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MARKETS AS SPACES: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY

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ABSTRACT

Markets are typically depicted as places with an economic or financial rationality, and are described as the genesis of business and entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, their inner mechanics are oftentimes abstracted away in the pursuit of neat theories. As a consequence, important insights are lost. We utilized autoethnography to take a deep dive into markets located in Nigeria. We discovered that women viewed the market not as a place for profit, but as a space for solidarity-based organizing. Although participants engaged in business transactions, the primary attraction was the fact that women could exercise independence and mutual aid. Our story demonstrates the market as a true heterotopia with a different social contract that influenced the values of market participants throughout their lives. This manuscript is of interest to scholars of entrepreneurship, space, organizing, women's studies, and solidarity.

Keywords: Solidarity, Space, Organizing, Women's Studies, Heterotopia, Autoethnography

Mercados como espacios: Una auto etnografía da la solidaridad de la mujer

RESUMEN

Los mercados suelen representarse como lugares con una racionalidad económica o financiera, y se describen como la génesis de los negocios y el espíritu empresarial. Desafortunadamente, sus mecanismos internos a menudo se abstraen en la búsqueda de teorías claras. Como consecuencia, se pierden ideas importantes. Utilizamos la autoetnografía para profundizar en los mercados ubicados en Nigeria. Descubrimos que las mujeres veían el mercado no como un lugar para obtener ganancias, sino como un espacio para la organización solidaria. Aunque los participantes participaron en transacciones comerciales, el atractivo principal fue el hecho de

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que las mujeres podían ejercer independencia y ayuda mutua. Nuestra historia demuestra el mercado como una verdadera heterotópica con un contrato social diferente que influyó en los valores de los participantes del mercado a lo largo de sus vidas. Este manuscrito es de interés para los estudiosos del emprendimiento, el espacio, la organización, los estudios de la mujer y la solidaridad.

Palabras clave: solidaridad, espacio, organización, estudios de la mujer, heterotopía, autoetnografía.

Introductıon

Modern literature has emphasized the nature of markets as abstractions. Alternatively stated, real transactions are best understood from a bird's eye view. Unfortunately, most birds can see the landscape, but not the blades of grass that compose nature's songs. Thus, we advocate a shift towards understanding markets as composed of individuals or independently operating entities instead of an amalgamation of transactions. We illustrate that taking a deep dive into "a market" instead of "markets" or "the market" will provide a depth of sensemaking unavailable under more mainstream viewpoints.

To furnish a holistic description, we advocate shifting the study of markets from place-bound to space-bound. To exemplify, we will eschew studying markets as locales in favor of markets as routines and mentalities. Our literature review summarizes existing studies of markets including a review of "the market" as advocated by the mathematically abstract neoclassical orientation (Mirowski, 1986, 2012) versus the introspective and subjective disequilibrium as underscored via Austrian economics (Follert et al, 2019; Dulbecco and Dutraive, 2007). We highlight the unique qualities that differentiate space from place, namely using the 4th dimension (temporality) and the 5th dimension (sensemaking).

Following the literature review, we present our methodology, the layered account autoethnography (Rambo, 2005; Pelly, 2016). We delineate ways in which the layered account blends theoretical- and practice-based perspectives of social science phenomena. Moreover, we profess that the layered account autoethnography is a way to explore meaning making in spaces.

Vignettes of women's interactions in the space of the Nigerian markets are provided, and show ways in which the market's influence permeates well beyond the geographical boundaries of the weekly market. This journey is narrated by the second author, and the theory of markets as space is written by our first author. Finally, we highlight the importance of spatial organizing for solidarity studies in the discussion and conclusion.

Moving Towards a Space-Based Interpretation of the Market

This literature review focuses upon divergent definitions of "markets". We begin by briefly summarizing the neoclassical perception of markets normally introduced in undergraduate macroeconomics or microeconomics courses, which is rooted in objectivism and mathematics. An explanation of Austrian Economics' theories of markets that relies upon subjectivism and real human behavior is presented, along with the advocation of examining "a market" in lieu of "the market". Ergo, each market is unique and not an abstraction. We then scrutinize commonly held perceptions to discern why a place-based definition of a market may not be as useful as a space-based one.

Economics and finance scholars propose an erklaeren (or clarifying) perspective. More precisely, they believe that markets represent business transactions mathematically (Mirowski, 1986, 2012). To wit, through mathematical analysis markets illustrate equilibrium of supply and demand, a proxy for human behavior (Kakarot-Handtke, 2014; Becker, 2013) with bounded rationality removed (Kahneman, 2003; Ross, 2014). In other words, participants in the market are merely abstractions, and their behavior is guided by an invisible hand that denies free will (Harrison, 2011; Oslington, 2012). This implies that markets are a model, are relatively homogenous, offer homogenous goods and services, are objectifiable, and are measurable (Micheels and Gow, 2008; Araujo, and Sandroni, 1999). In contraindication, markets are unpredictable, and math is an ineffective description of individual or collective behavior. Moreover, neoclassical economics has many holes vis a vis solidarity-based theorizing since a logic of care is mathematically incongruent (Boje et al, 2022).

In this vein, scholars of Austrian Economics postulate that markets are a negotiation (Follert et al, 2019; Dulbecco and Dutraive, 2007) comprised of people (Kirzner, 1995; Horowitz, 1994) and subject to bounded rationality (Whitman, 2022; Langlois, 1985). For example, Hayek (see Birner (2016) and Scheall (2015) for a more in-depth discussion on Hayek's ideas of introspection) wrote that markets could be depicted through processes of introspection, and the best way to know a market was not to explain it (via the erklaeren approach) but to understand it (via the verstehen approach). True understanding of the market means accepting that it is comprised of people who do not always act in their economic best interests (Rizzo, 2012; Langlois, 1985). Other scholars (Chiles et al., 2007) postulate that in order to understand the market, researchers must explore real human behavior though mechanisms such as storytelling and ethnography (Pelly and Fayolle, 2020).

The subjective nature of markets, as postulated by Austrian Economists, states that individuals in a market experience conflicting monologues and dialogues (Mizzi, 2010; Pelly, 2017). Furthermore, market activities are not normally distributed or random (Eckhardt and Shane, 2003; Pelly, 2017). The market is much larger, more unorganized, and more meaningful than mathematically elegant equations (Smith and Anderson, 2004; Steyaert, 2004).

Ludwig Lachmann professed that markets move to a perpetual state of disequilibrium (Boehm et al, 2000), and the only consistency in the market is the struggle to understand it. Verstehen (or an understanding based perspective) searches for meaning in prices (Storr et al., 2004) and plans (Lachmann, 1976). Unlike mainstream economics, verstehen promotes real human experience in place of ignoring root causes (Boetke, 1998).

Austrian Economists postulate that meaning begins with the individual. It is the individual who ponders the meaning of the market (Storr et al., 2004). This leads to the subjectivism of plans (Hayek, 1943) as well as a divergence in expectations (Shackle, 2012). Unlike the automaton proposed in neoclassical economics, human actions are neither objective nor detached – they are subject to systems, critique, and institutions (Lachmann, 1971). As a result, it is the agent that defines meaning through purposeful action (Lachmann, 1977). However, this action is far from rational – the actor behaves based upon imperfect knowledge or bounded rationality (Lachmann, 1971; Hayek, 2002) that may defy models. Of equal importance, individuals can interact with institutions and ideal types in surprising ways (Chiles et al., 2007; Hayek, 1937), particularly concerning how categories are grouped within our minds (Hayek, 1980).

Theories of Austrian economics are also imperfect in their descriptions of markets, particularly because of a lack of actionable insights into real human action and theories are relatively muted with respected to studying solidarity-generating behavior. Individuals in solidarity-based organizing are fleeing chaos and seeking stability in a turbulent world. Mayhap it is time to shift the perspective from "the market" or "markets in general" to "a market" or "a specific market" and then extrapolate to a better understanding of solidarity organizing. In lieu of examining individuals' role in a market, we should review the importance of behavior in ways that generate solidarity. This approach provides real insights into markets through a storytelling approach to allow readers to craft their own solidarity narratives.

One avenue to explore individual markets is from a "place-based" perspective in which markets can occupy three dimensions. Scilicet, they have an address – think of your favorite local farmer's market, an internationally recognized flea market, or a garage sale – any one of these may be found using a GPS navigator. The place-oriented understanding satisfies three of Aristotle's causes: formal, material, and efficient (Todd, 1976; Stein, 2011). On the formal side, a governing body (such as a local city council, neighborhood group, or other organizing committee) can designate a specific geographic locale as a market. For material cause, something can be designated as a market because the market contains people and items to be bought or sold. From an efficient cause, a market can exist because people are engaging in transactions at a specific place. What is missing in the place-based perception of the market is final or teleological cause – i.e. how is a market used or how is a market useful. Teleology is crucial for solidarity because it explores the creative ways in which people reappropriate their means to reference new institutional signposts and forge new routines (Sarasvathy, 2001; Leonardi and Barley, 2010).

Reviewing markets as places mirrors the concept of markets found in neoclassical economics—it favors formal, material, and efficient causes. Although appreciating "a market" is less abstract than "the market", the focus remains upon measurables and observables. The antenarratives (Boje et al, 2022; Boje, 2019) or that which lurks before and beneath visible actions, remain hidden. The lack of teleology means that the introspective "why" found in Austrian economics is missing in a place-based orientation.

In order to delve into this antenarrative of "why", or teleology, along with providing actionable insights, a market as a space perspective is beneficial. Space deviates from place in that it incorporates the fourth and fifth dimensions. The fourth dimension is time – spaces have a specific temporality (Foucault, 1967; Winkler, 2014), and a unique understanding of time – these may include chronological (or watch-based time – i.e., a space is converted to a market based upon a specific time on a clock or a calendar), and different forms of kairological time – markets as spaces revive or create practices and senses of identity from alternative timelines (Winkler, 2014). The fifth dimension is sensemaking – a space has a separate sense of reality.

This spatial sensemaking is comprised of four principal components (Topinka, 2010; Winkler, 2014). The first principle of spatial sensemaking is that it generates gestures towards meanings. Videlicet, spaces have unique rituals which may permeate into other spaces (Pelly, 2016, 2017). The second principle of the fifth dimension is the combination of representation or a carrefour where all roads and ideas converge only to be appropriated. Alternatively stated, spaces incorporate diverse antenarratives from the surrounding environment and create alternative stories, institutions, and social contracts. The fourth principle is that spaces have

borders that impose a degree of site-specific knowledge. In other words, is it almost impossible to understand spaces without "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 2008) that enumerate their inner workings because spaces eschew generalizability.

Our next section will describe the methodology and how it supports researching markets as spaces.

Methodology: Layered Account Autoethnography

To capture this story's rich and unique nature, we utilized a methodology that highlights the subtleties of this narrative and provides a robust sensemaking framework for readers unfamiliar with the dynamics of Nigerian markets - the layered account autoethnography. This method vivifies our empirical setting because it supports the benefits of scholar-practitioner research collaboration. Furthermore, the layered account autoethnography has been utilized in narratives depicting solidarity organizing because it highlights the opaque qualities of spaces (Shepherd et al., 2020; Todd, 2021).

Autoethnography is composed of three principal concepts. The first, "auto", means self, the second, "ethno", denotes culture, and "graphy" is defined as depiction. In other words, the autoethnography begins with the self as a way to describe broader social trends. This drastically differs from case studies because the self-story must provide a broader theoretical contribution (Pelly and Fayolle, 2020). Unfortunately, many rich stories are lost because practitioners do not always have the theoretical background to contribute to a scholarly conversation (Frandsen et al., 2020).

To overcome the academic-practitioner divide, we redefined "auto" to denote two people writing as one voice. The first author is a researcher, with no experience in the culture of Nigerian markets, but explores markets as spaces for solidarity. Our second author is from Nigeria and has experienced the vibrant culture of markets since childhood, but is at the initial stage of her academic writing journey. This layered account autoethnography (Rath, 2012; Pitard, 2016; Rambo, 2005) uses one voice to enable the reader to appreciate the rich stories along with the theoretical value provided in this manuscript.

The layered account structure is enhanced by a series of tableaux vivants or vignettes (Pelly and Fayolle, 2023) to oscillate the reader's attention between story and theory. This oscillation evinces a more interesting narrative – similar to reality television shows that move from principal story lines to "cut scenes" to provide a more dynamic media experience, and also providing depth to capture overlooked details (Pelly, 2024). Additionally, the abrupt transitions provide space for readers to create their own meaning (Pelly and Fayolle, 2020; Follett, 1970). Simply stated, the purpose of a layered account autoethnography is not to provide a monopoly of interpretation, but to allow readers the freedom to judge the validity of the story and to apply theoretical explanations in their own ways.

As we began writing this tale, the first author tasked the second author with composing vignettes that illuminated her experiences in Nigerian markets. The second author recounted her stories and described sights, smells, and sounds during the market events, a technique found in embodied ethnography (De Rond et al, 2019; Whiteman and Cooper, 2011). The second author blurred details when necessary to provide a more coherent story, since truth lies not in facts, but in the ability of the reader to understand and relate to the tale (Pelly and Fayolle, 2023; de Sade, 2008). Although this narrative is based upon the experiences of the second author, the

complexity of the phenomenon required a degree of fictionalization of names, places, and details so that readers unfamiliar with the setting could understand the occurrences and generate their own sensemaking. Finally, the second author wrote in an emotional, evocative, and post-modern way as described by Rambo (2005) so that the story would be more relatable.

These vignettes profited from retrospective recall. The second author has experienced the vibrant dynamics of Nigerian markets, which remain an integral part of her personality. It was neither possible nor practical for her to take field notes nor perform recordings during her lived experience, a common theme described by many autoethnographers (Rambo, 2005; Pelly, 2017). Retrospective recall is not problematic because the separation from events at hand enables the reader to reengage with a story from a memory-based lens, aiding her in providing connections and sensemaking for the reader's benefit (Pelly and Kulik, 2024).

Once the vignettes were compiled, the first author reviewed them with the second author and made suggestions to enhance the clarity of the story. After both authors agreed upon the story's content, the first author penned the literature review and theoretical vignettes. Throughout this portion of the writing process, the first author consulted with the second author to ensure that the theoretical vignettes represented the occurrences of the story in a way that embodied truth for the reader and the authors (Pelly and Brandon-Hopper, 2024).

This blended approach results in vignette titles in *italics* introducing the storytelling vignettes, and the titles in **bold** are the theoretical vignettes. In some cases, we included more than one storytelling vignette without a theoretical break. In other instances, we alternated the storytelling and theoretical vignettes. The decision was based upon the order which best provided sensemaking for the reader. The vignettes begin with *A Brief Biography* which is a mini biography of our second author.

A Brief Biography

My name is Mariam, and I am a young girl from Nigeria. I was born in Lagos state which is the mega-hub of Nigeria. My dad works as a Chartered Accountant, and my mum works in Customer Service Personnel. I have three siblings, who are much younger, so for the first few years of my life, I grew up playing with cousins which has allowed me to grow a close-knit relationship with extended family members. As the first child, it was natural that I was heavily pampered by grandparents and great-grandparents. Although I hail from a middle-class family, my parents sent me to a standard school filled with rich kids who were just as "spoilt" as I was.

Most of this changed in my teenage years, because there were expectations that I had to begin to meet as the eldest sibling. At grade 9, my parents made an effort to bring me out of my cocoon, and expose me to the real world - I learnt more about their humble backgrounds and interacted more with those beginnings. One of the primary components that I found very prominent, especially in my mum's side, was the market culture, and so I began to accustom myself with the lifestyle. I visited places where my mum and her sister grew up, most of which were linked to the market in one way or another - either in proximity or in the lifestyle of their neighbors.

While my mum picked up most of her values from the market, she decided to earn a living with her degree. However, my aunt continued living in this market culture. My aunt, Mrs. Ronke, who will later be discussed, owns a stall in the biggest market in Lagos State. I would follow her to work during school holidays and a few times after school. During this period that I

gradually began the transition from my old self to my present developed self. I picked up so many values and built upon the ones I had been taught at home. As you'll see in this article, the market shed my old skin and gave my existence the vibrancy it has today.

Eggs in the Kitchen

I just got back from school, and I meet my three siblings in the living room, while they were watching TV. My parents won't be back in a few hours - my mum is a government worker and her job is more flexible than my dad's, who is an accountant. I chat a bit with my siblings, and my brother and I go into the kitchen to make some pasta for lunch. After eating with them, I return to my room until…

"Mariam!!"

You can hear a reflexive "Ma!" response from me.

My mum is back from work and she tells me to go some houses down the street to buy a crate of eggs from our neighbor, Mrs. Hassan. I always wondered why she never just bought everything on her grocery list when she went to the supermarket because the prices were always the same, sometimes with a slightly varying range. I get dressed quickly and gingerly walk down the street, greeting a kiosk owner, whose daughter is my friend. I arrive at Mrs. Hassan's moderately furnished two-bedroom apartment, and her teenage son opens the door for me and beckons to his mum that a customer is here. Their small living room smells of a blend of aromatic spices and palm oil, and Mrs. Hassan emerges from the kitchen on cue. I greet her, and she asks about my wellbeing while stretching out to the top of her freezer to get a crate of eggs for me. We're still talking when she stretches again to exchange small eggs with bigger ones. I thank her chirpily and say my goodbyes after she tells me to relay her greetings to my mum, and then make my way back, tracing back my steps to the familiar trail leading home. After years of running such errands, it later dawned on me that my mum wanted me to go there because I was supporting a small business owner and not a supermarket…

Reflection About Mrs. Hasan

When I was growing up, this type of setting was not uncommon. Most of these women who had small businesses in their houses or small kiosks were victims of their circumstances. They all had different stories that had a central theme - some had irresponsible husbands and had to devise a means to take care of their children, like the kiosk owner on my street. Others were widows whose husband's family had taken all their properties, like the hairdresser that lived in a one-bedroom apartment with her three teenage children. These women were left with nothing and no option but to start their lives again from scratch. On the other end of the spectrum are women who simply vie for their independence in a male dominated setting like African society, such as the egg seller, Mrs. Hassan.

A Market Away From The Market?

In this example, we see an impromptu farmer's market operating in a home. This market does have an address, and it certainly isn't labeled as a market in any traditional sense – not with respect to formal cause. But it is a market – one of a different sort.

Our second author reflected upon this transaction because it contrasts so starkly with classical economic rationality. It might have been less expensive to go to the supermarket. The

quality might have been better at a grocer. It might have been more expedient to shop at a convenience store. But our second author visited Mrs. Hasan because it seemed like the "right" thing to do.

This "right" thing shows solidarity among women in a community. Nigerian governments and businesses have failed to provide economic freedom and independence for the women described in the two previous vignettes. Mary Parker Follet famously claimed, "Community is a Process" (Follett, 1919). What Follett is describing in this work as well as in others (see Follett, 1924, 1970, 2004) is that a community does not exist in a single place, but is marked by a series of behaviors that serve as the demarcation of spatial organizing. In this case, part of the border of the market is solidarity-generating behavior. A recurring them in this paper is that the market cannot be ascribed to math or economic rationality. Furthermore, Austrian Economists' description of the market is absent – it was a subjective and irrational choice to shop with local women in their homes, but it was neither random nor chaotic. The market mentality could not be confined to a specific address – this market existed everywhere and nowhere concurrently. The space-market is demonstrated by a mentality of solidarity or a series of processes and desires to support a community of people.

As we continue, women in the Nigerian markets operate in a separate space, one with a different social contract, even when surrounded by fundamentally different values. The values do not focus heavily upon earning income, exploitation, or mass production; instead, the goal is to support someone in need. This need is not just charity – it is a desire to support a community and a lifestyle. The market as a place is not applicable since the transaction occurred in a home, and not in the open. Mrs. Hassan's apartment is indicative of the market as a space and its accompanying alternative values transposing themselves into a variety of places. This recurring theme will be explored in the following vignette pair.

Travel to the Country

During Eid-el-Fitri, my family and I make our yearly trip to my dad's hometown to spend the holiday with my grandparents.

At about 4:30 a.m we would wake up to load our bags, which had been packed the night before into the Lexus SUV and get into the car to start our 7-hour trip all the way to the West. About 2 hours into the drive, we would buy some guinea fowl eggs and roasted plantains from the roadside sellers, and after eating I would fall asleep. The next time I wake up, I would see men on the roadside holding freshly killed snakes which signified to me that we had already gotten to our hometown.

My hometown was very different from the city; however, there was something familiar about the business system there. Villages are known for their agro way of living, and I remember how my grandma, who was a housewife, would collect harvested farm produce, particularly fruits, to be sold on Tuesdays which were market days. Those Tuesdays were very quiet in the households but ironically busy in the market. Mostly women came to sell, or buy in the market, but what made it peculiar was that it was not just a place for business transactions. The sellers joked and gossiped amongst themselves, and assisted themselves in different ways, including by referring customers to each others' stalls. The buyers were also not left out: they received advice from their fellow women regarding personal matters that were not discussed in their home.

The market was their safe space … and that space turned into an empty place on every other weekday.

Transition from Place to Space

In keeping with Follett's construct that community is a process and our addition that the market is a space in lieu of a place, certain rituals can be associated with approaching a space, including geographical movements. Our second author remarks that rituals, including food preparation, indicate of a transition from an urban to a rural mindset. The phasing is not sudden but rather gradual, supporting the precept that spaces have "fuzzy boundaries" (Pelly and Roberson, 2022; St. John, 2020).

Our second author also remarked that Tuesday was a market day, but her grandmother worked the rest of the week in order to sell at the market, indicating that the market's importance echoes into other routines (Pelly, 2016, 2017). Most importantly, she noted that the business rules in the market were drastically different from those she encountered in the city. The market exists because of the rituals in that space, irrespective of where the rituals take place (Topinka, 2010; Winkler, 2014). The fact that the entire week revolved around the Tuesday market also supports the premise that the space of a market is a process or routine – the physical place of the market is a manifestation of that routine, but is not the actual market.

The market was more than just a place to conduct a transaction; it was more than an introspective dream, and certainly more than a mathematical formula. This was a space that had utopic qualities (Vidier et al, 2014; Silverman, 1980). In this utopia, womens' oppression by men was decelerated due to female acts of solidarity. Moreover, women did not view other stall owners as competition – they wanted everyone to succeed. It was a space where they were safe, and as they were shopping, they could receive self-actualization and moral support that did not have an exchange value.

Both stall owners and customers were transacting in search of intrinsic common good. Although market day was Tuesday, the market "stall" was not in a specific locale; these stalls could appear anywhere – in a home, in a fixed marketplace, or even in the mood (or mentality) of individuals as they transitioned from city to country. It is important to note that this market appears to be the genesis for other markets in other parts of the country as will be described in the next vignette.

The Sights and Sounds of the Market

If you recall, I said that the business system operated among women in my hometown is very similar to that of women in the city. My aunt, Mrs. Ronke, is also a trader, and she sells clothes in the busy hub of a popular Lagos market. Her stall is one of the cramped spaces that make up a giant "abaya" clothing section in the market. This collection of cramped stores has a tiny walkway between them which is ideally suitable for just an individual, but the hundreds of time-conscious consumers that transact are able to maneuver their way through the walkways, from one store to another.

When I follow my aunt to the market, we start the day by displaying the wares, cleaning the shops and praying for good sales at day's end. Then we stop the first food hawker that passes our way to buy some food for breakfast - good food fuels the traders for the anticipated hectic workday. I like buying Togolese beans and bread, with very chilled malt. While eating sometimes,

customers approach our shop, and I immediately stand up to welcome them and offer them a seat before asking what "abaya" they'd like to buy. Two more customers come, and I don't return to my food until about two hours later. This cycle continues until about 10 p.m. when we start to pack the goods back into the shop and retire back home to rest until the next workday.

Heterochronicity of the Market

The preceding vignette highlights the power of the market routine as a space. Our second author describes ways in which the market superimposes itself upon other routines and places. For example, note that it was difficult to circumambulate due to the cramped stalls – a shortfall from the perspective of formal planning under a neoclassical view. What mattered more than the movements in the market were the sales and the interactions – our second author stated that food (even a special meal such as beans, bread, and malt) or physical fatigue was brushed aside in the hustle and bustle of the market causing the normal flow of time to slip away as a result of heterochronicity.

Meaning of the Market

The market runs in my blood. It isn't just a place for business transactions. As a matter of fact, the business style of the market is unconventional, and an outsider might view the market culture as unethical. This is because unlike the profit maximization motive that most businesses have, the market has redefined its business style as a community space that is much more than a pursuit for the highest revenue. The traders come together to share their personal and household worries, about meeting their husband's incessant demands, about their struggle with their in-laws, about their suffering financial status in the house, and other peculiar issues.

I once overheard Mum Titi telling Mum Ahmed, a fellow marketwoman, about going to Titi's school to beg the headmaster to extend the fees deadline before resuming at her shop that morning. Mum Ahmed took it upon herself to brainstorm some solutions for her friend and suggested starting a thrift contribution group to help other women with their financial problems, and to pay for her son's education fees. The same way they share these challenges is the manner that these women share their joys with each other. When my aunt, Mrs. Ronke, was pregnant with her child Nanah, the market women constantly shared pregnancy tips and bought new clothes and toys for the unborn child. They even went as far as pairing my unborn cousin up with some of the womens' young children, playmates, and even school mates.

Their kindness didn't stop there. They sometimes left their shops to help my aunt attend to customers when their customers were too numerous or they were incessantly nagging. These little things are what build the market women's alliances and their solidarity. Their mothers and grandmothers must have grown up to expose them to this communal culture, and they take it upon themselves to keep imbibing values like kindness, unity, empathy, resilience, generosity, and so on in their children and grandchildren - or in my case, their nieces.

A Special Space

In this space there was a tacit understanding that the outside world is "nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 2002), but a type of playfulness in a space (Hjorth, 2004; Hjorth et al, 2018) could be revived in a market. This playfulness within a space can be used to freeze time, as exemplified in museums (Crosby, 2016; Cooke, 2006), or in adhocracies and other innovative

spaces (Hjorth, 2005; Pelly, 2006). This market appears dramatically different from the examples above – the goal of this market as a space is not to profit. In a remarkable act of solidarity, the goal of this market is to encourage, to uplift, and to protect.

This type of organizing has been identified in community-based enterprises (Peredo and Chrisman, 2017; Montiel and Pelly, 2022) in which cities or villages gain an entrepreneurial impetus to create financial gain in the face of economic or political peril. However, community-based enterprises have a large amount of permanency – the enterprise maintains its existence over a given period of time, even after the sources have dissipated (Pelly and Zhang, 2018; Hudman, 2024). This permanency results in solidarity as a type of role playing (Checkel, 2005) instead of the repeated acts of thoughtfulness demonstrated.

The depictions mentioned above of space resembles ephemeral organizing (Pelly, 2019; Loacker, 2021). Ephemeral organizing occurs when organizations are formed based upon a specific need, only to dissipate after that need is met. Analogous alternatives to ephemeral organizations include adhocracies (Pelly, 2016; Grande et al, 2020), task forces (de Waard and Kramer, 2008; Kramer et al., 2020) and holographic organizations (Yazici, 2022; Diniz and Handy, 2004).

Two examples of ephemeral organizations are particularly germane to this study of markets as spaces. The first occurred during Hurricane Gudrun of 2005 in Sweden and was described by Johanisson and Olaison (2007, 2008). In their ethnographies, they explained that in the aftermath of Hurricane Gudrun, the individuals impacted by the storm had two options: cooperate or risk starvation, power outages, and isolation from the rest of the country while awaiting the central government's reconstruction plan. The solution was forming a temporary organization that facilitated cooperation in unconventional, surprising, and effective ways. Rules were broken, but substantiative in lieu of procedural rationality (Simon, 1976) was the order of the day. The result was not only the ability to overcome challenges that would have been impossible under normal bureaucratic protocols, but also the seeds for future collaborations outside of normal working parameters were sown. Restated, the organizers of the Gudrun group found that this unique bonding experience from the task force enabled effective collaboration due to enhanced trust even in the absence of a natural disaster.

A second example occurred in Pelly's (2016) autoethnography describing the military post office. In this case, he described the ways in which adhocracies could be an effective way to supplement and not circumvent the rules of the rigid postal service and military bureaucracy. In this autoethnography, Pelly explains that adhocracies were a form of temporary organizing that allowed soldiers to accomplish tasks faster and more efficiently than would otherwise be possible due to the fact that kairological timelines could be greatly altered. However, his description of adhocracies showed that they normally did not reform after the task was completed. Much like the ephemeral organizing described in the wake of Hurricane Gudrun, these adhocracies facilitated follow on interactions – but unlike the Hurricane Gudrun organizing group there were relatively clear leaders in Pelly's adhocracies.

Our depiction of the market shares two fundamental similarities with the illustrations of ephemeral organizing that Pelly (2016) and Johannison and Olaison (2007, 2008) show. First, the market has an echo after the event that changes the way people behave even when they are not in the market. The principal difference between the example of the Nigerian market and that provided by Pelly (2016) is that this market has no clear leader or predefined need. In theory,

individuals come to the market to sell goods – which could be a place-based interpretation of the market. However, upon arrival, many other things occur – camaraderie, bonding, mentorship, and mutual aid, all of which are indicators that solidarity is the basis for this space-based organizing. In Johanisson and Olaison (2007, 2008) there was no clear leader, but there was a clear need – to survive post Hurricane Gudrun. Similarly, we see the market as more being a space where vendors can spontaneously organize, without any real goal other than to make the market a safe space – if money is made along the way, then so be it.

The Echo of The Market

As a member of Gen Z, it is incumbent to also leave a legacy for the growing Gen Alpha. My time spent in my aunt's cramped shop in the tropical Nigerian weather that was often abated by a lack of electricity, which hawkers used as an opportunity to sell chilled soft drinks brings back a nostalgic feeling. I also remember the pushing and shoving on our way home during the 5 p.m. rush hour, when other workers get off work, in a struggle to enter a public bus which magically becomes scarce during weekday evenings. All of this is in sharp contrast to the comfortable and peaceful environment of my home. Sometimes I wonder how I even started accompanying my aunt to the shop, because while some traders resume work at midnight and work till mornings, and others work mornings through evenings, we typically don't start activities in my home until 5 a.m. and we begin retiring to bed at about 10 p.m.; however, my parents also grew up in the way of the market, albeit they decided to use their degree to get a job instead of continuing the business of my grandmother and great-grandmother. It is the knowledge of this history, however, that upholds the allegiance of white-collar workers to the lifestyle of the market women - some of whom had the choice this lifestyle, like my educated aunt, and others who continue to find themselves in that situation as a means of livelihood.

Interlude

The market symbolizes many things for me. It symbolizes a space for growth, struggle, character development, and a real-life exposure that allowed me to hone skills I learned at home and at school. The marketplace is the laboratory, where I truly applied and mastered values like compassion, kindness, patience, and selflessness, which were simply taught in school and at home. It was the real world that my parents exposed me to very early on to see the world for myself and learn people skills, and professional skills like good management, negotiation, and problem solving. Another very important thing I learned was how to maintain a positive outlook on life because I learned that these women had a million life problems, yet they put a smile on their face each day and took the problems one day at a time.

The Market as More than A Space – But a Space for Play?

Hjorth (2004, 2005) explained that separate spaces, which he called heterotopias, could be interpreted as spaces for play, where the homo ludens (the playful man) could triumph over the homo oeconomicus (the economically rational man). Hjorth's articles show that corporations can create this safe space with an existing organization, and in this heterotopia, imaginations can run free, dialogue can occur, and innovations can take place.

This story of the market goes one step further. This market is not endorsed by any major entity such as a corporation. The only real institutional signpost is tradition in these rural

settings. No one knows exactly what will happen in the market, and participants are free to make the rules as the day proceeds. They shun the economic visage of the market and move towards solidarity – and most importantly, this playful spirit allows market participants to appropriate other places with the spirit of this market space.

This playfulness in the separate space also draws insight from de Sade. De Sade (2008) explains that literature is a space for play that helps us better understand reality and more importantly, it helps us extrapolate this playfulness to become masters of our own reality in lieu of being slaves to someone else's social contract. Pelly and Fayolle (2023) expound upon this idea and explain that the spirit of the original entrepreneur, the original creator of markets, lies in the ability to imaginatively apply the potentiality we see in the world, including in spaces that may inhabit the fifth dimension.

This is the ultimate appeal of the market as a space. There may be a degree of reflexivity of imagination in the space. People can dream about the utopic sentiments that should exist in a market. As a result, they become better versions of themselves through vivifying these images. The social contract that Rousseau (2018) decries is not present, so individuals can focus upon being good in lieu of only seeing good as a byproduct of the social contract. When they encounter this alternate mentality of dignity, hard work, honesty, helping others, and solidarity, they are inclined to continue this mindset even when the market is not in session, and their ability to live these behaviors means they set an example for those who may not have encountered a market. Despite the difficulties of this lifestyle, it maintains an irresistible pull for others toward this space.

Final Vignette

At 16 years, I became a CEO for the first time. It was not an easy decision for me, because the first thing I learned in school about an entrepreneur was that he/she is a risk-bearer. However, the market really prepared me for the downs that came with having a business. I looked at other bakers like me as friends rather than competitors to outdo; this is not something I ever learnt in my management or marketing class, but the market exposed me to this strategy at an early stage. I learned to deal with customer complaints and separate my personal problems from business, at a very early stage, which is something I later learnt that even adults struggled with. Even after pausing my business to focus on school, I still find myself applying the ways of the market, years after leaving the market. As a baker, I learnt patience, consistency, purposefulness, and balance - all of which I had unconsciously imbibed through interacting and watching the market. In classrooms, among friends, and with strangers, my values are a reminder that even though I have left the market address, the market still resides within me. Indeed, it is a beautiful idea that the market is not just a place but a space is in the heart.

Discussion

Small scale market entrepreneurship is an engine of global economic development and a force for positive change in society (Shrivastava and Shrivastava, 2013). It is the pursuit of opportunity beyond controlled resources that strives to bridge a gap and create solidarity (Sarasvathy, 2001). This solidarity among female women in West Africa is a pursuit of independence and preservation of a lifestyle (Grimm et al, 2013).

Sole proprietorship is a form of entrepreneurship, and is the easiest type of business to own (Baik et al, 2015). According to Raimi and Raimi (2023) sole proprietorship comprises the majority formal Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria with females maintaining a significant role within this sector. Success stories of women-led businesses serve as compelling examples, showcasing the transformative influence such ventures have on local and regional economies. The economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs is not only a testament to their capabilities, but also a catalyst for broader societal progress.

Beyond economic contributions, women entrepreneurship in markets fosters a sense of solidarity and community empowerment. Collaboration and networking among women entrepreneurs create supportive ecosystems, challenging the notion of entrepreneurship as an isolated pursuit. Mentorship initiatives further contribute to building a network of empowered women who, in turn, uplift and inspire others within their communities.

Cultural dynamics are undergoing shifts that impact the perception of women in entrepreneurial roles. This includes changing narratives concerning traditional gender stereotypes and contributing to an environment where women can pursue entrepreneurship without societal constraints.

Women entrepreneurship stands as a catalyst for solidarity in Nigeria and West Africa. As women overcome challenges, make significant economic contributions, and empower their communities, the narrative around entrepreneurship is reshaped. Recognizing and supporting women entrepreneurs not only fuels economic growth, but also fosters a sense of unity and empowerment within societies. The transformative potential of women entrepreneurship goes beyond individual success, creating a ripple effect that resonates across communities and contributes to the collective progress of the region.

The challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are multifaceted, encompassing issues such as limited access to finance, gender bias, cultural constraints, and restricted educational opportunities. Despite these obstacles, women continue to break barriers, demonstrating resilience and determination in carving their space within the entrepreneurial landscape. Their successes as entrepreneurs in a market as a space can be an inspiration to anyone who reads these stories.

Conclusion

When we think of solidarity, we usually think of organizing processes (Daskalaki and Kokkinidis, 2017). These processes can include protests (Juris, 2008), community-based organizing (Peredo and Chrisman, 2017; Montiel and Pelly, 2022), or helping those in need (Pelly and Zhang, 2018). However, this may be one of the first times that solidarity was presented not only as processes, but also as a mindset that influenced behaviors of individuals throughout the course of their lives. It could be that the solidarity only manifested itself in Nigeria's marketplace. However, observing this singular marketplace would deny the richness of spirit that shows the market as a space.

In order to break free of this mental iron cage and the conception of markets as place, we illustrated that more mainstream perspectives of the market overlooked the solidarity we witnessed in Nigeria. We began by explaining that markets have been explored through neo-classical economics and Austrian economics, both of which rely upon the precept that markets

are places. However, both types of economics have left gaps that we were able to fill through shifting the view that markets are spaces.

In this manuscript, we pioneered the idea of a market as a space of solidarity because the supportive network of women became an institutional signpost that was used to aid merchants in their decision-making process for problems that would not appear analogous to the weekly markets. We showed that the market is a true heterotopia because the behaviors that take place echo and influence other spheres of behavior outside the marketspace.

These findings may be useful to scholars in other settings. For example, the understanding of the market as a space can be used as a means to create similar spaces that can in turn be used as institutional signposts and create solidarity. The most notable example that comes to mind is the use of antenarratives of care in corporate settings (Boje et al., 2022). In these antenarratives, the spirit of solidarity demonstrated in the market could be applied to care in corporate settings.

One of the major limitations of this manuscript is that it is difficult to quantify a spatial orientation of markets. We have explored one phenomenon, Nigerian clothing markets that are mostly controlled by women in one part of Nigeria. It is difficult to measure the exact impact of markets upon the impacts of the everyday lives of Nigerians since we relied on a small sample size. However, this is not generally seen as an issue in autoethnography since the methodology prioritizes small sample sizes to facilitate sensemaking for the reader (Pelly, 2016, 2017; Rambo, 2005).

Interest conflict declaration
The authors declare not to have.

Authorship contribution

Autor	Concepto	Curación de datos	Análisis/ Software	Investigación / Metodología	Proyecto/ recursos / fondos	Supervisión/ validación	Escritura inicial	Redacción: revisión y edición final
1	X		X	X	N/A	X	X	X
2	X	X		X	N/A		X	

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