016). Their construction was motivated by the hygienist and reformist movement in urban planning. Said movement was an attempt at normalizing markets by guaranteeing hygiene and salubrious conditions for the traded goods and ensuring that sales taxes were collected from those transactions. In architectonic terms, the construction of municipal markets coincided with the use of ironworks and steel frames in buildings (Jones *et al.*, 2007).

Many municipal markets were readily copied by private entrepreneurs and built as shopping malls in locations away from a city's central business district (CBD). Those modern rivals, in certain cases, with more convenient locations, appealing architecture, plentiful parking and servicing areas, individualized stores and shops, instead of simply retail stalls in an open floor plan, have contributed to the partial abandonment, and in certain cases, also the demolition of the original public market buildings. Exception to this trend includes public markets and farmers' markets that have adapted to and evolved with changes in the marketplace and lifestyle preferences (Bubinas, 2015; Lowery *et al.*, 2016). Those public markets benefited not only from their central locations in cities but also from an adequate combination of quality-price-variety-and-place of origin.

The relationship between commercial cores and the destiny of neighbourhoods has been studied relatively extensively. On one hand, their abandonment has contributed to the decline of whole neighbourhoods, while their rehabilitation has brought positive impacts to the reinforcement of commercial functions in central locations. Contrarily to public markets, shopping malls are instruments of capital accumulation for their owners and tenants. The need to maintain a strong commercial function in a central location was perceived by progressive local governments as a public policy priority and a food security strategy.

The uncontrolled replication of private sector business strategies according to real estate markets and customers' demand and lifestyles have contributed to the emergence of food

Role of public markets

deserts in cities. While western countries have their public markets, Islamic countries possess commercial bazaars (Vargas, 2001). Emblematic public markets in western countries include: the Convent Garden in central London, *Mercado de La Boqueria* in Barcelona, the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto and the Pike Market in Seattle, WA (Vieira, 2014).

Public markets have undergone transformations as a result of major changes in their host neighbourhoods (Pintaudi, 2006). For instance, the *Mercado da Ribeira* adjacent to the Bolsa Palace in the northern city of Porto, Portugal now has bars and night club entertainment functions, while the more peripheral *Mercado do Bom Sucesso* in the Boavista district has been renovated and still performs its regular retail functions. The Chelsea Market on the lower east side Meat Packet District of Manhattan in New York City has benefited from the construction of the Whitney Museum and the emblematic High Line elevated park.

Many public markets in Portugal were modernized in conjunction with the implementation of commercial urbanism projects (Barreta, 2014; Balsas, 2019), which not only helped to modernize the markets themselves but also the most important commercial areas of cities (Balsas, 1998). These commercial urbanism projects were part of urban regeneration interventions carried out during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Their main goals were to make shopping districts, small and medium-size – mostly independent and family-owned business establishments, and their adjacent public spaces in downtown areas more modern and competitive in the face of increased pressure from out-of-town big box retail formats.

Many of these public markets in European and North American countries have experienced functional changes in their assortments, hours of operation, and clientele and now appear to function more as seeds of gentrifying neoliberal tendencies, instead of the original intended functions of food security provision to urban dwellers (and the prevention of food deserts). The next sub-section explains the emergence of food deserts, mostly in North American cities.

2.3 *The emergence of food deserts*

Food deserts are locations, mostly in cities, where it is difficult if not blatantly impossible, to purchase fresh produce and other nutritious food items. This results from the fact that some of the grocery stores formerly located in those neighbourhoods have closed down and or relocated to other locations and the succeeding stores only carry a very limited assortment of food items (Bedore, 2014). Those food items tend to have a high concentration of sugar and salt (e.g. snacks), and are rich in processed ingredients and syrups (e.g. sodas and other sugar-based drinks).

The unavailability of fresh produce and other nutritious foods has partly led to the poor health of local residents, whom in the impossibility of eating healthy foods develop diseases such as: obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and other health conditions associated with poor eating habits and very sedentary lifestyles (Lowery *et al.*, 2016). Low-income minority populations often in inner-city locations in North American cities tend to suffer the most from food insecurity given their low wages, high unemployment rates, transit dependence, low automobile ownership and high prevalence of deficient nutritious eating habits (Sullivan, 2014).

Cities have used an array of regulatory and community development strategies to ameliorate food insecurity problems (Morgan, 2015). Those strategies have ranged from negotiating community gains with large retail businesses through regulatory and incentive strategies (APA, 2007), the encouragement of smaller size supermarket typologies in more

central locations, the deployment of veggie mobile solutions that deliver fresh produce directly to disadvantaged neighbourhoods, urban agriculture (Kaufman and Bailkey, 2004), and the allocation and cultivation of abandoned and under-used parcels of land to grow food in the form of community gardens (Vitiello and Wolf-Powers, 2014; Cabannes and Marocchino, 2018).

From social justice and food security perspectives, hallmark events commitment to enhancing a city’s competitiveness tend to privilege iconic architecture, sports stadiums and performance venues (Degen and Garcia, 2012), while almost completely neglecting important community development matters as ensuring that their disenfranchised residents have access to healthy and nutritious food (Nunes, 2017).

3. Methods

The research approach entailed mixed methods such as a review of the literature, groundwork in all four cases at different times during the last 20 years, and their post-evaluation comparative study across the Atlantic Ocean and as far as Macau special administrative region (SAR) in Asia (Choi et al., 2003; Harada, 2016). Groundwork research in Barcelona and Macau was conducted on September 1996 and April 2001; and February 1998 and May 2014, respectively. The observations in Albany and Tempe are the result of permanent residence periods from July 2014 to the present and from May 2004 to June 2014, respectively. The *in-loco* research in Barcelona and Macau comprised visits to the various public markets in the downtown and central inner-ring suburbs, semi-structured unrecorded interviews with planners in both cities and with a public market manager in Barcelona. The results of the work conducted during the first visit to Barcelona’s public markets were published in the *International Journal of Iberian Studies* (Balsas, 1998) and the motivation to study the public markets in Macau resulted from a 1997 unfunded short-term grant proposal to *Fundação Oriente*. Commercial urbanism developments in these two cities were also followed from a distance and the object of desk research, as the first visits.

The groundwork research in Albany and Tempe was the result of regular visits to the multiple establishments in the two cities’ main commercial areas over the years of residence, as well as of specific teaching assignments in Fall 2017 and Spring 2009, respectively. Finally, the author also made use of explorative surveys with photographic investigations. The findings comprise the identification of a set of public policies aimed at augmenting the relevance of commercial urbanism and urban regeneration strategies.

The *LABiMAAM framework* – where LABiMAAM stands for: [L]ocation; [A]ccessibility; [B]uilding; [i]nternal structure; [M]ain trading area; [A]menities and services; [A]nimation program; and [M]anagement structure – was conceptualized by the author based on more than two decades of real estate, commercial urbanism, and regulatory experience in the area of urban regeneration and retail development and modernization. The *LABiMAAM framework* built upon Spitzer and Baum’s (1995) conceptual analysis of public markets’ management, project feasibility, business plan and operations. The *LABiMAAM framework* applied to the case studies in Table I is more encompassing of not only the public markets’ operations but also of the broader market functions in their dislocation away from the CBD and toward other parts of the city.

T1

4. Overview of the case studies

This paper analyses public markets, and market functions, in Barcelona, Albany (New York), Tempe (Arizona) and Macau (SAR) – Figure 1. Barcelona has one of the most comprehensive networks of public markets of any European city. Albany, the state capital

F1

Table I.
Comparative
analysis of case
studies

LABMAAM framework	Barcelona	Albany	Tempe	Macau
[L]ocation	Network of public markets – downtown and neighbourhood cores	Food desert downtown – incipient commercial urbanism	Food desert downtown – incipient commercial urbanism	State-of-the-art public market in a very compact neighbourhood
[A]ccessibility	Pedestrian, public transport and variable limited parking at central and suburban markets	The CBD is very accessible and with plentiful parking in multilevel garages	The CBD is also very accessible and with plentiful parking in multilevel garages	Accessible mostly by foot and scooter
[B]uilding	Turn-of-the-century buildings, adapted to new needs (e.g. ADA accessible, adjacent servicing and limited parking)	Ground floor of an apartment complex; the market function is spread throughout multiple businesses	University Dr. However, the market function is spread throughout multiple businesses	Eight-story high new building
[I]nternal structure	Open floor plan with individual stalls organized by type	One ground floor store of a multi-story building	One ground floor store across from the district's delimiting train tracks	Vertical commercial urbanism principles (one retail specialty per floor)
[M]ain trading area	Convenience, proximity and variety of goods for sale inside each market	Store concept comprises a chic coffee shop with a limited supply grocery store	Small entrepreneur's venture to fulfil a niche market	The internal structure enables comparative selection by quality and price
[A]menities and services	Central markets function as tourism destinations and leisure spaces, lockers for purchases and home delivery services	State Street is the commercial spine of the CBD; installation of historic plaques and temporary art installations	Public space amenities (i.e. benches, tree rails, tiles with cultural motives and public murals)	Library, community centre, rooftop exercise and sports fields
[A]nimation program	Cultural programs on Saturdays	Summer concerts on South Pearl Street, farmers markets	Arts festivals on the Mill Ave. District	Satellite city hall at the community centre
[M]anagement structure	IMBB – Ayuntamiento de Barcelona	The downtown Albany BID is responsible for revitalizing the CBD, the grocery store is privately run and endorsed by the BID	The Tempe downtown BID is responsible for the revitalization of the CBD, the public market store is also privately run	Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau – IACM

Source: Author's self-elaboration

of New York, lost its central commercial function right after Second World War and its one-stop shop governmental complex has not been able to replace it (Kennedy, 1985).

Role of public markets

Downtown Tempe, AZ, is a food desert as a direct consequence of its dominant demographic orientation, the presence of Arizona State University (ASU)'s Tempe campus, and the downtown district's emphasis on entertainment. Finally, Macau's newest public market, *Complexo Municipal do Mercado de São Lourenço*, launched in 2009 is a state-of-the-art building in the southern tip of the Macau Peninsula – a direct contribution of the Portuguese administration to the territory, blocks away from an older and most venerated wet market, *Mercado Vermelho* (Figure 2).

F2

The four case studies illustrate a continuum from the original concept of a network of public markets (CBD and neighbourhood cores), to the relocation of market functions to car-accessible locations in Albany (e.g. Central Ave.) and Tempe (e.g. Rural Road), and finally, the emergence of food deserts and incipient attempts at bringing commercial functions back to core central areas in Albany (e.g. Steuben St. Market and an earlier proposal to build a public market adjacent to Clinton Square) and Tempe (e.g. demolished organic co-operative in the early 2000s and the launching of a mini-public market grocery store on University Ave.), and in Macau, the construction of a completely new public market with community functions (e.g. library, community centre, roof top playground and sports fields).

4.1 Barcelona (Catalunya, Spain)

Barcelona, a city of 1.6 million people (2017) and the host of the 1992 Summer Olympics and the 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures (Degen and García, 2012), is the capital of the autonomous region of Catalunya. Barcelona possesses a network of about 41 permanent public markets distributed throughout the city's various neighbourhoods, which are still

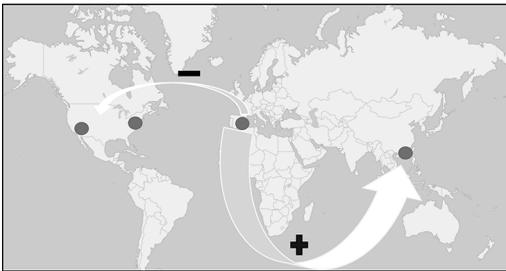


Figure 1.
Location of the case studies with reductions and gains in commercial centrality

Source: Adapted from openstreetmap.org with treatment by author



Figure 2.
Mercado Vermelho (Mercado Almirante Lacerda) in Macau (2014)

Source: Author's own

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managed by the city. Their important role in guaranteeing supply of food was visibly charted in the retail atlas produced by scholars at the University of Barcelona (Carreras, 2003). The public markets in Barcelona perform a central and centralizing role within each neighbourhood (i.e. serving local and daily needs).

The downtown public markets benefit from higher footfall (i.e. because of the patronage of local residents and many tourists, which also impacts the assortment of goods available for sale). Critical to the various markets is the integration of the facilities in the urban fabric where they are located, easy central accessibility for urban and suburban residents, the attempt at reserving some urban space for parking and servicing in the immediacies of the markets, and the latest tendency: the provision of deliveries to the customers' homes. Strong commercial networks between regional producers and the retailers at the various public markets assure the relationship quality-price-variety-and-place of origin.

4.2 Albany (New York, USA)

Albany's downtown is known for the Empire State Plaza complex (Kennedy, 1985; Balsas, 2018). The traditional market functions for goods has been occupied by the market for state affairs (i.e. public services) and the market for commodities has mostly moved elsewhere for the almost 100,000 residents in the city (2017). Once upon a time there was also a regular market in downtown Albany; however, nowadays said function is mostly found outside of the downtown area, such as the locations adjacent to residential neighbourhoods (e.g. Delaware Ave. close to I-87, and on Madison Ave. in the Pine Hills' the point sub-centrality), and in other cases near major auto-dominated arterial roads (e.g. Central Ave.), interspersed with car dealerships, hardware stores, and strip development (Cross and Morales, 2007). Specific to this retail transformation has been the automobile influence and the need to provide parking (mostly surface) near the grocery stores and supermarkets. Commercial plaza formats where supermarkets are located near complementary uses appear to be the dominant model in Albany.

For the most part, Downtown Albany remains a food desert with existing retail offerings being quite limited to apparel, shoe shops, and convenience and drug stores, and pharmacies (O'Brien, 2014). The exception, Steuben St. Market, is considered a new urban grocery, given that it sells food staples, but it has a very limited to practically non-existent supply of produce. The only grocery stores serving the downtown constituency (i.e. on the lower plateau adjacent to the Hudson River) are found up-hill and along Broadway Street in the adjacent agglomerations of Menands and Watervliet. This food desert situation is partially ameliorated by farmers markets on the ESP, in front of the SUNY Headquarters building, and elsewhere in the Capital Region from late spring to early fall (Kleppel, 2014).

4.3 Tempe (Arizona, USA)

The city of Tempe with a population of about 192,000 people (2018) is located adjacent to Phoenix, the state capital of Arizona. Tempe is a first ring suburban city in the Phoenix metropolitan area. The city's historic district is located on the southern bank of the Rio Salado in what's known as the Mill Avenue District (Balsas, 2014). In the city's history, this location was quite strategic, as the lack of bridges led to a boat crossing service between Phoenix and all points south. Over the years, this district became the city's centrality with the city hall, a general store, the main fire station and specialized retail stores.

The growth of the city with new subdivisions and master planned communities has influenced the dispersal of retail development to locations along the perpendicular arterials in the newer sprawling areas adjacent to the municipalities of Chandler and Mesa. The Mill Avenue District has become one of the most important walkable entertainment districts in

the Phoenix metropolitan area. Its proximity to ASU's Tempe campus and the constant supply of students fuels the district's many restaurants and bars. However, the Mill Avenue District has in fact been a food desert for decades, given that the only co-operative food store selling produce on the edge of the district closed down before the global financial crisis of 2007-2008. From then on, a grocery store has been a constant request by the growing downtown population. The nearest food retail store is located a block from the southern boundary of the university campus and on Apache Boulevard (i.e. the SE corner of the city). Nonetheless, the NW corner – where the Mill Avenue District is located – remains a large food desert.

In the early 2010s a very small grocery store opened a block away from the location where the food co-op had existed across from University Dr. Although this was a positive development, the area remained a food desert for the most part. A community garden functioned temporarily on a centrally located expectant parcel of land, which has, as then been converted to a hotel. This food desert has a socio-economic and demographic justification (i.e. young, affluent and household-independent college students).

4.4 Macau (*special administrative region, PRC*)

Macau is a small (667,000 people in 2018) approximately 29.9 square kilometre territory (one peninsula and two islands connected by an isthmus) on the western side of the Pearl River Delta, across from Hong Kong. Macau, the host of the 2005 East Asian Games (Chu, 2016), was administered by Portugal until its handover to the People's Republic of China in 1999 when the territory became a SAR under the one country two systems regime. It is now, perhaps, better known for its glitter and neon-encrusted casinos and hotels than for its public markets (Balsas, 2013). Nonetheless, public markets were introduced by the Portuguese administration to assure the provision of food and fresh produce to residents.

Macau is highly dependent on its hinterland for food, water and energy. The retail landscape is deeply atomized (many and diverse stores). All food comes from elsewhere. The newer districts to the north of the Peninsula (e.g. *Areia Preta*) have a higher concentration of supermarkets than the older districts to the south, which have relied on the *Mercado Vermelho* for generations and the new state of the art market built in the late 2000s. The islands of Taipa and Coloane also had small public markets in their core areas, adjacent to the *Juntas de Freguesia* ("satellite" city halls) and the local churches. The uniqueness of the *Mercado Público (Complexo Municipal do Mercado de São Lourenço)* – an eight-story-high building with different retail sectors per floor, sunken parking and service functions, plus a restaurant (i.e. food court), community centre, library (i.e. *Biblioteca de São Lourenço*) and a sports and a roof-top exercise area.

5. Comparative analysis and results

5.1 Location

The location of a public market is critical to the sellers' and shoppers' accessibility and long-term profitability. In central locations, sellers benefit from close proximity to a wide range of potential shoppers in the market's trading area, even though the logistics of handling goods, providing services, and getting rid of packaging through disposal and recycling practices may be more complex in city centre locations. These logistical functions are usually accommodated through time and space regulations aimed at minimizing disturbances to regular vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The public markets in Barcelona comprise a network of centralized retail establishments. Some are located in the downtown area (e.g. *Sant Josep de la Boqueria* and *Santa Caterina*) and the rest are located throughout the cores of other neighbourhoods. The main market

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functions of the two North American case studies have relocated to relatively more auto-dependent suburban neighbourhoods, and therefore, the real food deserts in the cities' cores are being filled by very feeble but entrepreneurial risk-taking attempts at fulfilling an incipient market stimulated by urban revitalization endeavours. On the other hand, Macau's public market is centrally located in the southern tip of the Peninsula. Its construction signified a major public commitment to maintaining food security in the territory.

5.2 Accessibility

The Barcelona public markets have high accessibility levels for customers, be they walkers, transit dependent-riders or drivers who can benefit from limited parking in the vicinity of the public markets. The CBDs of Albany and Tempe are very accessible by all modes of transport, they benefit from radial transit systems that favour central locations and have various parking garages nearby. Downtown Albany boasts an impressive number of traditional and smart metered parking spaces for visitors (well above 3,000 spaces) (3,000 spaces) (Balsas *et al.*, 2018). Downtown Tempe has more than 500 metered on-street parking spaces, with all meters accepting credit/debit cards in addition to coins and the ability to pay for and extend parking with one's smartphone. Macau's market is mostly accessible by foot, given the narrow street widths of the host neighbourhood. Scooters are a common mode of transport throughout the territory.

5.3 Buildings

Most of Barcelona's public markets are turn-of-the-century buildings, adapted to modern needs (e.g. ADA accessible, adjacent servicing and limited parking). Albany's downtown grocery store is located on the ground floor of an apartment complex; even though the market function is spread throughout multiple businesses with the highest concentration being in the following retail branches: Clothing and shoe shops; restaurants, bars and coffee shops; and convenience stores and pharmacies. The overall building composition of downtown Albany in 2017 comprised 21 per cent retail, 18 per cent commercial/private services, 11 per cent vacant, 11 per cent restaurant/cafe, 9 per cent government/civic, 7 per cent salon/spa, 6 per cent law offices, 5 per cent financial services, 4 per cent gallery/studio, 4 per cent health services, 2 per cent museum, 1 per cent theatre and 1 per cent residential (Balsas *et al.*, 2018, p. 65). Tempe's small public market is located on University Dr. It has excellent visibility from the main arterial; however, the small building constrains the range of goods for sale inside the store. The market function is also spread throughout multiple businesses (specialty retail, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, apparel and used bookstore). Macau's public market is an eight-story-high integrated state-of-the-art building (Figure 3).

AQ: 1

F3

5.4 Internal structure

Many public markets in Barcelona have open floor plans with stalls in the core and individual stores organized by type. Albany's grocery store is on the ground floor of a multi-story apartment building. Tempe's public market occupies one ground floor store across from the district's delimiting train tracks. The former has on-street parking and the latter has limited parking on the premises. Macau's market is vertically organized according to specialty (i.e. one retail specialty per floor), and vertical communication is provided by elevators and stairs. The distinction between horizontal and vertical internal structures is related to the construction era of the different public market buildings (e.g. Barcelona's turn of the nineteenth century ironwork frame construction versus early twenty-first century Macau's reinforced concrete and steel frame building), as well as land scarcity constraints in the case of Macau and less so in the other three case studies.

5.5 Main trading area

Most public markets in Barcelona are characterized by their convenience, proximity and variety of goods for sale inside the market buildings. Their horizontal floor plans enable convenient access, while the organization of stalls by specialty allows proximity and the possibility of comparison purchases. Albany's store concept comprises a chic boutique-like coffee shop with a limited supply grocery store. Tempe's market is a small entrepreneur's venture to fulfil a niche market unaddressed by the city's food market. The internal structure of Macau's public market also enables comparative selection by quality and price for the same basket of goods. A common feature of most trading areas in the four case studies is their co-location of retail stalls by trade and specialization (e.g. producers, fishmongers, butchers and bakers).

5.6 Amenities and services

Barcelona's central markets function partly as a tourism destination and leisure spaces; lockers for purchases and home delivery services are available upon request. In Albany, State Street is the commercial spine of the CBD. The heavy institutional character of the governmental functions reduces the pre-eminence of the area's commercial character, which takes place mostly on the perpendicular Broadway and Pearl Streets. The recent installation of informative historic plaques throughout downtown Albany, as well as the utilization of creative public art exhibits (a Nipper Dog art installation in 2017) have brought renewed attention to the insipid commercial nature of downtown Albany.

On the other hand, downtown Tempe has benefited from public space amenities (such as benches, tree rails, tiles with cultural motives and public murals). Nonetheless, the supply of fresh produce and nutritious foods remains an unaddressed food insecurity public policy issue in downtown Tempe. Macau's newest public market fulfils multiple functions besides the supply of commodities. The public market building has a library and a community centre that function as a satellite city hall, and a rooftop exercise and sports fields (Figure 4).

F4

5.7 Animation program

These days most public markets tend to have structured animation programs organized by the market's management and or a sub-group of merchants. Barcelona's animation of public markets is conducted by each respective market. Popular cultural activities such as concerts and art exhibits tend to take place on Saturdays.



Source: Author's own

Figure 3. Complexo Municipal do Mercado de São Lourenço (2014)

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Albany’s attempts at animating the downtown area have included summer concerts on South Pearl street, farmers markets at various downtown locations, and public space and streetscape improvements. In Tempe, there have been relatively similar downtown revitalization strategies such as the Tempe Festival of the Arts on Mill Avenue and several other similar events at the Tempe Town Lake. In Macau, the community centre fulfils communitarian activities.

Markets without structured animation programs are increasingly benefiting from changes in their retail mix. Stalls selling prepared foods and small restaurants and snack-bars are increasingly occupying a central role in many public markets in Barcelona. The aroma of roasted and freshly brewed coffee and baked desserts, as well as the visual appeal of various food dishes, together with the concentration of people eating and lining up for food and drinks on the premises, all tend to attract the attention of other customers. These lively and spontaneously choreographed public interactions contribute greatly to make these spaces so special from public animation and vibrancy perspectives.

5.8 Management structure

Barcelona’s markets are managed by the *Instituto Municipal de Mercados de Barcelona – Ayuntamiento de Barcelona*. Both North American case studies have Business Improvement District (BID) structures responsible for the revitalization, promotion, safety and cleansing of the downtown areas. Even though the Steuben St. grocery store is endorsed by the Albany Downtown BID, it remains a privately-run business and the same happens with Tempe’s public market.

The public market in Macau is managed by the territory’s municipality (Leal Senado’s Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau – IACM). What this demonstrates is that for various reasons, the North American case studies have abdicated their role in the maintenance of successful market functions in downtown areas. A tradition of European welfare state and public interest has contributed to the maintenance of successful public markets in Barcelona, and indirectly, via Portuguese commercial urbanism practices, in Macau.

6. Discussion

6.1 Positive implications

The positive implications of this analysis can be structured into five categories:

- (1) social;
- (2) financial;
- (3) macro-spatial;
- (4) environmental; and
- (5) public space.



Figure 4. Community Centre and top floor of the Mercado de São Lourenço (2014)

Source: Author’s own

The social implications pertain to the social function of markets in which they appear to fulfil the basic needs of residents for nutritious food, within close proximity and without the need to travel long distance to fulfil those food needs. Furthermore, the network of public markets in Barcelona employs a substantial number of people (7,738 workers) in an already important source of employment for the city – 10 per cent of the active population (around 90,000 people) work in the retail sector (Clots, 2017, p. 143). In situations of high unemployment as Catalunya has experienced during and immediately after the 2007-2009 global financial crisis, job maintenance represents a major source of resilience to the city's local economy and competitiveness. The financial implications pertain to the initial capital investment offset by the collection of rents to defray the market's operation and maintenance.

The macro-spatial implications of maintaining public market functions in central locations of cities are directly related to their polarizing effects that tend to augment central functions, and the provision and guarantee of food security to disenfranchise minority populations in low-income central city locations (Morales, 2009). The environmental implications are related to the provision of fresh produce and other nutritious foodstuff and the correspondent environmental benefits that accrue from low automobile dependence to fulfil those basic shopping needs. Finally, the public space implication results from the nature of the space created, the rights of individuals (i.e. public versus private access) and the uses allowed in those spaces (e.g. free and unrestricted mobility and political campaigning and or protest in public premises). In the words of Spitzer and Baum (1995, p. 2) a public market is:

located on and/or creates a public space within the community. This is the visible aspect of a market: an inviting, safe, and lively space that attracts a wide range of people. As an effective place where people mix, a public market can become the heart and soul of a community, its common ground, a place where people interact easily, and a setting in which other community activities take place.

6.2 *Dire implications*

The dire implications result from the abandonment of the public good orientation associated with having a public market function in a central location. The private sector rational of profit-making tends to either follow consumers in their flight towards more car-centric locations or to initiate operations of land and real estate development (i.e. fully democratically licensed by the public authorities) (Goss, 2004; Hahnel, 2009). Many of these activities appear conducive to new centralities that quite often compete with the public good goals of a balanced and social cohesive territory. The outcome of many of these decisions has been vast stretches of urban territory affected by food deserts and food insecurity for residents.

These dire implications often result in cycles of decline and broken window syndromes, in certain cases partially inverted only by expensive urban regeneration operations that could have been prevented by timely interventions at maintaining commercial offerings in central locations (Tallon, 2013). Public markets have also been found to contribute to the gentrification of neighbourhoods in transition (González and Waley, 2013; Mallard, 2016). This has occurred in cases where the commercialization of food staples has been replaced by prepared meals served by restaurants and tapas bars for a high-end clientele and tourists, instead of the original customers of nearby neighbourhoods.

The maintenance of original buildings with their unique architectonic character has not been sufficient to preclude the emptying of original food trade functions – often as a direct

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consequence of business opportunities by unscrupulous investors and short-sided public sector endeavours. As several public markets in Barcelona demonstrate, tourism is not incompatible with everyday commercial functions as long as the public policy decisions aim at serving and balancing the competing interests of both socio-economic constituencies.

Finally, and perhaps, the direct implication of the (unregulated) market broadly defined, is the fact that hallmark events put forward by neoliberal and entrepreneurial public policies aimed at increasing a city's competitiveness tend to privilege iconic structures, sports stadiums, performance art venues and peripheral shopping malls. These mostly material outcomes and hallmark legacies tend to be aimed mostly at tourists and visitors at the expense of residents' social capital reproduction and community development needs.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine public market functions in three different continents (Europe, North America and Asia) and to identify a set of planning implications for their use in contexts of urban regeneration. Furthermore, the paper has also attempted to answer these two research questions:

RQ1. How have public markets impacted their host urban neighbourhoods?

RQ2. Are there lessons to be learned from successful and failed cases?

The paper demonstrated that public markets in central locations, such as the ones in Barcelona and Macau, preclude the appearance of food deserts. It was argued that in the twenty-first century, public markets have to complement their traditional retail offers with creative place-making strategies to enhance competitiveness and increase urban habitability. This observation is made in the midst of increasing developmental pressures and widespread tendencies to multiply specialized retail offers in both traditional, and especially, innovative commercial formats. When such place-making strategies occur in the context of major competitive hallmark events (e.g. those in Barcelona and Macau), it is very important not to neglect critical community development matters such as ensuring that all, and especially disenfranchised, residents will have continued access to healthy and nutritious food.

The paper also highlighted the negative consequences of food deserts, especially in a North American urban context, that can contribute to the theory and practice of food safety systems. This was done by partially identifying the planning dilemmas and the regulatory and community development solutions found mostly at the local level. The eradication of public markets (and basic market functions), mostly because of the lack of a coherent commercial urbanism policy in the North American case studies, has indeed created food insecurity and enabled the migration of market functions to locations not easily accessible by minority populations. Furthermore, this research has also contributed to the body of knowledge by creating new parallelism and comparison among international case studies.

The lessons learned suggested that the centrally located public markets possess:

- Social functions aimed at guaranteeing food security;
- Urban development goals that prevent the leap-frog suburbanization of the territory;
- Walkability goals that reduce automobile dependence; and
- Welfare goals that support disenfranchised, usually minority populations.

In closing, urban planners have to rethink how the retail activity has traditionally impacted urban habitability, and who benefits from and who is negatively impacted by food systems (Nunes, 2017). Finally, to ensure food security for all, food systems planning ought to be based on community participation, foodshed assessments, asset mapping inventories and the identification and eradication of food deserts.

Role of public
markets

Note

1. In this paper public markets are synonym with municipal markets.

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About the author

Carlos Balsas, Ph.D., AICP, is an independent researcher in Albany, New York. He is the author of *Walkable Cities – Revitalization, Vibrancy and Sustainable Consumption* (SUNY Press, 2019). He was an assistant professor at the University at Albany and Arizona State University. His main research interests include Urban Revitalization, Sustainable Transportation Planning and Planning Pedagogy. Carlos Balsas can be contacted at: cbusa06@yahoo.com

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