

# Space, place and belonging: informal trading in and around Congolenses market, Luanda, Angola

Martin Mendelsohn

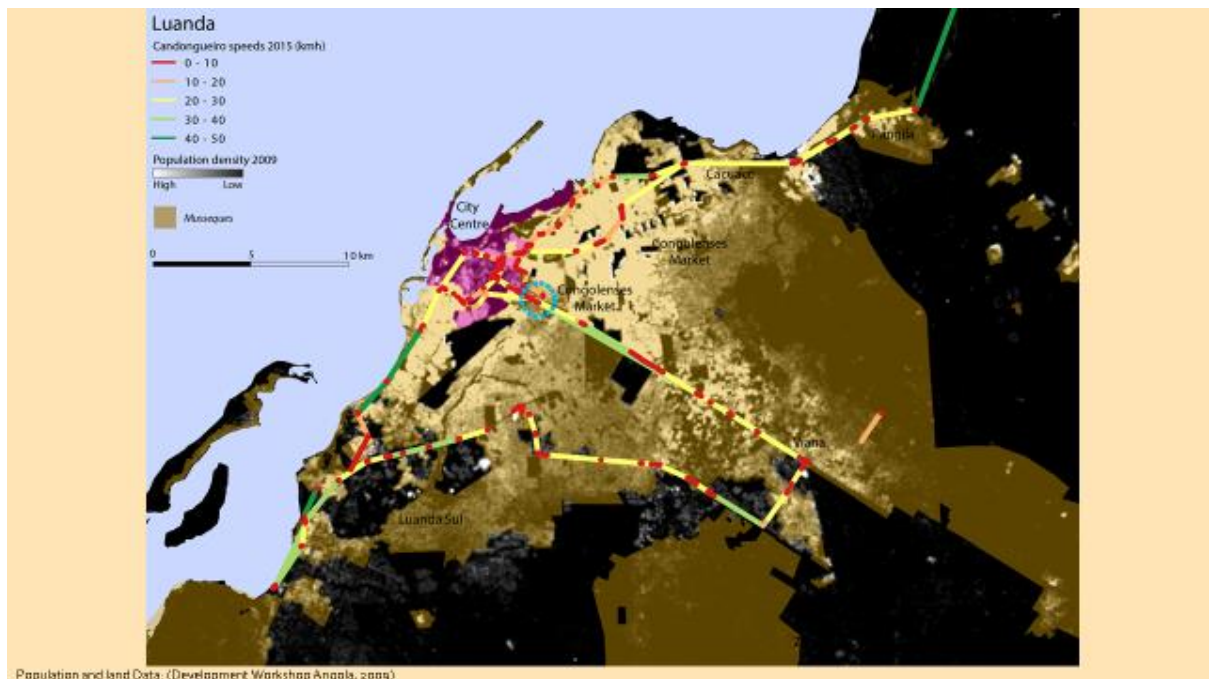
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Good day my name is Martin Mendelsohn. My dissertation focuses on the Congolenses market and its surrounds in Luanda. A distinct characteristic of Luanda is the relationship between a highly modernist state, a lack of formal public services, and the provision of these through informal actors. Perhaps the most explicit manifestation of this is the relationship between informal traders and the state. The Angolan government regards informal trading outside designated markets illegal. It routinely and violently harasses traders on the streets of Luanda.

The dissertation thus first examines the role of Congolenses and how the state has intervened there. It does this by looking at how the market affects the lives of traders, shoppers and commuters who use the space. It then provides spatial and institutional recommendations for the improvement of the area.

The dissertation stands as a complete piece of work. Instead of duplicating its efforts, this presentation expands upon the dissertation by providing additional insights into the lives of informal traders. The presentation briefly gives context to the study, and an overview of the market's key elements. It then explores the lived realities of some traders before describing the conceptual framework used for the recommended plan.

## Slide 2



During Angola's 27 years of civil war mass urban migration to Luanda took place. The lack of a land management system has resulted in informal suburbs known as *musseques* growing. They increased in density close to the city centre, and sprawled away from it. The extent of this can be seen in this map showing the extent of Luanda's *musseques* and its population density.

The government has undertaken spatial and social reordering in central Luanda. Most prominently, it has demolished large parts of the inner city *musseques* and markets. It has also created satellite towns and new markets for the resettlement of these citizens. These areas are often far removed for the social, and economic opportunities in the city. The entire process has occurred without thought of these consequences for those moved, or those left behind. Many from the newly burgeoning population living in these new satellite towns commute into the city centre daily. This has put increasing pressure on the few trunk roads into the city centre.

Luanda's largest trunk roads were travelled using local minibus taxis or *candongueiros*. These were tracked using GPSes and their average speeds along the trunk roads recorded. Areas where *candongueiros* move slowly are heavily congested and constitute areas of intense activity.

The Congolenses market is one such area and constitutes not only an area where significant informal activity takes place, but is also close to the city centre, and the major road into town. These three factors put significant pressure on the area and for this reason it is salient for government, the informal economy, and Luandans in general.

Slide 3



Catete road is the major trunk road into Luanda from the south-east. To the west and the city centre it splits off in several directions. It is not an efficient route into the city centre and Hoji ya Henda is a much more efficient route for this. Lino Amezaga should function as a major connector between these two roads. Instead it is heavily congested by *candongueiros* and the slipway is pot-holed. Freeing this connector up would provide an easing of pressure on traffic in the area.

## Slide 4



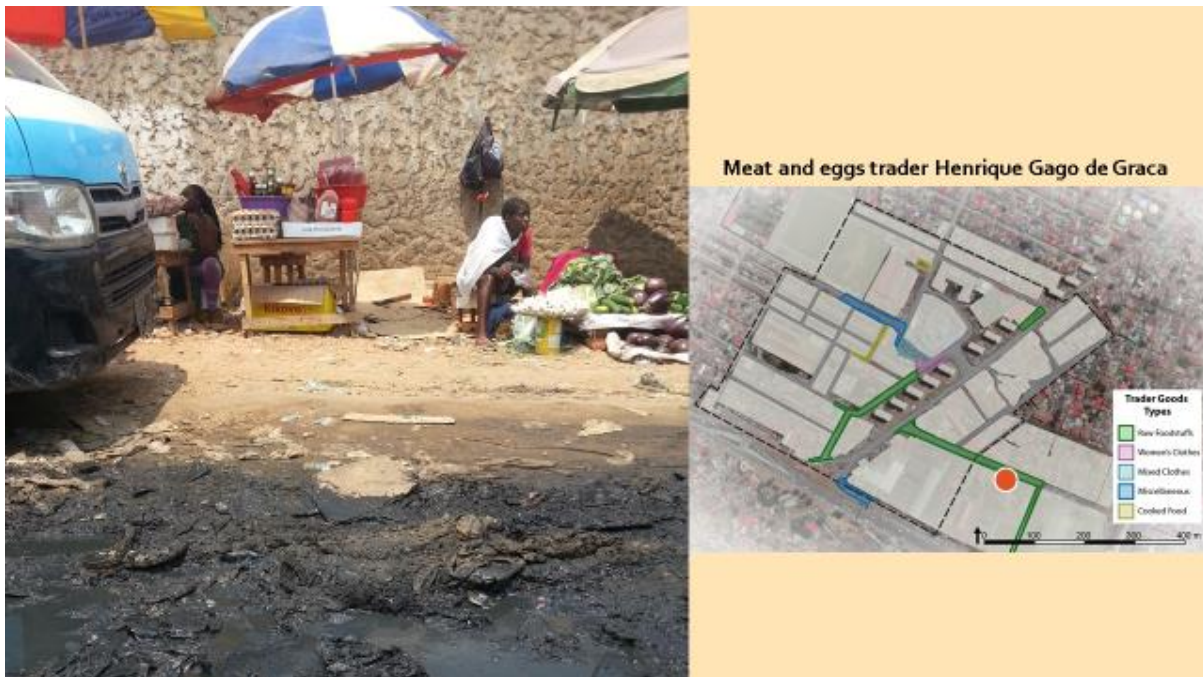
Areas of intense informal trading constitute a 'natural market' which occurs in specific spaces in the site. The main road is clear of any trading. Activity instead follows pedestrian commuter movement. This movement occurs mostly between the *candongueiro* stops in the area and is therefore linear. Many of the areas where trade takes place suffer from a marked lack of decent infrastructure. This makes it difficult for vehicle and pedestrian movement and means that trading occurs in unhygienic conditions.

The *fiscais* or the fiscal police also influence the distribution, layout, and manner in which trading occurs. *Fiscais* visit the site intermittently, and traders avoid the area where they enter. One can see a clear space where no trading occurs around this area, marked by the yellow dot. Traders which are closest ensure that their goods are easy to pick up so that they can escape when the *fiscais* approach.

The next few slides look at how individual traders have different experiences from various influences within the site.



Slide 5



This trader wouldn't let me photograph her, only her stall (centre) on Henrique Gago de Graça road. She was concerned that the police would be able to identify her. As with many traders, her main struggle was a lack of business. She sells goods for making hot dogs, and when the economy was better she had a lot of business. She has one child and is busy finishing grade 9 going to classes in the evening. Many of the traders are not as lucky and do not have the security which she enjoys through having a second care giver in the household.

The *fiscais* don't move this far up the road. When the road was in better condition they used to though and so despite this her goods are kept in buckets and boxes. This means that she can quickly pick them up and leave if the *fiscais* do turn up.

The *candongueiros* never used to come so far down the street. In the last few months they started moving into the traders' space to try to find customers. Despite there being no rain for several months there is still thick mud in the street. It stops shoppers from moving between trader stalls on opposite sides of the road. The mud occupies the centre of a large part of this section of the market, running down the middle of the road creating a barrier between traders. This *Candongueiro* on the left had just got stuck in the mud and needed to be pushed out. The driver span its wheels for a few minutes, spraying mud into the air before conceding to paying nearby men to push it out. *Candongueiros* get stuck often where one finds this sort of mud.

Slide 6



On my first visit to Congolenses I asked if I could take a photo of this trader's goods. She and her neighbour refused. They became suspicious and unhappy with my presence. Traders are regularly vilified by the government and fear any identification that could single them out. After interviewing traders across the street however her curiosity was peaked. I returned to interview her and eventually take a photo. Once again, I still wasn't allowed to photograph her as she was scared of being identified.

This trader took more care than surrounding traders to display her goods attractively. She could do this because the *fiscais* don't come to this part of the market often. This gives her a competitive advantage over other traders closer to the *fiscais*. She is also able to carry a relatively large stock in comparison to these other traders. There are surrounding traders in either direction, so when the *fiscais* do arrive she is able to receive ample warning from them. This gives her time to collect her goods and move away with everyone else. Traders who are closer to the *fiscais* cannot rely on safety in numbers, but have their own advantages. There are not as many other traders nearby, so they are more noticeable to customers. This area is also where one of the largest *candongueiro* stops is, giving them access to alighting customers.

Slide 7



The *zungueiras* here are right below the pedestrian bridge. They are sandwiched on the far side of Catete road between the barbed wire fence separating them from Catete and the slipway to Congolenses. They sell goods to passing pedestrians crossing the bridge or alighting from *Candongueiros*. The *zungueiras* move around to wherever they feel they are most likely to find business.



## Slide 8



This spot is particularly good because pedestrians often walk along the sidewalk past the *zungueiras*. They then cross the slipway where they can, the puddles and *candongueiros* often make it difficult to find a place to do this. Pedestrians are squashed into the same marginalised spaces as traders. On the other side of the street traders hang their goods on fences. It's handy to display what you're selling and catches the eyes of passing customers.

This typifies the way that Congolenses functions for traders and pedestrians. They have adapted: They trade in the same spaces which pedestrians are forced into; they sell the goods they can carry to avoid the *fiscals*; and they adapt their sales strategies to use whatever advantages the space provides. In the absence of the ability to improve or occupy the space properly they use it as is.

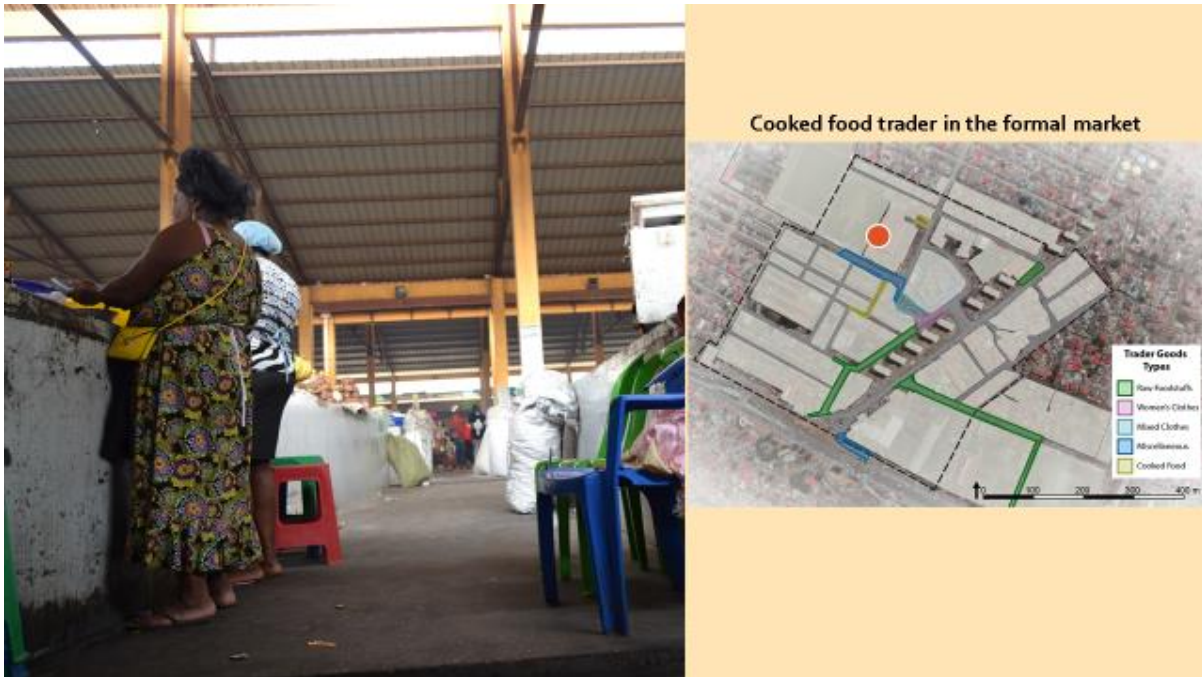


Slide 9



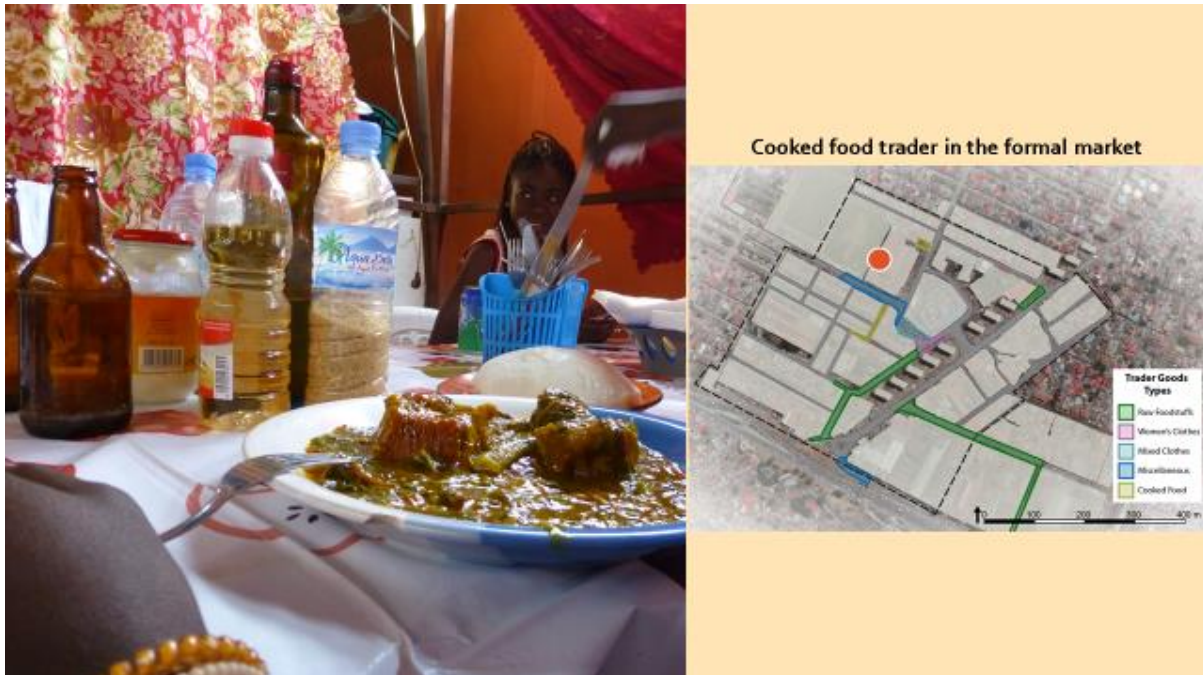
Inside the market, on the far west there is a run dedicated to cooked food. There are no specialized stalls. Even in this formal marketplace traders need to bring makeshift barbeques made of tire rims with them to cook in. The roof leaks and when it rains water runs in from the ventilation gaps above and they cannot work.

Slide 10



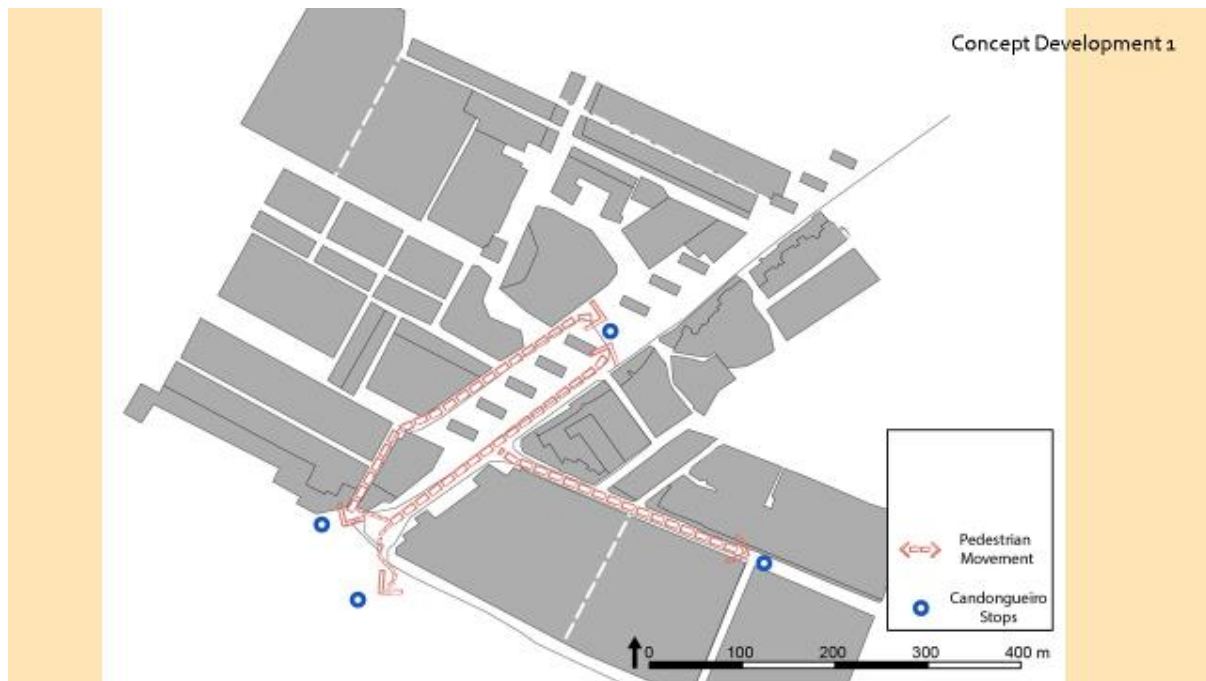
Cooking food inside the market is a high demand activity. This trader could only work here 3 days a week. On the other days different traders have the opportunity to use this space to cook. This highlights a lack of trading space amongst traders. The demand for trading spaces is not limited to the marketplace.

Slide 11



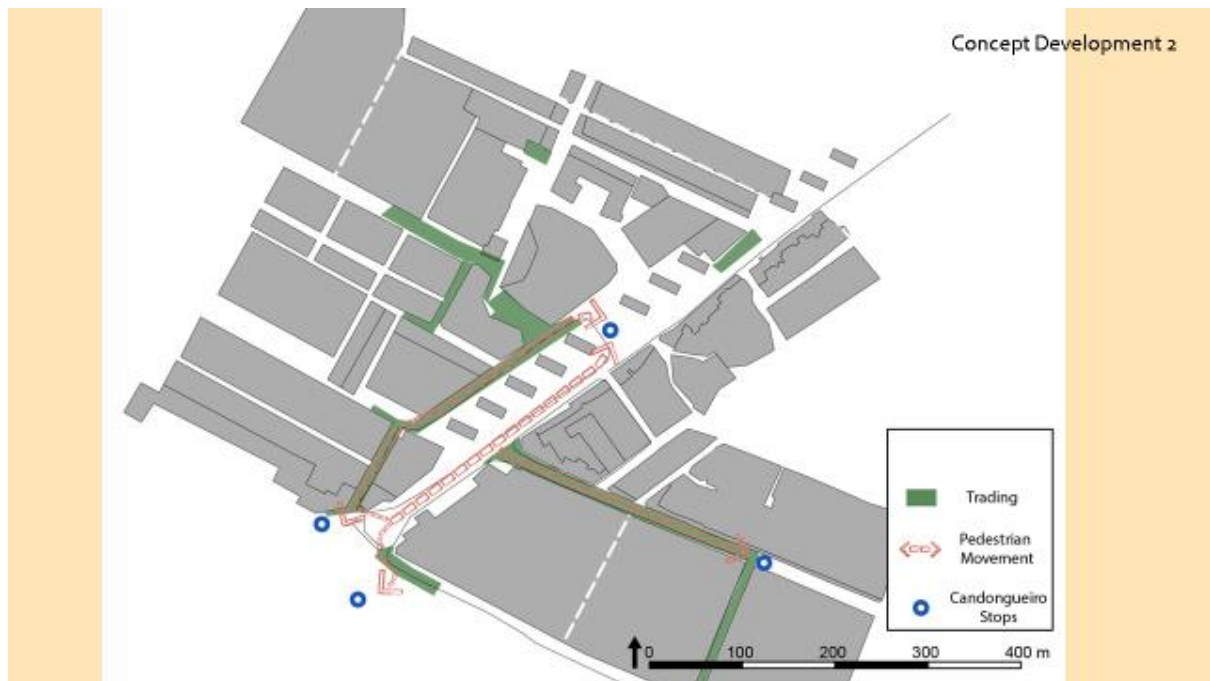
The dishes cooked by traders inside and outside the marketplace cost customers around 1,000kz or 7.50 USD. Despite this high price the trader only takes home around 6,000kz or 44USD per week after business expenses. Profits are low and demand is high, but there is no more space available for traders to work in.

The following section explores the conceptual thinking behind the plan for Congolenses.

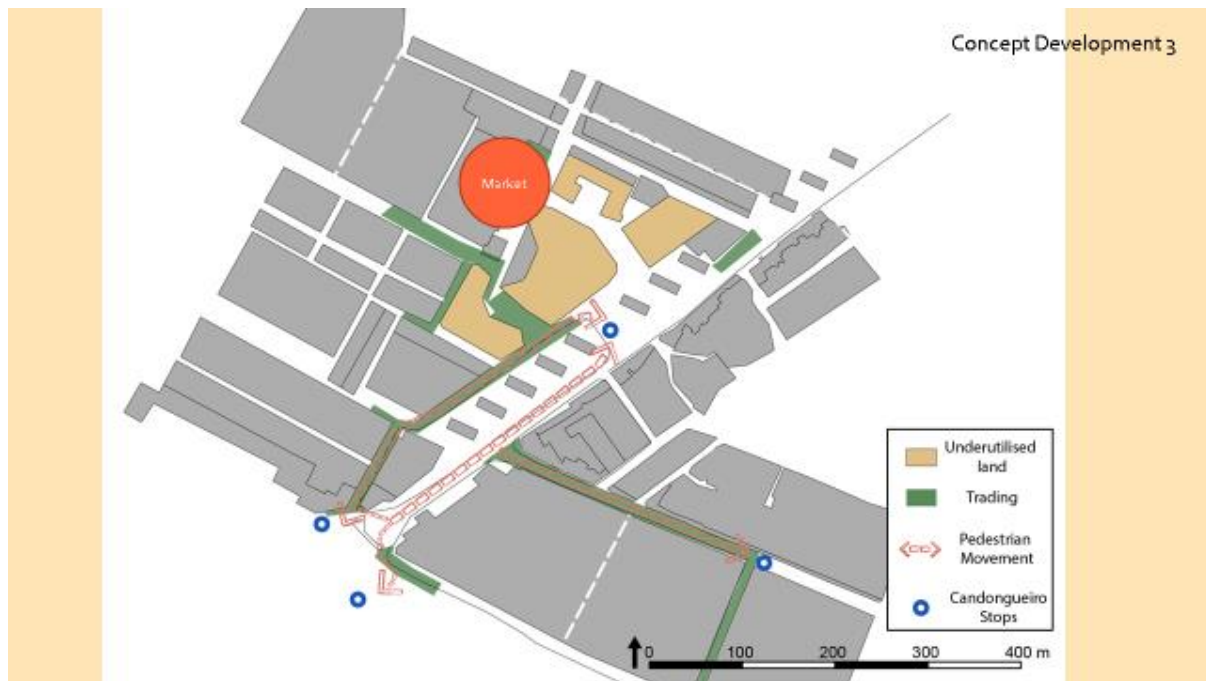


Pedestrian movement systems in the site function mainly between the *candongueiro* sites. Currently the most difficult of these commutes is to the eastern most stop.

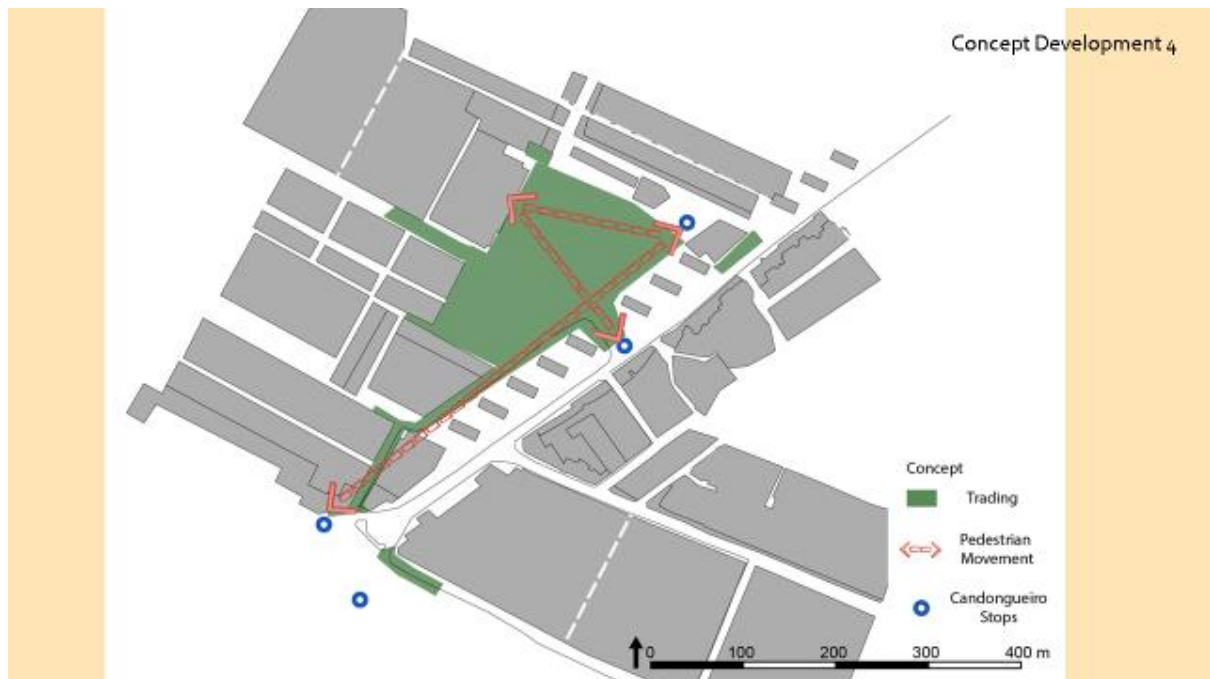




Trading occurs along these pedestrian routes, but not much on the main connector road, Lino Amezaga.

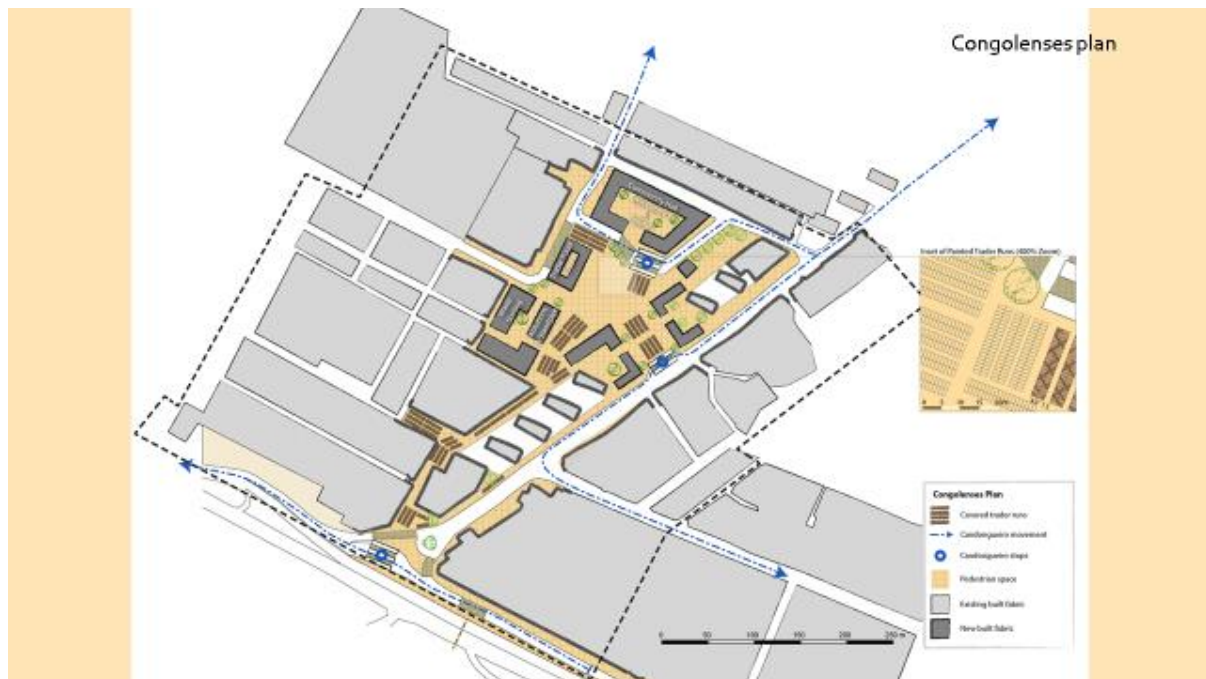


There are several underutilized, but occupied pieces of land in the central area between and around one of the main *candongueiro* stops and the market. These represent the greatest realistic opportunity for development.



Possibilities arise in terms of being able to move *candongueiro* stops, so that pedestrians are no longer forced across Lino Amezaga, and don't need to move up Henrique Gago de Graça. Activity can be intensified around this more permeable urban fabric creating a public space and transport interchange. This will create space for trading, free both pedestrian and vehicular movement, and restore Lino Amezaga to a mobility route. This restructuring of activity and space will have positive macro and micro consequences.

Slide 16



The plan above shows the manifestation of this concept. In addition it is aimed at resolving and providing solutions to many of the problems faced by traders explored before, such as a lack of space and quality areas to trade. It refocuses pedestrian activity by reconnecting to the marketplace, and in the process creates active space for traders which previously occupied highly marginalised positions. The plan is while still staying true to the nature and vibrancy of Congolenses, and relinking of the market to the site.



Slide 17

Thank you! Muito Obrigado!