Global dynamics and empowerment of the local street food network:

A case study on the
Ghana Traditional Caterers Association in Accra

Hilde-Marije Dorresteijn
Wageningen University and Research Centre
October 2014

Global dynamics and empowerment of the local street food network:

A case study on the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association in Accra

By Hilde-Marije Dorresteijn
861114-195-110
Wageningen, October 2014

WAGENINGEN **UR**
For quality of life

Abstract

Street foods are a phenomenon with worldwide relevancy. Their importance is growing because of large-scale urbanization. They are accessible food for many urban citizens as well as a good income generating activity. Food provisioning of urban areas and globalization of the food system are highly debated topics over the past decades. Yet there is a great lack of empirical research in specific local settings. Similarly for collective organization that is expected to both contribute to an empowerment of local networks, as well as to the empowerment of the individuals involved. This case study on the street food network of Accra, Ghana has been carried out at the crossroads of these discussions. The study looked at possibilities for empowerment of the local street food network, with a focus on one civil society organization: the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association (GTCA). By applying qualitative research methods and taking a critical constructivist approach we aimed to identify the role the GTCA plays within this local food provisioning system. At the same time we looked for prospects of emancipatory transformation. The research results reveal that an ongoing mixture of local and global influences takes place. This leads to a greater variety in food recipes and practices. We furthermore found that currently the GTCA is however not sufficiently powerful to have a real impact and to steer the developments of the network. Private sector actors proved to be more influential. For an enhanced power of the caterers association more links have to be established with other civil organizations as well as with governmental actors. They have to become better embedded within the network of powers.

Key words: Street foods, civil society organization, associations, globalization, empowerment, qualitative research, Ghana

Preface

"Food provides an answer. Our landscapes and cities were shaped by food. Our daily routines revolve around it, our politics and economies are driven by it, our identities are inseparable from it, and our survival depends on it. What better tool, then, with which to shape the world."
(Steel, 2012 in Viljoen & Wiskerke, 2012:36)

This quote from C. Steel beautifully illustrates the central role that food plays in our daily lives. Besides the essential nutritious function for our bodies, the food we eat and share with others is of great social and cultural value. Food is a multidimensional topic touching upon networks, organization, and the policy field; linking public concerns such as public health, employment, social inclusion and quality of life. The importance of food and the great many fields involved with it, connecting agriculture, supply chains and consumption, makes this a very interesting and dynamic study field. Taking food as a focus opens up many possibilities for research. Food issues are of growing interest in the social sciences and of great importance for 'on the ground' development programmes – both in the western world as in the global south. In my search for a thesis topic relating to food issues, after attending a few courses on food, globalization and sustainable (place) development, I came across an article about street foods that immediately appealed to me. After looking into the many initiatives that are undertaken in Western countries to go back to a more local food system, such as the 'FoodGuerilla' and many fair food festivals, I got interested in a different perspective from the developing world where many people still rely on a largely locally organized food system that naturally occurred and is on the increase. The more I read about street foods; the vendors livelihoods, their importance for food provisioning in cities, the supply system and the informal petty trade, the variety of foods, etc., the more interesting it became. This thesis is the outcome of what started out of that curiosity.

Acknowledgments

To materialize this final document of my MSc thesis has been quite a journey. After my great experience in Ghana I was often times struggling to get all my findings on paper in a clear and structured manner. I would not have made it without the help and support of many people. First of all I would like to show my appreciation to my supervisor, Guido Ruivenkamp. At the start for his contacts in Ghana that provided me with the opportunity to go there and to receive a warm welcome. And throughout the whole writing process for the multiple feedback sessions in which he tried to keep me 'on track' with his useful comments, for his encouraging words and the conviction that I would make it.

In addition to this my thanks go to all people working at CSIR/STEPRI for their hospitality, and a few persons in particular. George Essegbey, the director of the institute, for providing me with a working space at the office and his assistance. To Rankine and Nelson, my translators who did a great job and made the effort to go with me to many places all over Accra and also shared with me much of their knowledge. And above all to Joyce Haleegoah who like a mother took care of me and helped me out especially at the start up and so many more times during the three months of fieldwork. She showed me around, introduced me to people, and answered many of my questions, all with great patience. Also she was so kind to let me spend Christmas with her and her family, without her the research and the experience would not have been the same.

Furthermore my gratitude goes to all the women, and the few men who were willing to participate in my research and to share their stories with me. Especially the executives of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association for their hospitality, openness, time and information. It was not always easy for them to answer all my questions and to understand what I needed that information for. I hope I do justice to their stories. Moreover I want to thank everyone who has helped me in the course of my field research. Also my housemates in Accra for the great times we had, the nice talks and the relaxing moments when I got home from a tough, hot day running through the city.

Back home, my dear friends, housemates and family helped me through the reverse culture shock and through the tough months of writing. Marjorie, for your inspiring positivity and your understanding because you were going through the same process, after our Skype talks I would continue with renewed energy. Thanks to Robine, for your practical guidance and coffee breaks. To my sisters and the many phone calls, to their children for the joyful distraction and to my parents who unconditionally believe in me. Thank you all for your support, listening, advice, for putting up with me, and the assurance that I could do it. It has motivated me to keep on going at times I was discouraged.

I hope you will enjoy reading the result of this hard work.

List of acronyms

AMA	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
CSIR/ STEPRI	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research/ Science and Technology Policy Research Institute
DFID	Department For International Development, United Kingdom
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FDA	Food and Drugs Authority
FRI	Food Research Institute
Ghatof	Ghana Tourism Federation
GoG	Government of Ghana
GSA	Ghana Standards Authority
GTB	Ghana Tourism Board
GTCA	Ghana Traditional Caterers Association
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
ICAG	Indigenous Caterers Association of Ghana
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IMF	Internal Monetary Fund
MOFA	Ministry Of Food and Agriculture
TFC	Transnational Food Corporations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIAD	Women In Agricultural Development
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

List of boxes, figures, maps and pictures

Boxes

Figures

Maps

Pictures[1]

---

[1] All pictures taken by the author

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Street foods are a worldwide phenomenon; they come in an uncountable variety, are prepared in manifold ways, sold from various mobile and fixed venues and are consumed by an estimated 2,5 billion people around the globe (Kraig & Sen, 2013). They can generally be defined as:

"Ready to eat foods or beverages prepared and/or sold in the street and other public places for immediate consumption or at a later time without further processing or preparation."
(FAO, 2012).

Especially in developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa they are a notable part of the street view that is hard to miss. Rapid urbanization and the growing adoption of urban lifestyles; with increasing distances between home and the workplace, women at work, and changes in family cohesion, contribute to a rising demand for processed, ready-to-eat food (FAO, 2007). The long existent and widespread phenomenon of street foods is indispensable in the current urban environment as a social-economic occurrence and for the cities food provisioning. Street foods make an essential contribution to nutrition of the urban population by providing easily accessible and affordable foods, as well as they provide a good livelihood strategy by creating employment and increasing incomes for a large number of urban dwellers (Tinker, 1997; FAO 2007). Hereby thus making a great contribution to the local economy. This informal sector[2] requires low start-up capital and low levels of education are needed, making it a good business opportunity for especially women (ibid). On the other hand, there are many concerns about the health and safety of the street foods and about the lack of good government and municipality regulation (Cohen et al., 2000). Over the last couple of years there is a rising awareness about the importance of street food vending and more attention is being paid to the sector to address the concerns that are raised, especially when it comes to issues of food security[3], food safety[4] and hygiene (FAO, 2007, 2012; WHO, 2007; Mensah et al., 2002; Mwangi, 2002).

In Ghana there is a vast and still growing informal industry of street food vendors (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008). Despite Ghana's growing economy and its positive description as a nation in transition, income inequality has risen significantly over the last decade (Grant, 2009; Obeng-Odoom, 2012). A large part of the population, women in particular, do not have access to the formal labour market, are not able to profit from the economic growth and are left out of formal policies. They rely on themselves and try to seize every opportunity and enter into self-employment to make a living. In the streets of Ghana's capital Accra, from early morning until late at night, vendors sell a great variety of foods from all different locations and structures or are hawking their offerings around at busy bus stops and market places. Like everywhere in West Africa, the majority of the vendors, around 85 to 95%, are women (Tinker, 2003; FAO, 2012, Tomlins et al., 2005; Maxwell et al., 2000). For consumers, they are a convenient source of food. Unlike often assumed, not only for the urban poor. An estimated 80% to 85% of the

---

[2] The *informal sector* is in this thesis used as a descriptive term, not an analytical category. Much debate is ongoing about the definition, particularly in relation to taxation and regulations. The street food sector is pre-eminently a sector in which a distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' is hard to make.

[3] Defined by FAO (2007): "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

[4] Food safety defined by WHO (2007): "The protection of supply from microbial, chemical and physical hazards that may occur during all stages of food production including growing, harvestings, processing, transporting, retailing, distributing, preparing, storing and consuming in order to prevent food borne diseases."

urban population in Ghana patronize it, cutting across socio-economic boundaries and designating the important cultural role of street foods as well (Tomlins et al., 2005; Tortoe et al., 2013).

When looking beyond these first general impressions, a dynamic and intriguing system can be found. Food itself links a great many areas and follows different economic, cultural, ecological and political/institutional logics (Morgan et al., 2006). Urbanization processes, changing lifestyles as well as globalization of the food system bring about considerable transformations in this local street food network. The intensified trade that increases the length of the food chains and the distances food travels around the globe causes a rising critique from a growing group of concerned consumers, environmentalist, social scientists and the like. Mainly in the Western world there are many initiatives from concerned consumers who want to go back to a more locally organized food system with more attention for food values other than economic ones and a reconnection of producers with consumers (Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012). The critics argue that a growing power among corporate food companies in the agro-food network leads to a *commoditization* of food and assume this subsequently causes an under-valuing of other dimensions like food as health, culture or human right (Vivero, 2014). They fear for homogenization of food supply chains, food practices, local cuisine[5] and recipes (Pingali & Khwja, 2004; Drakakis-Smith, 1991). Others however rather see heterogenization, also referred to as '*glocalization*' or 'hybridization[6]. According to these authors integration takes place of local and global spheres, which leads to variation (Wilk, 1999; Massey, 2004; Murdoch et al., 2000; Morgan et al., 2006). This study will investigate those different assumptions by looking at the changing dynamics in Accra's street food network.

The study will add to the existing body of knowledge and the identified knowledge gap in twofold ways. First by identifying the transformations in the street food network and reflecting on how global and local food dynamics influence those changes. Second by focussing on the role of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association to an empowerment of the local street food network in Accra. An increasing attention for empowerment can be noticed in the broader development debate, which is often associated with a focus on women and with feminism (Rowlands, 1997; Sadan, 2004). 'To promote gender equity and women empowerment' is even one of the eight United Nations millennium development goals for 2015 (UNDP, 2012). The local street food network mainly consists of women, who thus play a central role in urban food provisioning and food safety in the city of Accra. In Ghana's major cities several (research) projects have taken place to improve food quality and safety as well as the livelihoods of the predominantly women that are involved in vending. These projects were often executed in cooperation with scientists, local authorities, foreign NGOs and locally organized associations (see e.g. Tomlins et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2006; Tortoe et al., 2013; Rheinländer et al., 2008; Alfers & Abban, 2011). Often has been emphasized the role that local associations play and the potential they have for improvements of the network and in the personal lives of the individuals involved. An increasing amount of national and international organizations and agencies helping food vendors and their associations are noticed (Tinker, 2003). However, still little is known about the specific functioning of the local associations, their position within the broader society, and the facilitating and inhibiting factors that influence their success in light of a globalizing food system. Therefore this research focuses on the role the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association plays for an empowerment of the local street food network.

---

[5] When we speak of the local *cuisine* it is often used to denote special typical ingredients, combinations of ingredients and preparation methods belonging to a certain country, region or ethnic group (Fieldhouse, 1986).
[6] The connotations of '*glocalization*' and '*hybridization*' will in this thesis both be used to define the process in which local and global forces intermingle and lead to various outcomes.

The thesis contains eight chapters and is organized as follows: after this first introductory chapter, it will continue with the theoretical framework. The literature on the key concepts that guided the entire inquiry will be discussed. It starts highlighting the modification that took place in thinking about local – global interaction in the agri-food sector and presents the 'state of the art' of this debate. It includes the governance triangle with state, market and civil society institutions governing the food system, and its assumed transformations. This will be followed by an examination of civil organization within an African context. The concept of empowerment, with its community, organizational and personal components will close this section. The subsequent chapter presents the research outline with the problem statement, research objectives, sub-questions and the methodology that was used to collect the data. In chapter four 'setting the scene' the relevant background information will be provided on Ghana as a country and the current street food network in Accra. This indicates the significance of local foods, street vending and accordingly the importance of its organization. Chapter five, six and seven present the empirical findings; an interweaving takes place where the empirical data are interpreted in light of the theoretical and conceptual framework. In the concluding chapter eight we will combine the empirical findings of the previous chapters and further reflect on them. We will discuss the broader implications of the results. It will include the limitations of the research and reflexive remarks on the theory and methodology. The report will end with the recommendations for science and policy on how to move forward from the thesis results towards further food empowerment research and practices in the future.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and conceptual framework

'Without a theory there is nothing to research' (Silverman, 2006:14).

Theories provide us with a 'lens' through which we look in order to make sense of complicated problems and social issues. They can help to grasp how societies work and why people interact in a certain manner. There is not one way to fully understand a particular phenomenon; many 'lenses' can be applied to a problem, each helping to focus on a different aspect of it. Theory provides a framework of concepts for critically understanding phenomena and functions as a basis for considering how to investigate the unknown (ibid). Theory guides the entire research project, from formulation of research questions, to operationalization and discussion. This thesis has been guided and is framed by using two main concepts. The first is 'glocalization'[7] of the food system; it focuses on the integration and negotiation of the 'local' and the 'global' scale. By presenting key conceptual frameworks on globalization and food, the changes in thinking about globalization will become clear. Considering particularly the activities of local actors that co-shape the occurring *glocal* developments. The second key concept is empowerment. Empowerment is understood as the process that enables individuals' control on their environment and circumstances, which is mediated by a civic organization that groups the individuals into a collectivity. The combination of these key concepts has been chosen because they provide a useful and original framework to research the street food network in Accra. In the literature civic responses on globalization of the food system in Western countries have been amply discussed, yet far the less that can be said for countries in the global south. It is important to realize that the dynamics in the South are somewhat different. The priorities of people concerning food are considerably divers for people in modernized countries having strong social safety nets compared to the individuals in developing countries that often struggle for their livelihood. Therefore has been chosen to compliment the theories on global agri-food systems with theory of empowerment to be able to pay genuine attention to possibilities for intervening in the global dynamics at local level. The two concepts of empowerment and *glocalization* together facilitate us in connecting the broader food system with the activities at a local level to empower. Therefore we will look at 'food through the lens of globalization, and globalization through the lens of food' (Phillips, 2006:38) and global food through the lens of empowerment at individual level and at the collectivity of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association.

2.1 The glocal food system; some theoretical considerations

There is a wide consensus that food, alike other commodities, is now highly globalized. A worldwide network of exchange connects regional economies, societies and cultures. This globalized system is furthermore characterized by a strong link to science and technology (Murdoch et al., 2000). This process, driven by profits, scale enlargement, efficiency and increasing exports has been both praised, for its contribution to an increase in the world's food production, and is as well heavily criticized for its negative environmental and social impacts (Oosterveer & Sonneveld, 2012). In Marxist terms: reproducing the social differentiation between the haves and the have- nots. It also highlights the increased importance of global capital in the new globalized era (Appadurai, 1999). Concerns are rising; ecological ones such as environmental pollution, deterioration of nature and landscape and degradation of (agro) biodiversity, as well as socio-cultural critiques; the disembedding of social ties and territories,

---

[7] Some notable scholars who have written about '*glocalization'* are among others: Appadurai, A; Robertson, R.; Massey, D. (see e.g. Swyngedouw, 2004).

agriculture getting disconnected from society and the lack of trust in food quality and safety (because of long value chains). Also most regions and cities become more dependent on external factors and more vulnerable to external shocks and fluctuating prices (Oosterveer & Sonneveld, 2012), this leading less resilient areas (Wiskerke, 2009). The improved production, that did go up in many areas, and generally cheaper food distribution around the globe did not include that the issues of food insecurity, malnutrition and hunger are resolved. Besides, new problems are coming up, such as the wide spread of obesity.

Countries like Ghana have been involved in trading and thus have been in contact with other localities around the globe for centuries. The global connections are now however more intense and more diverse than in any previous phase. Giddens (1990:64) puts this as "the intensification of worldwide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". This statement points at the interaction between different localities. For a long time a great deal of research has been concerned with the influence of globalization on local environments (see e.g. Arce & Marsden, 1993; Massey, 2004; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). The influence was approached as mainly unidirectional. Attention was particularly paid to processes of industrialization, standardization and efficiency in which transnational corporation and institutions play a central role (Murdoch et al., 2000; Morgan et al., 2006). The political economy theory was the main analytic tool to look at the developments that were expected to follow the capitalist logic (Whatmore & Thorne, 2004; Oosterveer & Sonneveld, 2012). This theory, based on Marxist ideas, focused on political and economic dynamics of commodity chains and industrial rationalization. This unidirectional, top-down interpretation of system development proved to be unsatisfactory to explain the growing diversity that was noticed at different localities. Several forms of critique began to arise on this too deterministic and seemingly uncontested process of industrialization and commodification (Murdoch et al., 2000).

Slowly change occurred in the thinking about globalization; an increasing attention can be witnessed on how global influences are mediated by local and regional responses. The older modernization and acculturation theories that feared for growing homogenization and predicted large-scale Westernization of local food practices proved not to hold (Wilk, 1999). Massey (2004) called the global-local dichotomy a false dichotomy; the global was presumed to be a hegemonic force that overpowers and dominates local places, which were seen as victims. The new visions on global-local interactions, as inter alia argued by Massey, thus stimulate to consider contemporary food chains as being not so strongly disembedded as some literature on globalization from the political economy perspective might indicate. As strongly set out in Granovetter's theory on 'social embeddedness' (1985); all practices are still rooted in local and regional contexts, which in their turn influence the global. In the contexts of these global-local interactions and conflicts we find diverse sets of social relations and cultural practices, not leading to homogenization of cultures, but leading to further variations (Murdoch et al., 2000). The term *'glocalization'* as a portmanteau tries to grasp this reflexive and dialectic process and describes the outcomes of local responses and adaptations to global forces that are constantly negotiated and revolve around power relations (Swyngendouw, 2004). Woods (2007) in his research on places refers to this process as 'hybridization'; globalization is rooted in localities, which respond to these processes in their own specific manner leading to divers and *hybrid places*. Similar to places, food is strongly connected to identities and can provide an illustrative example of a strong symbol of personal and group identity. Also for food counts that integration into global mass-market capitalism and the strengthening of local and national identities are no contradictory trends but two aspects of the same process (Wilk, 1999). The influence of foreign foods might even help revive local culinary traditions.

In the last decades we have seen mainly in the Western part of the world an enormous rise on (alternative) food movements by people who would like to make changes in the current conventional globalized and industrialized food system that is strongly dominated by multinational corporations (supermarket chains) and focused on exports and intensification. They want to re-value local food and promote locally produced and consumed food (see e.g. O'Hara & Stagl, 2001; Bowen, 2011). Local food initiatives in Western countries are often seen as a predominantly elite occurrence and limited to social (food) activists and conscious consumers who can afford the more expensive local products of which added values are created by regional marketing strategies (Dupuis & Goodman, 2005). However they might be the instigators of change. An example is the Slow Food movement[8] from Italy. Groups such as the Slow Food movement commit themselves to combat standardizing impulses of globalized food chains and promote to rediscover and protect geographical diversity of food patterns. They see food as an important feature of the quality of life (Morgan et al., 2006). Also they perceive traditional foods[9] as 'artful': 'they require skill and care and evolve by building on the knowledge of the past to meet the new social needs of contemporary consumers (ibid: 13). An important social need in the food activist discourse is a strong connection between the localization of food systems and the promotion of environmental sustainability and social justice (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). Sustainability in local agri-food networks is understood to include short supply chains, more fresh and seasonal food, and knowledgeable relationships between growers and consumers (Oosterveer & Sonneveld, 2012). It is believed to lead to more resilience within regions. An example is urban agriculture in which 'worldwide 800 million urban residents are engaged', as estimated by Smit et al. (1996) (in ibid: 113). Hereby is income generated locally and the production is a good means of self-sufficiency; establishing greater region resilience in times of hardship. Besides, with higher food and fossil fuel prices such local food systems could become more appealing in the near future. Furthermore, Tinker (1999) argues that when the real costs and polluting effects of our 'efficient' food system, such as transportation, processing and packaging would be included, alternative systems to supply foods to cook and eat will definitely become more attractive. Wiskerke (2009) describes these emerging systems as 'alternative food geographies'. The alternative food networks as part of those geographies attempt to reduce the distance between consumer and producer, city and countryside, and reconnect people with their environment. Hereby transforming the 'governance triangle' that relates the state, market and civil society as the main institutional mechanisms steering the food system. The latter is assumed to progressively play a more significant role (ibid; Renting et al., 2012; Lamine et al., 2012). The civil society actors hereby create 'space to manoeuvre' within the established systems, by building capacities and social learning. See figure 1 for a visual representation. Moreover, this emergent phenomenon is however mainly researched for the European situation, how this applies to countries in the South has been largely underexposed.

---

[8] For more information see: http://www.slowfood.com/
[9] 'Traditional foods' are defined as *"a product frequently consumed or associated with specific celebrations and/or seasons, normally transmitted from one generation to another, made accurately in a specific way according to the gastronomic heritage, with little or no processing/manipulation, distinguished and known because of its sensory properties and associated with a certain local area, region or country''* (Guerrero et al., 2009: 348).
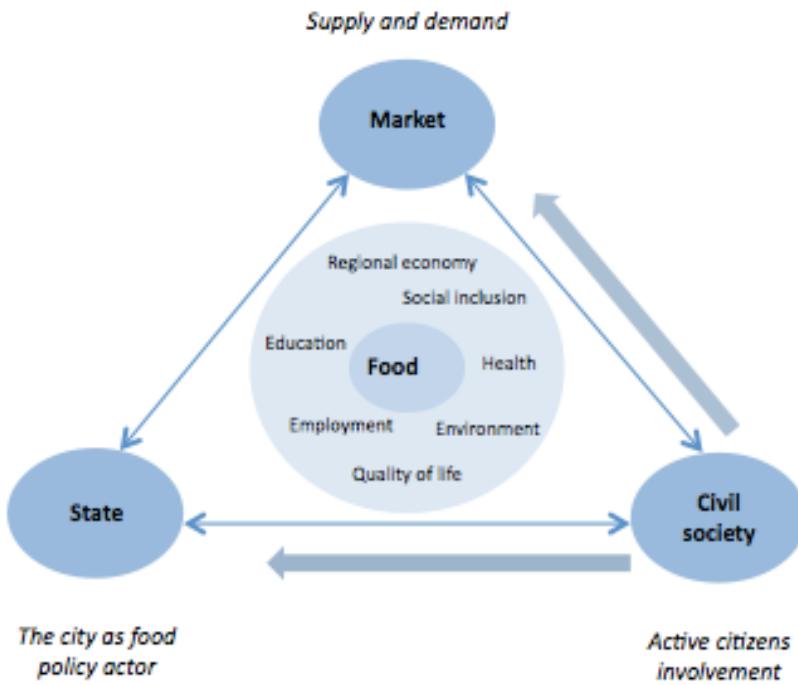
Figure 1. The food governance triangle with active civil society mechanisms
(Adapted from: Wiskerke, 2009 & Renting et al., 2012)

A revision of theories on global development, built upon a critical analysis of all these different occurrences was needed. The local production and consumption trends were insufficiently taken into account and too much attention was paid to the role of the national state that was expected to determine food policies and on international market forces. Indeed in our modernizing world with a growing circulation of food products there is a greater power for transnational food corporations (TFCs)[10] and a bigger role for global governance setting trade arrangements and food quality and safety standards (e.g. IMF, FAO and WHO) (Phillips, 2006). Yet on the other hand there are more civil society responses to these developments. "The argument that commodities cannot be understood outside the networks of meaning and power in which they are circulated opens up lines of inquiry that challenge the idea of globalization as a predominantly economic, hegemonic, or singular process" (ibid: 40). Slowly a turn to a network-oriented perspective took place, that was expected to be better able to analyse the interaction between technological, political, cultural and economic changes (Oosterveer & Sonnenveld, 2012). The actor-network theory (ANT), primary developed by M. Callon, J. Law and B. Latour[11] and originated in the sociology of science and technology started to get influence in studies on the food sector. Great attention is paid at relations and associations in a network in which both human as non-human actors, also referred to as 'actants', are enrolled and how their coherence is created and changes over time (Murdoch et al., 2000). ANT treats everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located and thus looks at all entities and their linkages. It does not focus on local and global processes that where seen as distinct and unrelated, but looks at the length of the networks and its connections (Whatmore & Thorne, 2004). This is important to

---

[10] Transnational Food Corporations (TFCs) are defined as firms that own or control much of the food production, processing, distribution and or/retailing facilities in more than one country through global investments (Coe & Wrigley, 2007).
[11] The concept of ANT has been elaborately discussed elsewhere and will not be part of this review, for more information see e.g. Law, 2009; Latour, 1993.

keep in mind when looking at food networks in which both production and consumption are not only steered by vertical integration of actors in the value chain, but also by horizontal relations in the form of social networks. Closely linked to ANT and increasingly influential in agro-food studies is the convention theory (Murdoch et al., 2000; Morgan et al., 2006). A group of French social scientist, with Boltanski and Thevenot as its main founders, developed this theory that enables us with an even more specific framework to interpret current hybrid responses in food systems (Wilkinson, 1997). Chains and markets are according to them coordinated through different principles, called 'conventions'. Conventions are defined as *"practices, routines, agreements, and their associated informal and institutional forms which bind acts together through mutual expectations"* (Salais & Storper, 1992: 174). Similar to ANT, it criticizes the idea portrayed in political economy that points of reference are imposed upon actors by an all-encompassing social order, yet emphasize that any activity always relies on prior understanding among the social actors involved and is constantly mediated and negotiated. The rules emerge in co-operation among actors' 'intersubjective identification of the rules' (Wilkinson, 1997:318). It is argued that convention theory is the most appropriate conceptual framework for dealing with commodities, and also food. It is a product-centred theory of production organization, in which the nature of the product and its quality is defined as much by conventions as by markets and technologies (ibid). The basic assumption is that any form of coordination in economic, political, and social life, requires agreement of some kind among the participants involved (Morgan et al. 2006). This thus opposes the thought of simple imposition of power relations by one dominant party as assumed in the older globalization theories discussed above. They offer a wider range of food notions, with a specific place for quality. Food quality conventions are identified in light of prior knowledge among actors and other actants (such as food companies and its technologies). Below we summarize a few out of the different quality conventions that were established[12] and will be used in the analysis on the street food network:

> Domestic conventions, which are based on trust and loyalty, resulting from long-term personal relationships. This is often attached to place and tradition (local products);
> Industrial conventions, those resolve uncertainty about quality through common norms or standards mostly enforced by an external party via instrument-based testing, inspection and certification (you can think of hygienic standards like HACCP);
> Public conventions, the recognition consumers give to trademarks, brands and packaging;
> Civic conventions, they build on the collective commitment to welfare. They refer to the worth of a certain product in terms of their general societal and environmental benefits.

These conventions, or intersubjective identification of rules, help us to interpret the changes in food systems. They indicate how the consumption of street foods or a group's unique dietary practices and habits may be maintained, despite the constant flux of diets, recipes and cuisines. 'Localized' and 'authentic' food habits based on prior knowledge and principles are now interpreted within a global context. Through consumption the foreign is made part of local existence and in this sense "foreign goods create local identity on a global stage" (Wilk, 1999:253). Furthermore, in Western countries generally a strong link is made between 'local' and the perceived quality and nutrition of food products (Murdoch et al., 2000; Guerrero et al., 2009). This is driven by arguments about ecological sustainability, higher trust among consumers because of a more direct connection to production, perceptions of healthy food, etcetera. On the other hand we see a growing recognition towards established trademarks and brands that are trusted because of applied standards. Conventions can thus be conflicting and

---

[12] Adapted from Thevenot (1989) (in Oosterveer and Sonnenveld, 2012) and Murdoch et al. (2000).

contradictory. Another essential aspect within the food practices are the hygienic practices, which vary greatly over different cultures and as Rheinländer et al. (2008) found, are 'formed by and are dependent on interactions between vendors and customers' (p.962). In other words, 'modern' recipes, products and practices are translated, transformed and mixed with 'traditional' or 'indigenous'[13] ones. For instance the tourism sector can be a key driving force that both facilitates exchange and can help promote the local or regional identity, that is associated with quality food (Murdoch et al., 2000). Once more, conventions are continuously negotiated and may even compete, among all different actants in the network and therefore change over time (Oosterveer & Sonnenveld, 2012).

Where in the western world local foods are making a comeback, in the global South, in countries like Ghana they never left the scene, at least up to now. Selling traditional street foods is a long-established way of adding value to raw food products. The practice is deeply rooted in the local community (Kraig & Sen, 2013). As Malaspina and Vugliano (referred to in Manzini, 2005) describe about the olive production in Italy: as the whole community shares the product of a process it becomes a topic for conversation and, as such, contributes to social regenerations. This relates to the theme of cooking as a 'craftsmanship' as delightfully described by Richard Sennettt in his book 'the craftsman' (2008). He portrays the historical connection between craft and community, as indissociable in ancient Greece; how skill would bind workers to their ancestors as to their fellows by the collective, repetitive and concrete practice of executing the skill. Tacit knowledge is passed on from generation to generation, however change is occurring daily. In the same way this counts for the cooking skills of the Ghanaian women. In a city as Accra, which faces a high speed of urbanization and modernization processes it is worthwhile looking at how global players integrate in the network and what the effect is of this local – global interaction. With the convention theory in mind, we investigate how new influences are negotiated in conventions among the social actors involved. Are products like street foods, and its way of production, seen as a limitation on development, as part of what must be left behind if we are finally to enter modern age, or are they perceived "not as cultural fossil, not as a limitation on development, but on the contrary, as a 'seed for the future'"(Manzini, 2005:68)?

2.2 Food; civic organization, the state and the market

As touched upon in the previous section, in mainly European and other Western, industrialized and high-income countries we see a shift in the governance triangle of market, state and civil society institutions from predominantly state institutions defining food policies and a strong market influence towards more local, civil society institutions of food definitions (Renting et al., 2012; Lamine et al., 2012). In a context of a growing power for food-related transnational corporations as market players (Phillips, 2006) and a declining role for nation-states because of global governance institutions (Yenal, 1999) there is an increasing endeavour of civil society and consumer initiatives to make changes in the current food system (Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012). Those initiatives, such as the Slow Food movement, aim to be an opposing force to an increasing influence of TFCs. These groups of civil actors are part of the network that simultaneously shape the food system with other actants involved. Ideally this is supposed to lead to more 'food democracy'[14].

---

[13] In this thesis the connotations of 'traditional' and 'indigenous' will be used interchangeably. The author is aware that both are contested concepts in light of 'glocalization', yet for analytic reasons they are essential to be used.

[14] "Food democracy ideally means that all members of an agro-food system have equal and effective opportunities for participation in shaping that system, as well as knowledge about the relevant alternative ways of designing and operating the system" (Hassanein, 2003:83 in Renting et al., 2012:293)

The historically European concept of civil society is broadly winning terrain in the developing world as well. In the postcolonial era in Africa this is particularly the case since the 1990s (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999; Whitfield, 2003). In a broad sense, civil society can be defined as a social arena where social movements and civic organizations express themselves and advance their interests as an intermediary between family, the market and the state (Bratton, 1989). Voluntary associations like the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association are part of this civil society. They consist of a group of individuals who voluntarily decide to come together, with a common interest and purpose (ibid). Alexis de Tocqueville is one of the first thinkers who expressed the importance of associationalism. He used the term 'art of association' and described how weak individuals become strong by coming together in civil associations; they can either engage directly in political life, or because of learning the habits of co-operation this would eventually contribute to active citizenship in the public sphere (Fukuyama, 2001). In other words, associations have an important role to play in connecting and carrying (poor) peoples voice to local and national decision makers. Besides, associations are believed to contribute to an increase in social capital, with social capital facilitating cooperation and trust, leading to more collective action and in this way improving the efficiency of a society (Putnam, 1993). Thus bottom-up, cooperative initiatives may prove to be essential for sufficient and healthy urban food provisioning, provided that they are included in local politics to shape the local food networks (Dupuis & Goodman, 2005). And furthermore might function as a counter voice to strong market forces from TFCs that in a response to a saturation of industrialized-country markets, seek to open up developing country markets as a crucial expansion strategy (Yenal, 1999).

Urbanization in West Africa had considerable influence on the increase in the number of associations and the diversification of them (Little, 1957). They started to change from primarily kinship and tribal formations to associations with a diminishing importance of ethnicity that were more organized around trade or occupation, hereby also modernizing their practices and widening the scope of their functions. In addition to the settlement of disputes, informal social and economic support, they started to take up functions such as advocacy for their shared interests, education of members and standard setting. This is comparable to the medieval European guilds with superiors setting standards and training apprentices to maintain the standards of work in the profession or craft (ibid; Sennett, 2008). In modern Ghana, especially in the urban setting, voluntary and professional or occupational[15] associations in the informal sector, have become widespread and numerous (Lindell, 2010). Livelihood studies in developing countries more and more emphasize the essential role of the social networks of personal relations; particularly because of their functions for knowledge transformation and social support in an environment where people have less existing kinship and community networks and where formal safety nets are largely absent (Hanson, 2005; Maxwell, 2000). Thus in addition to the, at least potentially, political role associations can play as socializing agents within civil society, they are believed to take up tasks that that governments fail to provide (Hyden, 1997). Rusaw (1995) identifies similar functions in terms of formal and informal learning. Professional associations are as he claims: providers of updated and extended professional knowledge, builders of normative frameworks for enacting knowledge in practice and function as change catalyst. However, collective associations in development settings have often been described as in-ward looking and focused on self-help and their own business, hereby not having political goals (Lindell, 2010). Their failing to effect long-term influence and change is also ascribed to a lack of resources, financially and in terms of personnel and skills that most informal associations face (Tostensen et al., 2001). Besides, according to Brown et al. (2010) it is evident that informal workers in Sub-Sahara Africa are denied effective citizenship and voice in urban organization, especially when they work outside the designated markets.

---

[15] The GTCA will in this thesis be both designated as 'professional' or 'occupational' association

Yet the authors see many local initiatives and much potential for those civil organizations. As also portrayed in the documentaries on 'fixing the urban mess'[16].

Likewise, Lindell (2010) argues that there is a growing awareness of informal workers who portray themselves as 'the backbone of national economies and claiming economic rights and recognition' (p.209). They start scaling up by forming national organisations and by making connections with international networks. There is the example of SEWA (self-employed women's association), StreetNet (a street vendors association), Homenet (home-based workers), forming the coalition called WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), which is a network that collects data of women in the informal sector with the aim to advance their status and improve their conditions (see Tinker, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000; Alfers & Abban, 2011). Both Hanson (2005) and Lindell (2010) emphasize the fact that occupational oriented associations revolve around socially shared meanings and collective identities, which are constructed and reconstructed through interactions with other actors in society, influenced by power relations. Members can strengthen their professional identities by identification with the association, yet their collective identities are often not perceived all that positive by the broader social and political environment (ibid). If their rights are to be recognized, those identities, which were constituted on subordination and exclusion, might first have to be reconstructed (Mouffe, 1991; Kincheloe, 2005). A critical reconstruction of the negative image of the informal food vendors could possibly work as a counter-hegemonic of the status quo of a government that systematically denies their rights.

When further specifying collective action to the street food network, there are a few important areas in which associations could play a role. In a research by Levin et al. (1999) on 'Working women in an urban setting: traders, vendors and food security in Accra', the researchers first of all identified the importance of improving the regulatory environment of self-employed women, both petty traders and street food vendors, who often fall victim to repressive and eviction policies. Strengthening the capacity of (nascent) associations could both help in increasing its political voice, and in self-regulatory mechanisms on difficulties of informal trade activities. Hereby contributing to vendors' businesses as well as to public health and food safety. They see increasing income earning potential, provided by associational support, as best way to reduce both women's vulnerability and to improve food security in the city. Similarly Dolphyne & Ofei-Aboagye (2001) identify the outstanding potential of networks and associations as 'critical vehicles' for building women's capacity for advancement and sustainable development. Hence, the possibilities for an association like the GTCA are according to the literature wide and promising. The next section will zoom in on the role of voluntary associations in empowering processes of communities, organizations and individuals.

---

[16] http://www.citiesalliance.org/Ghana-advocacy. According to the informants in these documentaries Ghana has no culture of civic activism; citizen largely do not know their rights and they are generally not engaged in policy making. Yet this is currently evolving with better education and more initiatives are taking shape.

2.3 Empowerment as a process

"Empowerment is premised not only on the individual's desire for and assessment of the possibility for change but on the ontological possibilities for social transformation" (Carr, 2003:16).

The two main definitions found in the Oxford English dictionary of the verb empower is 'to give someone the authority or power to do something' or as 'to enable': giving a person the means to achieve their self-defined goals. Many practical and scientific fields apply the construct of empowerment: psychology, management, education, community development and studies of social movements and organizations like this one. How empowerment is understood varies among them. When studying empowerment it is valuable to first look at its root concept, which is 'power'. Power has been subject of debate in the social sciences and beyond for centuries. Michel Foucault is one of the main modern thinkers on power and first introduced the idea that 'power is everywhere'. He saw power as 'enforcing' and 'disciplinary' yet, contrary to many interpretations, also believed in possibilities for action and resistance (Sadan, 2004). In this line of thought there are three aspects we will take up here, namely that *power is a relational concept, power can change* and *power can expand* (Czuba, 1999). Power is in this sense not associated with control and domination but with *enabling people to gain control over their own lives and communities*. In other words: power not as zero-sum and 'social control' by the state, but as 'social production', which goes beyond institutionalized power and works potentially enabling to citizens and communities (Taylor, 2007). In addition to these notions of 'power over' and 'power to', Rowlands (1997) adds the forms of 'power with', emphasizing the group dynamics, and *'power from within'* where an individual becomes fully aware of his or her human potential and abilities as "true power cannot be bestowed, it comes from within" (p.16). These notions are essential in the further discussion and use of the concept of empowerment within this thesis. Furthermore will be looked at empowerment not as an outcome, but as an ongoing social and cyclical process. Empowerment is a process that challenges our assumptions of the way things are, and our aspirations of how they could be (Czuba, 1999). The definition by Wallerstein (1992) eloquently covers the subject:

"Empowerment is a social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities towards the goal of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life and social justice"

This definition is especially relevant and worth exploring when connecting it to the assumed social justice and better quality food within local food systems, in which citizens are more involved; the aforementioned concept of food democracy (Renting et al., 2012). In the process of empowerment, critical consciousness and consciousness-raising is by many empowerment theorists seen as the starting point (Carr, 2003). This is based on the foundational claim made by the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire in 1970 that the engagement of an individual in social change starts with *conscientization;* an intensive reflection of oneself in relation to society (ibid). Individuals first have to come to understand the political dimension of their personal problems. Especially feminist interpretations of empowerment, that got renewed attention after the Bejing UN conference on women in 1995, incorporate this idea and see 'the personal as political' (Rowlands, 1997:14). Gutierrez (1995) describes *conscientization* as involving three processes: (i) group identification in which individuals identify with a group having a shared culture and norms, (ii) development of group consciousness when they start to understand the political dimension of their relative deprivation and blame 'the system' rather than the group, (iii) the development of collective and individual efficacy by a mobilization toward social action. Similarly, the social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai translates empowerment into 'increase the capacity to aspire', especially for the poor (2004:8). This demands on the one

hand the *conscientization* process that starts with the personal awareness of ones position in society. On the other hand the necessary space needs to be given to individuals and collectives to change their position and to 'voice out'. Hence, the emphasis in this research is on action to empower; what does the GTCA do (how do they constitute agency) in the context of the local street food network? And what are its power structures? Since 'empowerment is praxis' (Carr, 2003:18), and "not a commodity that can be acquired; power is transforming process that is constituted through action" (Kieffer, 1984:27).

Empowerment is surely hard to measure; it is easy to see its absence (e.g. powerlessness, devaluations and deprivation) but hard to define positively because it is different for people and contexts (Rappaport, 1984). It is always a multilayered concept, taking place at the individual as well as on the interactional and political level (Rowland, 1997). Moreover it is multidimensional, involving social, psychological, economical dimensions among others (Czuba, 1999). And besides, there is no final state of empowerment (Staples, 1990). To bring more clarity into the concept, empowerment can be divided into three interconnected categories of: community, organizational and personal empowerment. See figure 2 (as adjusted from Zimmerman (2000) and Rowlands (1997)).

Figure 2. The three dimensions of empowerment

Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) argue that much research is limited to the individual level of analysis and stress the need for more focus beyond the individual bias. Organizational empowerment processes possibly contribute to personal empowerment, as well as they can be placed in the broader perspective of the street food network as a whole; the community. *Community empowerment* includes efforts to deter community threats, facilitate citizen participation and improve quality of life (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). *Personal empowerment* can on one the hand be interpreted as a more psychological process and paying much attention to transforming power relations; associated with an increasing self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of agency, of the 'self' in a wider context (Rowlands, 1997). On the other hand it includes the more practical level of capacity building: "capacity-building for people involves providing them with the resources they need to enhance their productivity, their ability to take action and to make choices" (Dolphyne & Ofei-Aboagye, 2001:24). Zimmerman and Peterson (2004) introduced a conceptual model of *three components of organizational empowerment:* the intra-organizational, inter-organizational and extra-organizational. The first one indicates the ability of an organization to support their members in their individual progress, in reaching their self-set goals and full potential, with good leadership

as vital condition. The inter-organizational component is understood as extent to which organizations are looking outward and strive to co-operate with other organizations to gain resources and share information. Lastly the extra-organizational component includes the larger community institutions and refers to efforts by the organization to influence public policy and practice, creating alternative services or successful advocacy, and thus directing to improving community life and stimulating community empowerment. Carr (2003) reasons that even 'failed' attempts at political change are in fact successful, as they 'reveal information about the structures and systems that are being targeted' (p.18).

The empowerment of the street food network will thus be analysed at several levels, with the underlying notion that empowerment means more local control of the street food organization by the people that are directly involved and dependent on it. Meaning a strengthening of their individual lives and respecting their appreciation for street foods that are, beside their economic asset, believed to have an important cultural and social value.

Chapter 3: Research outline

Related to the theoretical and conceptual framework exposed in the previous chapter, this chapter will present the research outline. We will start with the problem statement and the research objectives of the thesis. Subsequently we present the three research questions that were derived from the overall problem statement. Then the methodology that was used to answer these questions will be highlighted; referring to the research methods of critical constructivism, reflexivity and triangulation. This is followed by an elaboration on the research site, the data collection methods and data analysis techniques. The chapter will end with the scope and limitations of the research.

3.1 Problem statement and research objectives

"Street foods are here to stay; there is a big demand.
We can't stop it so we just have to improve it."
(Dr. Tortoe, FRI, 20 Dec. 2013)

Given the indispensable position of street foods for food access and employment in the urban setting and the ever-growing demand for street foods due to an increasing number of urban inhabitants and changing lifestyles, it is essential to obtain more knowledge of the functioning of the local street food system; they contribute to the feeding of the cities. The city of Accra is currently one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa (Grant, 2009). This high speed of urbanization is often referred to as the 'urban crisis': a process in which the rapid population growth leads to uncontrolled development, shortage of housing and jobs, widespread poverty, severe environmental problems, failing services and inadequate local government structures (Tostensen et al., 2001). In this setting, with cities having ostensibly many urgent problems, food provisioning does not often receive the highest priority. Also the debates around food security and the rationale of 'how to feed the 9.1 billion people in 2050' are mostly centred on how to get more production and how to stimulate rural development. Hereby forgetting that with the growing cities it is in these areas where most mouths are to be fed (Sonnino, 2009). Urban food provisioning and the role cities could play in the demand for local production and become food system innovators tend to get overlooked by policymakers and urban planners (ibid; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000; Crush & Frayne, 2010; Maxwell et al., 2000; Atkinson, 1995).

In the elaboration of the literature we found varying thoughts of how processes of globalization and urbanization have their effects on local foods and supply systems. The street food network provides an ideal setting to identify and investigate the differing powers at stake. The growing number of street food vendors in Accra causes much concern, mainly the hygienic circumstances and food safety. Most research and projects done on street foods focussed on food safety practices and microbiological quality issues (Mensah at al. 2002; Tomlins et al., 2005; Tortoe et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2006). Another common research target concerns the vending as a household livelihood strategy and the contribution to nutrient intake and food security ('t Riet et al., 2001; Maxwell et al. 2000; Tinker, 1997, Mwangi, 2002). A field that hitherto has been underexposed is that of the broader network involved and the effects the several actors within this network bring about. Little research has been done so far on the arena of civic organizations and how they interact with others in the network and what they do to effectuate change. When looking at networks and associations, the majority of social research in Ghana concentrated on market trading and trade unions, and not on food providers as another important group of actors (Alfers & Abban, 2011; Clark, 1994; Lyon, 2003). The important role that associations could play are sometimes identified, for instance in the report

by Rheinländer et al. (2008), who claim that many street vendors could be reached via local vendor networks and associations and that their leading members can act as role models and agents of change. Also Alfers and Abban (2011) plea after their study on indigenous caterers in Accra for further research on work-based associations to better understand the nature of this kind of organizations and how they relate to the power structures around them. The lack of accurate policy attention for street foods and its vendors, make a better understanding of civic organization and market and governmental influence even more relevant. Given this knowledge gap, it is worthwhile to investigate the ongoing changes in this food system. This thesis will present the case study of the dynamics of Accra's street food network; how the different actors use their power to influence the network or to gain more control over one's own life and community circumstances, in a globalizing world and food system. The focus will be on the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association (GTCA). Thus in other words the core issue of this thesis is:

In the context of a globalizing food system, how does the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association (GTCA) contribute to an empowerment of the local street food network in Accra?

In this thesis we will explore a context specific case study of an issue, which has worldwide relevancy due to its different but omnipresence in various regions. In this research we combine theories of *glocal* food systems and empowerment to investigate the informal organization of the street food network in a development setting. This approach was chosen in order to enlarge insight in the possibilities for the female caterers association to empower the association and the individual lives of its members. The aim of this research is to go beyond the prevailing descriptions of the street food network as an important source of nutrition for poor consumers and as a source of income for the vendors. The study intents to include an in-depth analysis of the social and cultural constructions pertaining to the network, and investigates the efforts that take place in light of the empowerment process. Or to quote Langeveld (1965) "the aim is not only 'to know facts and to understand relations for the sake of knowledge'. We want to know and understand in order to be able to act and act 'better' than we did before" (in Bell, 2010: 27). The objectives are twofold. On the one hand this research wants to enhance the knowledge on food system theories and contribute to the debate on the effects and responses of globalization and local food. On the other hand by giving voice to the food vendors and presenting an illustration of their life world this study will hopefully also contribute to a better understanding of their situation and their potentialities to empower their situation, which can subsequently lead to a more appropriate policy approach towards the essential street food network and all its actors involved.

3.2 Research questions

In order to be able to answer the core research issue, three research questions were developed to cut this overall enquiry into smaller pieces and to cover the main aspects connected to the problem statement. The first research question is:

1. What global and local food dynamics can be recognized, what is the role of the different stakeholders, and how do they influence the street food vending network of Accra?

This sub-question was set up to identify the current dynamics in Accra's street food network. It aims to recognize the constantly negotiated local and global influences that provoke changes in the street foods. The question allows for an exploration of the food supply system, street food

demand, as well as the hygienic food practices and food quality demands that are connected to it. We look at the interrelated roles played by the diverse actors involved.

2.   How is the street food network organized, what is the function of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association and how can their role be strengthened?

This question continues from the previous one and focuses more specifically on the role of the local government of Accra in the street food network and subsequently on the GTCA. It looks into the regulatory environment: the implementation of specific bylaws and the officials' approach towards vendors. Then it seeks to explore the current function and activities of the GTCA and for a possible empowerment of their role within the network.

3.   What effect does the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association have on the lives of food vendors, and how can the empowerment of the individual members be enhanced?

This third question will focus on the empowerment processes of the individual street food vendors, and especially the members of the GTCA. It starts with revealing the difficulties and aspirations expressed by vendors to then look at the role the association plays to overcome those difficulties and achieve the aspirations. It as well attempts to detect options for an enhancement of the association's contribution to personal empowerment.

3.3 Methodology

The methodology used to investigate Accra's street food vending network is qualitative of nature and led by ethnographic principles and methods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Characteristic of qualitative research techniques is that one tries to make sense of the social world and understand 'the other' by interpreting the meanings, values and believes people hold within a certain setting (Silverman, 2006). The qualitative, ethnographic approach was most suitable to get detailed and in-depth information on the street food network and its social organization, with the variety of actors from different societal and organizational levels involved. Furthermore, the critical constructivist approach provides the benefit of a thorough analysis on the current situation and to detect possibilities for change. It looks critically at how human knowledge, consciousness and behaviour are shaped by dominant power structures in society (Kincheloe, 2005). It also recognizes that some actors have more power in constructing realities than others. In this approach a constant assessment takes place on existing social relations and power structure and the possibilities for their emancipatory transformation (Bohman, 2013). The aim of this research is to interpret the social phenomena of street food vending from this critical-constructivist approach by doing an ethnographic research on street food vending in order to understand what is happening, how this is influenced by broader societal and global developments and what is changing or can be changed. Therefore was tried to first get a general overview of the network, followed by a further investigation of the specific themes of interest.

Instead of using a hypothesis to be tested, this research started with a foreshadowed problem and took an inductive approach. In practice this means that the actual research problem was developed and transformed, while paying close attention to the local situation. The research problem got explored slowly and was reformulated by doing constant analysis, reflection and

comparison with new data collected and the theory and questions in mind. During the study was tried to understand and interpret the individual actions and the group interactions from the actors' own point-of-view as much as possible. It demanded a curious and open attitude of the researcher while interacting with people in their everyday lives in an environment that was totally new. Hence, in order to get a reasonable understanding of the meaning of certain observations and of the topics that were discussed, careful listening and watching were critical, and also conversations with the translators who assisted were of great value.

One aspect of ethnographic research is the importance of reflexivity throughout the research process. The term 'reflexivity' gives attention to the fact that researchers are part of the social world they study and contests the idea of finding an objective truth; there is no way to abstract oneself from the objects under study and there is no absolute truth out there that can be known (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This implies that the researcher has to be aware of his or her social background and how this influences the interpretations, bias and prejudices and on the other hand how the researchers' presence influences the attitudes and answers of the people that are interviewed, observed and interacted with. A research diary was kept up in which all notes of what had been seen, heard, smelled and experienced that day were noted down. Some parts of this diary will be included in the chapters of the findings for the purpose of reflexivity and to give a lively illustration of my interpretation of the situation. A distinction was made between the descriptions of the 'objective' surroundings, the interpretation of them (the analytic notes) and on what went well or not during the observations and interviews (the methodological notes). Thus a continuous reflection was made about what was learned on a particular day, with questions and remarks on how to move forward.

The ascribed identity was very clear, often was referred to the researcher as 'white lady' and predominantly this entailed questions such as what was there to offer them, which NGO was involved, and whether this concerned the offering of money or assistance in whatever form. One interviewee said about this: *'That is from the colonial ancestors, that is our mentality. When they see a white person, oh you will help us, in organizing'* (Mr. Mensah, trainer AMA, 8 Jan. 2014). Most likely the interviewees made assumptions of what information was wanted from them and subsequently made considerations as to what responses to give or not. Besides, the personal way of asking questions by the researcher, and the questions themselves (probably with a more instrumental underpinning) certainly influenced the replies. A researcher can furthermore never be sure whether people behave differently when he or she is around, also in cases of mere observations and no verbal interaction.

One method to overcome this limitation is by applying methodological and theoretical triangulation, respectively comparing different kinds of data collection methods and looking at the phenomena from different theoretical perspectives to detect which permits best to comprehend the data (Silverman, 2006). This should not be confused with a more 'objective' representation, but can be a very useful research tool to get a better understanding of the subject under study because certain data can be used to illuminate the other. This approach turned out to be extremely useful; during the research many contradictions were discovered. It is common for human beings to do something different than what they say, and this case study showed no exception. An example is the frequency of visiting meetings; people would say they went there every week, but by observations was learned that in most cases this was actually not the reality. Triangulation and approaching the topic like a real research puzzle was therefore fundamental to better understand the state of affairs.

3.4 The research site

The area where the fieldwork for this study took place is the city of Accra[17], over a period of three months, from December 2013 until March 2014.

Map 1. Map of Africa

Map 2. Regions of Ghana

Upon arrival contact was sought with relevant informants from the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association and other individuals and organizations that were targeted during the preparation period in the months prior to the fieldwork. The first contacts were easily made with the help of researchers from the local research institute STEPRI/CSIR with which the Wageningen University RSO chair group has long-time connections. Especially the PhD candidate Joyce Haleegoah was of great help with some acquaintances in the field. As is typical for ethnographic research, the sampling happened interactively during the research period, the informants were thus selected via a snowball and purposive selection (Silverman, 2006). This provided the space to intentionally select the processes and informants of interest and at the same time demanded a constant critical thinking of the population for the sample size. For instance if new interesting information came to the front out of earlier interviews or observations it could be decided to increase the sample size to get to know more about a specific phenomenon. Furthermore it depended on suggestions from informants and interviewees, time availability and coincidental encounters during walks throughout the city.

The study started with consulting a few executive members of the GTCA and by attending some meetings and workshops they had organized to get a better overview of their activities. It soon became clear that the scope of the city of Accra was most suitable for the data collection. The initial idea of purposely selecting and comparing certain neighbourhoods; areas which are known for their varying income classifications was not executed because the specific research areas were adjusted to the ones where the association was most active at that time. Also for the assumption to find different dynamics and perceptions within these areas and a higher number of vendors in lower income areas because of a higher reliance on street foods the study found no evidence. Certainly there are some differences among areas, yet the street vendors can be

---

[17] Note that the association is nationally organized and thus some information applies to the wider country context and not merely Accra.

found all over the city, from busy market places and lorry stations to high-end commercial areas, in fact they can be located right next to formal, (fast food) restaurants. This corresponds to research done by Maxwell et al. (2000) who concluded that neighbourhoods in Accra are much more mixed than previously assumed. The vendors: members, non-members and executive members, were between 16 to 65 years old. The highest level of completed education strongly varied; some had no formal education at all, while others went to senior levels of high school. However, Ghana's education system has changed several times since independence, which complicated the accuracy of these data; 'form four' could mean either six or ten years of education. Therefore this classification was merely used as an indication for the understanding of the researcher.

The GTCA has divided the city of Accra into thirteen zones, of which presently around eight of them are actively involved. The majority of the interviews with the vendors and the attendance at their weekly meetings took place in the neighbourhoods of Osu, James Town, Nima and Kotobabi. See the map below.
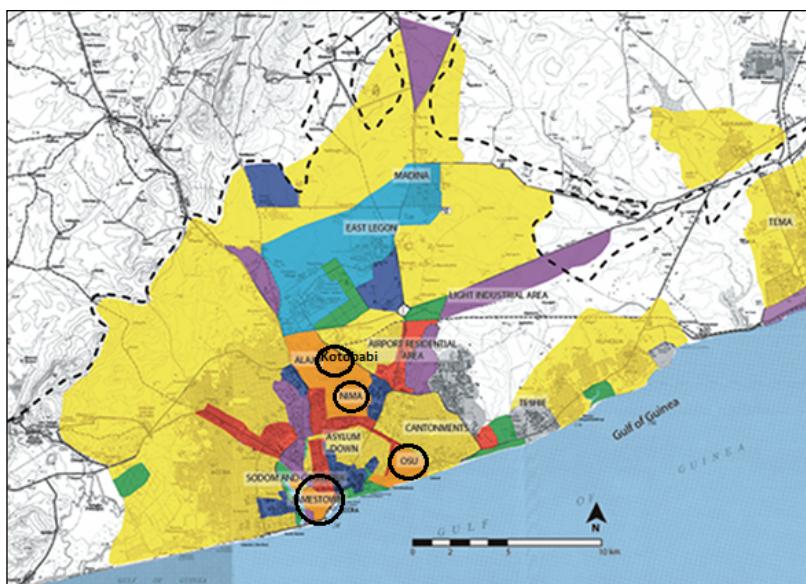
Map 3. Research locations

Osu is typified as a relatively wealthy business district, and popular among tourist for its active nightlife, as well as it is a residential area. *Labadi* lies adjacent to it and is more residential. While *Kotobabi* has different parts in terms of advancement, *James Town* is pre-eminently symbolized as a slum area, with a strong community feeling; it is at the same time the oldest township from which Accra started to grow (Weeks et al., 2013). The weekly executives meetings took place at their national headquarters office in the *Nima* neighbourhood, another locale known as 'slum'. Some more workshops that were attended were organized in different parts of the city, plus the exception of one in the Northern city of Tamale. Furthermore several transect walks were made with local persons and informants and the main markets of Accra: Agbogbloshie, Makola and Nima, and many lorry stations, like '37' and Tema station were visited. The urban farmers interviewees were located at the airport residential area, behind the STEPRI/CSIR office and in the neighbourhood of Labadi.

The selection of the respondents was first of all guided by the research questions, and for practical reasons started with the most active executive members on key positions within the GTCA. Among them were public relations officer (PRO) Mr. Ansong and the vice-president Miss. Hajia. At the same time they turned out to be the gatekeepers; the actors with control over the research site and key sources of information (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007). They

were the ones with most authority to grant access to their meetings and they mostly informed me about workshops and other activities. Obviously they wanted the association to be put in a favourable light, this has to be taken into account considering the information they provided. Also therefore was tried to find multiple entries to new data and accounts. Generally the executives and the member were enthusiastic about the interest in their activities and traditional cooking. At the same time they were very curious of the purposes and sometimes a bit suspicious about my intentions. To gain their confidence it was important to be clear about the scientific reasons and not to give them any hope about possible sponsorship, which is often assumed when seeing a 'white lady'. Building 'rapport', a relationship that is marked by mutual understanding and trust, was very important and a constant pursuit. Each meeting or workshop again the unofficial endorsement of the ones present was needed. Due to the informal way of organization, and people walking in and out this was at times quite a challenge. For the interviews with people working at public institutions or private corporations such as Nestlé and the Food and Drugs Authority, an official letter requesting their cooperation and stating the academic purpose was needed. Fortunately the CSIR/STEPRI office could provide this document. Sometimes with great perseverance, much travelling around the city and by numerous emails and phone calls, all intended informants that were reached within the period of fieldwork.

3.5 Data collection

While doing the data collection, it was kept in mind that the questions should drive the methods; there is no intrinsic value in the methods themselves (Silverman, 2006). As amply described above, some creativity and intuition was used in search for answers. In this section the process of data collection and the specific means that were used will be described. In cases when interviewees did not have a sufficient proficiency of the English language, and during most meetings and workshops, assistance was received from an interpreter, Rankine or Nelson from the CSIR/STEPRI research institute.

3.5.1 Participant observations

During the course of this research, the method of participant observations was abundantly used. Observational data can contribute a great deal to getting insight in a particular situation. It helped to get an understanding of the dynamics of this particular context and the functioning of the organization. In fact Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that basically all social research is participant observation, since we are all part of the social world. The data retrieved from observations were caught in the field notes that were made throughout the process and which were worked out almost every day. There is a difference however between *focused participant observations* and more *general observations*, as part of naturally occurring data. For the focused observation the following questions were used as mnemonic: 'What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish? How exactly do they do this? How do people characterize and understand what is going on? What assumptions do they make? Analytic questions: what do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes? Why did I include them?' (Silverman, 2006:89). Especially emphasizing on what an activity means for the ones who are involved in it is important in qualitative research (Bell, 2010). It was tried to make a clear distinction between more 'objective' observations and my interpretations. A complicating factor was the fact that in the meetings the informants spoke Twi and Ga, thus not everything could be understood and there was much reliance on translation. Discussions with the interpreters afterwards helped a lot to check possible prejudice and to see if some essential happenings were missed or misinterpreted. However, as said before, the researcher can never be sure on his or her own influence; 'the problem of reactivity is merely one aspect of a more general issue: the effects of audience, and indeed of context generally, on what people say and

do. All accounts must be interpreted in terms of the context in which they were produced' (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007:102). There is no such thing as 'pure' unbiased data. And besides, the research looked through a particular theoretical lens as legitimized in the theoretical framework by presenting the current scientific debate based on former research.

Some principal sites for regular observations were at the weekly executives meetings on Monday morning, during the neighbourhood meetings (Osu, James town, Kotobabi) and during the workshops about hygienic practices at different days of the week. By going to those social gatherings a good insight was obtained in the way things are organized within the GTCA and in the topics that are important to them. Additionally, a number of one-day observations were done. Among them was an inspection executed by officials of the public health department of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), the cities authority. The Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) were accompanied on their inspections on the cooking conditions of the vendors. Another mission was on tax collection, with two tax-collecting officials on their duty to collect the obligatory taxes by vendors. Once a workshop organized by Nestlé in the city of Tamale in the north of Ghana was attended, as well as a celebration of the national farmers' day in Accra. Furthermore, to get a better feeling of the topic a lot of observations were done at the ventures themselves (on the streets, at markets and lorry parks). It turned out that a good strategy was to go somewhere, eat all the different kinds of food and in the meantime talk to the vendors and consumers that were there. Also a few times several vendors were accompanied on their purchasing visits to the market and a few women were assisted during their cooking practice; pounding *fufu,* and making *kenkey* balls by putting the substance into cornhusks and carrying them to the place of sales; all leading to great hilarity among the bystanders. These valuable encounters provided a respectable view on the vendors' daily activities, the heaviness of the work, the difficulties and yet also the joy they seemed to experience during this community and family cooking in the mostly open kitchens in their back yards. The conversations with consumers while enjoying food together granted insight in their opinions, preferences and demands.

3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews were held with a great variety of people and at different moments in time. An interview gives a particular representation or account of an individuals' view or opinion of a particular situation (Silverman, 2006). It is a good way to acquire information about ones attitudes and values, which was of great importance in this study on food and empowerment. First of all a lot of informal interviews were done naturally occurring talks were used as an important source of data collection; especially regarding the developments of the ideas for further 'formal' collection. A lot of talking to different vendors took place while walking on the streets or purposively going round in different neighbourhoods to ask the vendors some questions. The interview sites caused some distractions in terms of noise and a lot of patience was needed; yet it provided the opportunity to do more observations. The topic was extremely helpful to do this, by first ordering food to then slowly starting to ask the vendors some questions. This way they could continue their work. It was also a good approach in order to gain confidence and for them to open up. Food is often a subject that people heartily talk about which made it easier to ask additional questions about difficulties etcetera.

Out of the many exploratory talks different topic guides were developed, depending on the position of the person interviewed and leaving enough room for non-prepared questions and comments that arose. All interviews were semi-structured, meaning they can be characterised as flexible, open-ended and discursive in nature (Silverman, 2006). The goal was to get a good overview of the changes and activities currently organized by the multiple stakeholders involved, in order to understand what is done for an empowerment of the network and how

this is interpreted. In total an amount of 32 interviews were conducted with vendors (members and non-members of the GTCA), executive members of the GTCA, government officials, private company actors and farmers. Almost all interviews were recorded, after permission, and transcribed soon afterwards. Verbatim transcription was easier for the ones conducted in English. In cases it was necessary to work with an interpreter, it is unfortunately unavoidable that some information gets lost in the translation process. It was good to immediately listen back to the interviews for analyses and to look for clues and directions for further investigation. The combination of note taking and recordings that could be listened to multiple times contributed to the reliability of the data. Nuances that were missed could be identified later. Also it was helpful for self-evaluation, the recordings gave clues for possible improvements in succeeding interviews. Furthermore many follow-up interviews were done. This helped a lot in building rapport; to get more detailed information and some clarifications on things the interviewees had said before and were not completely clarified yet.

3.5.3 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions are an excellent technique to get a sense of the social organization, of the group dynamics that take place and to get much valuable data in a short amount of time (Silverman, 2006). It is essential to treat group discussions as fundamentally different from face-to-face interviews for several reasons. An advantage can be that synergies are created; the attendees build on each other. For example, when a topic was brought up, such as the main difficulties of food vending, the women started discussing this among themselves, coming up with more and more issues. Sometimes stimulated and encouraged by the interpreter who functioned as a moderator. This process and the interaction dynamics gave good insight in the group views, norms and beliefs and how knowledge is socially constructed (Kincheloe, 2005). Some caution is needed however. The ostensible consensus that appears might be misleading; peer pressure has its influence, also considering more powerful voices and hierarchy in the group. In Ghana age hierarchy is of major presence; older people deserve great respect and cannot easily be contradicted by younger folks. This became very apparent and will be elaborated on further on in the findings section. Several focus group discussions were held, of which some were formally organized and others more naturally occurred. The two main occasions were after the workshops on hygienic circumstances as organized by the GTCA and during the weekly neighbourhood meetings. After the workshops a group of around ten women who were willing to stay a bit longer, were gathered to have a discussion on a range of topics. These discussions were thus to a large extent informally organized, a specific selection of for instance age groups to avoid the influence of age hierarchy was simply not possible. Furthermore a lot of caution was necessary to explicate the research intentions in order for the women not to get disappointed. There was at times some uncertainty and suspicion about this, the women then wondered how their cooperation would benefit them. By clarifying the scientific purpose this problem was solved and usually the participants were pleased with the interest in their work and lives. One of the main difficulties was that the women were easily distracted. They walked in and out and wanted to go back to their work as soon as possible. Often this made it difficult to lead the discussion in an organized way and it was important to make sure to gather all the desired information before they would want to leave. The other occasion for focus group discussions was during the neighbourhood meetings, of which some were newly formed groups and others had existed for a longer period of time. This was excellent for comparison. At these occasions the women were more patient since they came for the meeting anyhow. Much fruitful information about the association and the functioning of the neighbourhood groups could be gathered.

3.5.4 Secondary data

Besides a study of the scientific literature, as an indispensible part for any research project, a review was done on relevant policy documents by the Ghana government: on urban policies and strategies, food and agriculture, as well as on documentation that was published by and/or for the GTCA. Written documents are an important part of the societies that we study and can provide valuable information on policy and how is thought of certain societal problems. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) emphasize the fact that, written documents are, similar to oral data, socially constructed in a certain time frame and should be approached as such. Documents like 'Ghana's vision 2020', 'medium term agriculture sector investment plan (METASIP) 2011-2015', and 'food and agriculture sector development policy (FASDEPII) gave an understanding of Ghana's current approach to food issues. Furthermore, after building sufficient *rapport* with the executives of the association permission was obtained to look into their internal documents: letters to ministries, applications for grants, invitations for workshops and other activities, the agenda for programmes, minutes taken at meetings, membership registries etc. The collection of textual materials offered a little historical insight, on the activities that they have been organizing over time, and also about the functioning of the association. For example letters about disputes and how they were solved. The documents supported in the understanding of issues that are important to the association and were of indispensable value to the research. It pointed at issues that probably would not have come to mind otherwise or clarified certain topics that were discussed in interviews and meetings. At the level of neighbourhoods access was obtained to see among others, the membership cards, the attendance list, registration of the amounts of dues and *Susu*[18] paid by the members etc. That contributed to the comprehension of the way of organization at this community level.

3.6 Data analysis

As already mentioned, a constant comparison and triangulation of the data took place. The foreshadowed problem changed over time and for the ethnographic analysis there is the "necessity of thinking not only about one's data, but also with and through the data, in order to produce fruitful ideas" (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007:168). While going through the heap of relatively unstructured data of field notes, observations and interviews, first a number of '*sensitizing concepts*' were identified to indicate certain directions for the further research analysis. This was guided by the sub-questions of the study. Inspired by the techniques as summarized by Ryan and Bernard (2003) during the analysis was looked for repetitions, indigenous typologies and categories, similarities and differences. A few interviews were used to start open coding; by comparing and labelling, the classification based on recurring themes slowly became apparent. As set out in the theoretical framework, we both sought for interpretations of local and global interaction and the different conventions applied to them, as well as for performances in light of empowerment theory. In this manner, for instance the rough indication of community, organizational and personal empowerment could be made and was later on further divided into subthemes. The classification was drawn from the comparison of empirical data, as well as from knowledge gathered from the literature. The strategy of continuously going back and forth between theory and data was applied; "we must repeatedly ask ourselves how we are to make sense of local cultures and actions in terms that relate to wider analytic perspectives" (ibid: 189). Memos, all ideas that came up throughout the research process, were noted down instantly in the advancement of the analysis. With the critical constructivist approach in mind, the study strived to critically analyze the current street food

---

[18] *Susu* is a traditional way of saving, and will be explained elaborately later in this thesis.

situation in a globalizing context, and the roles played by the several actors, to then constructively look for possible improvements and empowerment.

3.7 Scope and limitations

This thesis is based on a single case study: the street food network of Accra, and particularly on the role of one specific civic organization, the GTCA. According to Flyvberg (2004) the nature of a case study is often misunderstood and seen as an unreliable basis for generalization. According to him it is generally thought that theoretical knowledge, which is context-independent, is more valuable than practical, context-dependent knowledge. However this overlooks the advantage of qualitative research, which has the ability to give insight into local practices and to report a rich and complex narrative. This particular case study provides such a narrative of one particular context that might be exemplary for what is happening in the food system at a bigger scale, with its many contradictions and complexities.

Inevitably, research projects have limitations. First of all, the short amount of time; a period of three months is not much to understand the context and collect all the data, especially without prior contacts and without a host-organization or previously set up programme. A few occurrences complicated the data gathering process. At the start of the fieldwork, which was the period prior to Christmas, the heavy traffic congestions in Accra made that getting around in the city took up much valuable time. Many Ghanaians that live elsewhere in the country come to Accra during those days to do shopping for the coming holidays and to buy presents for their families. Also it was clear that this was a quiet period within the association, in many neighbourhoods they stopped their activities for a few weeks because of this Christmas break. It could be noticed that this was a somewhat different period than normally throughout the year.

Another limitation was the language barrier; this made direct conversations in many cases impossible. English is the official language of Ghana, yet the indigenous languages, of mainly Twi and Ga are widely used in the city of Accra. In all meetings and workshops the local languages were spoken. As well as in many individual interviews if the respondents did not master the English language because of their low educational background. This caused that some information got lost in translation or that simply some verbal communication was missed in cases that the interpreter was not available to accompany. In that case had to be relied on observations or on the sporadic translation by an arbitrary person after asking.

Lastly the different cultural background makes it difficult to fully understand the life world of the respondents and the Ghanaian context. The fact of coming from a complete different society and having had a very distinct upbringing and (educational) chances, made it hard at times to comprehend certain practices and perspectives. Furthermore the 'Dutch directness' plus the *Obroni*[19] ascription as 'white lady' were unavoidable. To illustrate this; Ghanaians usually have long and careful introductions, it was tried to do that as well yet not sure to what extend this was successful. Also the expectations about, and at time the suspicion towards the research probably influenced the responses. But despite the constraints, by observing, participating, conducting interviews and reading the study was able to gather insightful and valuable information, which will be presented in this report.

---

[19] *Obroni* is a term used in Ghana to refer to white person.

Chapter 4: Setting the scene

'It is five o'clock in the afternoon at the busy trotro station '37'. Loud music is playing, vendors are selling their products from little shops; heavily piled up or hawking it around advertising their merchandise with loud voices, commuters rush by, do some shopping and fetch some food at the many different ventures…'

This little sketch is to introduce the chapter that will provide the necessary background to place the thesis into context. Though as rightfully pointed out by Atkinson and Hammersly (2007): context is not just a matter of putting things into 'context'; we need to have a clear understanding of the material circumstances and social structures and networks that constrain and enable social activity and agency. This chapter will discuss some of Ghana's major historical events, of political independence, the neo-liberal policy and the subsequent structural adjustment programs that had severe social differentiating consequences. The current situation with rapid urbanization shows the relevancy of street foods for employment and securing food accessibility in the socially highly unequal setting of Accra, and subsequently the need for a better understanding on its organization and possibilities for empowerment. After giving a short outline of the countries socio-economic and specific street food context, an introduction on the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association will follow. In this chapter mainly descriptive facts on the association will be presented; an elaborate analysis on their specific functioning and social construction will follow in the chapters on the empirical findings.

4.1 Ghana and Accra background

The West African country of Ghana was the first in sub-Sahara Africa to gain independence from its colonizer: Great Britain, in 1957. In many respects Ghana is presented as a model for the rest of the continent - in terms of politics for its democratization process, with a multi-party democracy since 1992, as well as for its economic development (Hearn, 2001; Kuenzi, 2008; Whitfield, 2003). Nonetheless the fact that Ghana has one of the fastest growing economies in Africa and is celebrated as the best case of the rise of neo-liberalism in Africa and referred to as 'star pupil' and 'trailblazer', with a GDP per capita of $1.605 and an 'upgrade from 'low income' to 'lower-middle income' state by 2011[20] income inequality has risen significantly over the last decade, with far reaching social effects (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). The Human Development Index (HDI) in 2012 denoted Ghana the 135th place out of 187 countries, based on the measurement of average achievements in three basic dimensions of non-economic, human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living (UNDP, 2013). Food is certainly strongly connected to all three of these indicators and given Ghana's ranking much improvement can be made.

The first IMF 'Economic Recovery Programmes' introduced in 1983 under the Rawling government, have been strongly criticized to focus on export (of mainly cacao, oil and gold) rather than local food crops (corn, plantain, millet, yams, cassava and other root crops) (ibid).
In the study by Maxwell et al. (2000) on urban livelihoods and the way this relates to food insecurity and malnutrition in Accra, they make reference to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which indicated the negative effects of structural adjustment programs on urban areas, of which Accra is a representative example. They indicated two major shocks for urban areas; rapid population growth and 'brutal' exposure to world markets, leading to deepening social differentiation. These large-scale national and sub

---

[20] data.worldbank.org/country/ghana

national deregulation and trade liberalization policies have caused higher food prices, higher prices for imported goods caused by the liberalization of imports and exports, growing joblessness among middle-class residents, lower wages as a result of increasingly competitive labour markets, and reductions in basic health education, and other social services as governments reduced expenditures. The implementation of the programmes, with a cut on food subsidies that led to rising prices, showed an increase in the number of street food consumers (Johnson & Yawson, 2000). Thus more city dwellers became depended on the consumption of street foods, as well as they used it as a livelihood strategy to gain some income. A study by ISSER[21] in 1995 (referred to in Maxwell et al., 2000) showed the informal – formal employment ratio was two to one by 1980 and by 1990 it had increased to five to one. Official unemployment and poverty rates have fallen with the advent of neo-liberalism, though finding wage employment has become more difficult, most employment is in low-paid wage jobs and an estimated 50% of the urban population is employed in the informal sector, mostly labour-based income generating activities, like street food vending. Furthermore are men three times as likely to find a protected job than women (ibid). 'Only 10% of economically active Ghanaian women work in the formal sector, public and private' (Dolphyne & Ofei-Aboagye, 2001:27). Partly explaining the high rate of women entering into the street food trade.

Ghana could rightfully be called an agricultural society; a large portion, over 60% of the population is employed in agriculture and depends on the practice of farming, nevertheless yields are low and the country continues to be highly dependent on food imports (MoFA, 2010). Currently, domestic agriculture production only meets around 60 percent of fish consumption and around half of cereal and meat needs. Self-sufficiency does exist for starch staples such as cassava, yam and plantains, yet largely falls short for rice and maize demand (Wolter, 2009). Food security is long seen as a merely rural problem, with most programs targeted on increasing productivity and inputs to farmers (see e.g. Maxwell et al, 2000; Crush & Frayne, 2010). It is indeed in rural areas where the population stays most vulnerable to scarcity. However, Lipton (1977) (in Maxwell et al., 2000) first introduced the concept of 'urban bias': the notion that the urban population is structurally privileged over rural residents. This obscures the issue of urban poverty and the related food access and thus urban food insecurity. In 2012, the total number of Ghanaian inhabitants was measured at 25,5 million of which 52,6% live in urban areas (UNDP, 2012). The population of Accra is estimated at about 3,5 million, with an annual growth rate of 4,4%, which is exceptional if you compare it to older world cities like London or Paris which grew at a rate of around one percent (WB, 2010). Accra is Ghana's financial, administrative and economic centre and is a developing and prosperous city. However, Accra, similar to most other African cities suffers from poor urban planning, water provisioning and sanitation, inadequate services and infrastructure, pollution, congestion and high rates of informal housing and overcrowded slums; approximately 51% of urban residents live in slums (ibid).

The people of Accra are heavily reliant on the urban market for access to food and pay much more for their food than their rural counterparts, and the inhabitants of smaller cities like Kumasi. Local markets are still the main source of supply to both food vendors as well as regular citizens (Porter et al, 2007). The majority make more use of the informal food retail; the markets, than that they go to the supermarkets. Similar as in Southern African cities, supermarkets in Accra seem to co-exist with the informal food economy rather than they take over its indispensable function of food provisioning (Crush & Frayne, 2011). In the same way the two biggest transnational food corporations in Ghana: Nestlé and Unilever[22] seem to have

---

[21] Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research of Legon University, Accra
[22] The data in this thesis are mainly based on Nestlé corporate strategies, however from earlier research and informants' replies we can assume that both companies apply similar practices.

slowly integrated in the food system, with their presence as 'corporate citizens' in the country respectively since its independence in 1957 and in 1963[23]. This indicating that food manufacturing in Ghana, although still dominated by small-scale productions, is being transformed into an integral part of the international agro-food industry; the TFCs make use of and integrate with domestic networks and gradually expand their product range (Yenal, 1999).

Accra furthermore provides an interesting case since it is very much aware of the urban challenge. In April 2013 the government of Ghana, together with the German development cooperation (GIZ) has launched a National Urban Policy Action Plan, the first comprehensive urban governance framework in the country's history.[24] Though when reviewing the policy documents very little could be found about food policy. The only part where 'food' was actually mentioned was under the area of 'environmental quality' and mere about hygiene and sanitary conditions of the storage, preservation, preparation, handling, presentation and the surroundings were food is offered. Nothing could be found about street foods and their role in livelihoods, food provisioning, access or production; this illustrates the importance for more attention for these issues. As underlined before: food links many different areas, from public health, culture and identity to socio-economic networks; 'food is a powerful weapon for social transformation' (Vivero, 2014:8). In this thesis street foods will be used both as exemplary case to illustrate ongoing dynamics in the global food system, as well as it provides a specific scope to investigate possibilities for empowerment.

4.2 The street food network in Accra

"The cheapest way to make money, is to cook food. You are a secretary, or you have a shop, and the shop collapse. You can buy a pot, buy silver, cooking utensils, buy water, the pepper, yam and you cook and you'll get people to buy. Very, very cheap. So day in day out people have been coming into the system. That is why they are plenty. And automatically when you cook, you will get people to buy." (Mr. Ansong, PRO GTCA, 13 Jan. 2014)

Street food vending, locally mostly referred to as 'traditional catering', proves to be one of the easiest businesses both to enter and to exit, especially for women. Depending on the size of operation envisaged, not much capital or formal training is required to begin with. Cooking, especially traditional dishes, appears to be a natural endowment for most women in Ghana; the skills are passed on from generation to generation. According to a previous study project by DFID/NRI/FRI in 2000, an estimated 15.000 vendors, employing a total of 60.000 people in the food-vending network in Accra and generating an annual turnover of more than $100.000. However the authors do not explicate who exactly is included in these numbers. In response to this research it is assumed the numbers also include all hawkers, pure water, fruits and other non-processed food sellers, who are not the focus of this study. Official data are not available and besides, very hard to measure because of the high turnover of vendors selling at different places and the high degree of informality. Thus the local street food network, including the traditional local restaurants: the 'chop bars', is a very dynamic one, in Accra as well as in other Ghanaian cities. Both in terms of the food that is sold as well as the variety of different food joints: their structures, size, quality, hygienic circumstances and the environment in which they operate. It varies from small ventures; 'table top-vendors' to more permanent structures or chop bars, with mostly religious names like 'by his grace', 'god is great' or 'god first' chop bar.

---

[23] http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Data/Africa_file/Company/ghana04.html &
http://www.unileverghana.com/aboutus/Introducingghana/
[24] http://citiesalliance.org/node/3748

Pictures 1-4. Ventures impression.

Generally, the women (and exceptionally men) that want to start a venture look around in a neighbourhood and seize the opportunity when they realize that there are no other vendors close by that sell the same type of food. They ask permission to the owner of the land, in case it is public space belonging to the local government they talk to people in the neighbourhood and install their little structures. Some simply start in front of their own house, in case they live in a busy area where many people pass by. There are also many family businesses in which women take over from their mothers from generation to generation. Depending on the space, the cooking happens at the spot or in other 'open kitchens' like in back yards. Some women have had other jobs in the past, in restaurants or offices, but the money they can make by selling food is more than their salary would be there. Also the fact that they work independently is seen as a great benefit. The women wish to combine the domestic duties and other responsibilities with income generating activities; this is mostly a challenging task and demands a constant trade off (Maxwell et al., 2000). Overall there is little real investment in the sector, most vendors stick to small-scale ventures (Bobodu, 2010). Some explanatory elements are the influence of too much insecurity on the vending sites, low educational backgrounds of the majority of food vendors involved, difficulties of getting a loan and a day-to-day survival attitude. The street food trade is crucial for many family incomes and nutritional status (Tinker, 2003); petty traders and street food vendors have the largest percentage of food secure households, of which one third female is headed (Levin et al., 1999). This corresponds to my findings on the most important reasons to go into food vending:

"Because sometimes I go around and don't sell anything (the cloths), but the food I always sell something and the children get something to eat."
(Myriam, member Kotobabi, 29 Jan. 2014)

The prices of street foods are relatively low, as compared to formal restaurants and it is possible for the consumers to decide themselves on the portions. You can for example buy one ball of

Kenkey for 50 Pesewa, and an amount of fried fish for the equivalent varying from two to six GHc[25]. The same counts for *fufu* and the desired amount of meat or fish, as for *Waakye, Jollof rice, Banku, Redred,* etc. (see box 1. for the most familiar types of street foods). Street foods thus provide an affordable option for many (poor) urban dwellers and similarly the proximity aspect makes the street foods an attractive choice. The great many vendors are the persons who can provide a large general public with a tasty 'home-made meal'.

Box 1. Familiar street foods

Food type	Names
Cereals and legume foods	Kenkey, Tuozafi (TZ), Banku, Hausa Koko, Waayke, Omotuo, fried rice (*check-checks*), Jollof rice, plain rice, Indomie,
Roots and tubers	Fufu, Kokonte, fried plantain, fried yam, fried cocoyam, roasted plantain, roasted yam, roasted cocoyam, Kelewele, Ampesie, Gari
Soups and stews	Groundnut soup, palm nut soup, light soup (goat, beef, cow leg, fish pepper soup), Okro soup, Kontomire, Agoushie, vegetable stew (cabbage, carrot, cucumber), garden egg stew
Meat, poultry and fish	Beef/fish stew, Khebab, fried/boiled egg, fried turkey tail, roasted/fried/grilled chicken, grilled/fried fish, grilled sausages

(Adapted from Johnson et al., 2006)

The importance of street foods for food provisioning becomes clear in many researches (see e.g. Tinker 1997, FAO, 2007, 2012; Cohen et al., 2000). Maxwell et al. (2000) found evidence that on average 32% of the household budget went to street food purchase, and even up to 40% among poorer residents. In terms of calorie intake roughly 30% comes from street foods. They are an important source of carbohydrates, the main component of most diets. In Ghana's traditional diets carbohydrates are predominantly found in the starchy staples of grains and tubers: plantain, maize, cassava and yam (Salm & Falola, 2002). The total amount that is spent on food is at least half of the total household budget, and up to 70% among the poorest one-fifth of the urban households (Maxwell et al., 2000). Nevertheless, the consumers show ambivalent behaviour and responses. An estimated 85% of the Accra citizens patronize street foods to a bigger or lesser extent. Contrary to what is often assumed, they belong to all different socio-economic classes. At the same time the majority hold a negative attitude towards street vending in general; 77% opine that vendors should not be allowed to sell their products on or alongside the roads or on street sidewalks (WB, 2010; see also Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008). This probably has to do with the aspirations of many citizens for a more organized city with planned, ordered and well-controlled eating-places. As Sennett (2008) argues that unqualified labour is often seen as being a loser in the process of modern rationalization, in the economic as well as in the social sense. In the meantime consumers make happily use of this practice that is deeply rooted and incorporated in society.

The local government does endeavour to get a grip on the informal sector of street food vending. However, there is little or nothing done in informing and sensitizing the street food vendors on the registration process in force in the area they wish to operate and the local government often practices ambiguous and repressive policies (Bobodu, 2010). Furthermore the great diversity in structures, sizes and professionalism creates a thin line between the 'informal'

---

[25] The Cedi, ¢, is the Ghanaian currency, with Pesewa as cent. At the time of the research the Cedi was at an exchange rate of approximately 3,2 Euro, though currently the Cedi is rapidly devaluating.

food vendor and the more 'formal' chop bar. There is little clarity and much inconsistency when it comes to regulations, the tax system and the responsibilities of the different governmental departments involved. They are in addition not accounted in national economic statistics, leading to an absence of enabling policies, regulations and organization to support the sector (ibid).

The focus, politically and of the general public, is thus often on associated risks and negative aspects of the phenomenon, in addition to the food safety concerns also on sanitation problems (waste accumulation in the streets and the congestion of wastewater drains), traffic congestion in the city also for pedestrians (occupation of sidewalks by street vendors and traffic accidents), illegal occupation of public or private space, and social problems (child labour, unfair competition to formal trade etc.) (FAO, 2007). The issue of food safety is currently highest on the Ghanaian research and policy agenda. Much research has been done on microbial quality of the foods sold on the streets of Accra (see e.g. Mensah et al., 2002; GoG, 2012; Tomlins et al, 2005, Tortoe et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2006). Varying results are found from the technical samples taken, especially among the different types of food. The studies showed that some foods are intrinsically safer than others, for example *Waakye* and *Ga Kenkey* were generally tested as safe to eat, while *fufu* revealed more contaminated cases, due to ways of preparation, temperature and pH rate (Tortoe et al., 2013). In a WHO bulletin (Mawusi, 2006) was concluded that in fact most of the food served in the streets of Accra was safe for consumption. Traditional preparation methods, such as a long cooking time and lactic acid fermentation that sterilized the foods and kill some food spoilage bacteria, contribute to that food safety. Reheating food, and products such as meat and fresh salads cause a higher hazard. In the Ghana national urban policy action plan (GoG, 2012) there is a call for public education on food hygiene and public health to sensitize consumer and providers, enforce regulations to ensure safe public food and protection of consumer health, better field inspections and control. This is all to be executed by the metropolitan assemblies (the AMA in Accra) and specifically the environmental health officers (EHOs) who have to ensure the food vendors meet some minimal requirements. The research findings on the implementation of these policy plans within the city of Accra will be presented in chapter six.

4.3 Ghana Traditional Caterers Association

"Aduane Pa", response "Ema ahooden"

This expression in the native Akan language[26] is the motto of the association, and means something like 'good/healthy food', 'gives strength and good health'. Their emblem is a pot on fire (see pictures 5 & 6). The Ghana Traditional Caterers Association (GTCA) started its formation in 1988, and was officially inaugurated in 1992 and registered as a private organization for catering and food services with the Registrar General's Department as a Company Limited by Guarantee. This timing does not seem to be a coincidence since 1992 marked the beginning of Ghana's democracy with a referendum to draft a new constitution and free elections (Whitfield, 2003). A few inspired caterers from Accra and Kumasi set up the association, with the help of the ministry of social welfare (Mr. Ansong, personal communication). They realized that 'food is health', but that this was not always reinforced by some food sellers. As is stated in their national constitution booklet, they wanted "to weed out

---

[26] Akan is also known as Twi and Fante. Twi is the southern lingua franca, aside from the official English language, and spoken by the majority. Given the large Ga community, also Ga is widely used in Accra.

the 'mercenaries' form the patriotic members"; in line with the thought of 'he profits most, he who serves best'.

Pictures 5 & 6. The GTCA emblem and motto.

The associations' overall goals are twofold: first to ensure healthy food for Ghanaian consumers, and second to form a united front and to contribute to the members' general welfare. Box 2 below shows the official aims of the association taken up in their national constitution that was written in 1998 and took effect from September 18th that same year.

Box 2. Aims of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association

a) To endeavour to make members of the association see the need for healthy food and also to help members maintain and attain better and efficient cooking methods.
b) To address itself to the problems of sanitation and health.
c) To seek members' general welfare in sickness and hospitalisation, in death, funerals and national disasters (e.g. fire outbreak, flood etc).
d) To endeavour to clarify government policies of food, health and sanitation to its members.
e) The association will see to the members' growth and progress.

The association is nationally organized over the ten different regions of Ghana, and has national, regional, district and zonal branches. They focus on micro- small- and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs) and especially try to pay attention to the two facets of welfare and business development. As became clear during this research, an additional aim they currently aspire is the promotion of traditional Ghanaian dishes. They are a membership-based organization; where the members are the users of the services, as well as they are the owners and managers of the organization (Unifem, 2005). Currently they have around 25.000 members nationwide, yet exact data are not available; all registration happens on paper and highly fluctuates. Over all, only a small proportion of the total amount of vendors is member of any vendor association; in a study by Tortoe et al. (2013) 75% of vendors in Accra did not belong to any association. The GTCA, unlike the name might suggest, includes all food vendors, from raw fruit sellers to successful chop bar owners (among them the executives). They would like to see all food vendors organized, and membership as an obligation, since:

"Cooking for the mass is very different from that for the family."
(Hajia, vice president GTCA, 3 Dec. 2013)

Most of them are non- or semi-literate, in an age range from sixteen to almost seventy years old. The association organizes, in cooperation with other parties, all sorts of trainings especially on food safety, food handling, personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness. Yet, as a predominantly female association, also on topics that are not directly related to food vending, examples are: tuberculosis prevention and control, safer sex and HIV/Aids, breast cancer, girl education and child labour. At the social level they sometimes advice and arbitrate in family, relationships and other social matters and their welfare system can provide financial support in times of difficulty or bereavement, which often heavily affect members' businesses. Membership is open at all times to those involved in preparation of food sold to the general public.

The association gets partly financed by government institutions like the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), the AMA, private sector companies like Nestlé and Unilever, foreign NGOs and institutions such as FAO and WHO. They apply themselves for funds and at times use their own resources. The fact that they formed themselves seems to contribute to the relative sustainability of the association. This in contrast to those associations that are set up by external agencies, are donor driven and tend to fall apart as soon as funding finishes (Lyon, 2003; Seferiadis, 2009). The GTCA falls under the Ghana Tourism Federation (Ghatof) together with 21 other associations, such as the alliances of hotels, restaurants, bars and travel agencies that joined together. Ghatof on its turn is linked to the ministry of tourism as a private sector arm; the GTCA can thus officially channel any claims or other interest through this organization. The link of traditional caterers with tourism was often expressed in interviews and in documentation; 'without food, tourism is not complete'. The idea is that the street food vendors can provide a culturally authentic experience to tourists and visitors to Ghana through local dishes, which projects the image of the country in a positive light. Tourists spend money, which is good for the street food vendors' businesses and the country as a whole (Mr. Anim, president Ghatof, personal communication). They are furthermore member of the council for indigenous business associations (CIBA). The GTCA attempted to become part of the Trade Unions Congress (TUC), who opened up to the affiliation of informal worker associations (Lindell, 2010), to strengthen their position. However, up till now this has been without success. It is important to mention that in Ghana the activity of most associations and their cooperation tends to vary considerably. For instance there was the demerger of a few former executives of the GTCA who set up their own association: the Indigenous Caterers Association of Ghana (ICAG), due to some internal leadership issues and rivalry (Mr. Ansong and Mr. Anim, personal communication). The ICAG fall under Ghatof as well and have the same goals of promoting indigenous foods and its safe consumption. The GTCA is thus not the only party attempting to empower the local street food network; several others are involved, as well as some chop bar associations. Often this led to some confusion among informants; the boundaries of which people and organized activities belong to which association were in many cases not so clear and should be taken into account while reading the thesis.

After giving this background information, the next three chapters will present the empirical findings of the study. This will be done according to the three different research questions that were created and set in the research outline (see chapter 3). In each chapter we aim to find an answer to one of the questions that was set. Starting with the interaction of global and local dynamics and its influence on the street food network.

Chapter 5. The glocal street food dynamics

As outlined in the previous chapters, our modern food system got a globalized character, and Ghana is no exception. Several processes were identified; food is increasingly seen and traded as a commodity, transnational food corporations (TFCs) got a bigger influence and the organization of the Ghanaian food system is now more steered by global governance institutions (such as the WHO, FAO and IMF) organizing trade and implementing global standards. In addition, global media and product advertising and the rising number of people travelling all over the world and exchanging food cultures, practices and recipes contribute to the formation of a 'global imaginary' (Phillips, 2006). At the same time one can observe a growing number of initiatives by civil actors who collectively aim to make changes in the current dominant food system and strive for a re-valuation of traditional foods. Using a network approach that goes beyond old dichotomy theories of opposing global - local, consumer – producer, and paying genuine attention to all actors in the network and its power structure, this chapter will present the empirical findings on the inquiry on the current dynamics of global and local influences within the street food network of Accra. It will attempt to give insight into the interaction and the negotiations of the two spheres and its mutual impacts. It starts with highlighting the most apparent developments in the food supply system and continues with the findings on the mixture (hybridization) of food recipes and the current dietary convergence in terms of food demand, partly under influence of transnational food corporations. It is important to keep in mind that the two processes of food supply and demand are highly interrelated in the sense that on the one hand urban consumers in Ghana gradually diversify their diets and include more 'modern' patterns, like an increase in 'quicker' and more pre-packaged food; the supply chain responds to this changing demand. On the other hand we could say that the broadened offer in food options and the diversified food supply chains causes alteration of diets. This is an interrelated process, which especially becomes apparent in a city like Accra. Lastly the changing hygienic circumstances and food quality demands will come to the forefront; further indicating an integration of global standards, mixed and negotiated within the local context.

5.1 The street food supply system

In the discussion on *glocal* food systems and its empowerment, the food supplies to the food vendors and the use of locally produced food items are indispensable elements. The vendors are in effect 'processors of raw agricultural produce into consumable foods' (Trager, 1987:246). They procure the link between farming and food consumption. Or to cite Lévi-Strauss (in Sennett, 2008:189) who described gastronomy as 'a narrative, with a beginning (raw ingredients), a middle (their combination and cooking) and an end (eating); 'all stages should be included' and it is about 'imagining the whole process'. Thus also when it comes to the street food-vending network, we need to include the beginning of the story. An elaborate inventory of the food supply system towards the food vendors and the origin of the product is beyond the scope of this thesis, instead the research mainly looked into some relevant aspects, such as: the promotion of food products produced within the country and the practice and possibilities for production that is done closer to the city; (peri-) urban agriculture. Out of previous literature and research we distinguished the line of thought that more localized food supply chains are less susceptible to volatile world markets, more environmental sustainable and socially just than long and distant food chains (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Oosterveer & Sonneveld, 2012). They are believed to lead to more empowered and resilient areas (Wiskerke, 2009). This study looked at these considerations within Accra's street food network.

To describe the promotion of local food products we start with its primary producers: the farmers. The important role that farmers play for an agricultural country like Ghana in which around 60% of its population is employed in agriculture (MOFA, 2010) is broadly recognized. It is even celebrated on the national farmers' day; a public holiday celebrated each year on the first Friday of December since 1988, to honour all the hard working farmers. All over the country there are festivities, hence also in Accra. This year the nationwide theme was 'reducing post-harvest losses for sustainable food security and nutrition'. This issue is still a major problem in Ghana, especially for grains and cassava. At the celebration, at a public square in the Kotobabi neighbourhood, representatives from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) and the AMA held some laudatory talks about farmers and their work, and certificates and prices (fertilizers, mattresses, wheelbarrows etc.) were handed out to the most successful farmers and the best-organized associations. Some promotion for farming is most welcome since the general perception among youth is that farming is something for the old and illiterate, young people prefer an office job in the city. In one of the interviews with a young vegetable farmer, on the question whether he wanted his children to go into farming, he answered he would make sure they could do something different. The government wants to attract more youth into the sector by increasing access to financial and mechanised services and technology and land (FASDEPII, 2007). This might be an essential initiative for empowerment of the agricultural sector, to keep a certain amount of local control of the countries' food production, with young people as driving forces and perhaps even to counter large-scale urbanization. Yet at the same time the government is criticised for focussing too much on export crops, often supported by donor agencies that show great interest in cocoa for instance, and investing too little in the production of domestic food crops (Wolter, 2009).

Attempts are being made however to change this. The ministry of food and agriculture (MoFA) has a target to promote local food production and consumption. The ministry in its attainment of food security, by them defined as "good quality nutritious food, hygienically packaged and attractively presented, available in sufficient quantities all year round and located at the appropriate places at affordable prices" (FASDEPII, 2007: 24), has the strategy to focus on the development of the five staple crops: maize, rice, yam, cassava and cowpea. Especially the department of Women in Agricultural Development (WIAD) is mandated with this task. According to a lady working for this department and coordinating several programmes, it is important to promote local food, as in any other country.

> *"We should be proud of what we have and it's a relieve on our import dependency."*
> *(Paulina, WIAD, 23 Dec. 2013)*

An example programme she mentioned[27] is when they trained local bakers how to use locally produced cassava dough for their bread instead of wheat, which is mostly imported, to both use local production and to make the bread more nutritious. Especially for some products, mainly rice, consumption of local products is low. First of all because of the simple fact that Ghana is not yet self-sufficient in its rice production, yields do not comply with demand; approximately 75% of rice consumption is constituted by imports (Quaye, 2012). Nonetheless also cultural believes and prejudices play a role in this story. Locally produced rice has a bad reputation, and all vendors said that they prefer to buy Asian perfumed rice because this is expected to be better quality rice; otherwise 'consumers won't buy it'. The Ghanaian government, with international help, has done a lot over the past years in programmes that targeted to improve the production and post-harvest handling of rice (FASDEPII, 2007). The rudimentary and small-

---

[27] See also: http://www.modernghana.com/news/171625/1/cassava-maize-composite-flour-launched.html

scale production process of local rice, and particularly the de-stoning process have been evolving considerably. Local rice is also 'perfumed' now and does usually no longer contain stones, as was often the case in the past. Many people are not yet aware or convinced of this improvement though and stick to their belief that local rice is not good. Better promotion, marketing and sensitizing the consumer on Ghanaian quality rice could give an impulse to the demand and thus production of local rice. In addition, several people indicated that much deceiving takes place; local rice is put into bags with the logo of 'Thai perfume rice' so the trader can get a higher price. The difference is mostly unnoticed, yet the conception in the variation of rice quality is the more present.

"It depends on taste. If the government comes up with a policy in which we should eat what we grow, what we are actually seriously promoting, why not? We will take that into our local cuisine. We need a policy to back that. But as humans as we are, if the foreign rice is there and the aroma is inviting you, but we should also do our rice in a way that is inviting. I think that is about it." (Bella, owner Traffix restaurant, 29 Jan. 2014)

Informants indicated that except for rice, the majority of the fresh food products of staples, fruits and vegetables sold at the urban markets are produced inside the different regions of Ghana, or within the region of West Africa. Products such as beans, cassava, plantain, corn, tomatoes and onions are, depending on the quality and the season, produced within Ghana or imported from neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso, Togo and Cote d'Voir or Nigeria. Porter et al. (2007) found evidence that, within the context of increased trade, Ghana indeed largely retained their vigorous traditional systems of market supply that interlink vast regions and are crucial to current patterns of urban food supply.

Furthermore, in light of WIAD efforts to stimulate shorter and local food supply chains, it is proposed that the street food network and urban farming may be good strategies to bring production closer to consumption areas and to achieve higher self-sufficiency. When asking where the vendors bought their products they would all declare that they purchase most of their needed ingredients at the traditional open-air, markets of Accra. Depending on the food types sold and the size of their venture, they do this several times a week, and some go every day because they want their products fresh. They said their relationship with the market women was good and cordial; they build up trust relations with them and they can sometimes buy products on credit, if needed. Also the food vendors can bargain with them, the prices are not fixed. Another option is delivery at their stands, as was sometimes the case for products such as bags of corn dough. A few other vendors buy their products directly at the farm, in villages nearby the city, in case they have the time and resources to go there and buy in bigger amounts. However most vendors prefer to buy from the market women because of long-lasting relationships and the proximity of all products. None of them bought directly from urban farmers. As confirmed by the farmers themselves: given the small quantities most food vendors buy each time, it is not even possible for street food vendors to buy directly at the farm because the farmers prefer to sell a whole bed at once. So even in the rare case the vegetables were grown within the urban or peri-urban area, most of it would still be sold at the urban markets. The vegetables and poultry farmers who were interviewed within the city of Accra did have some direct links with wholesalers or restaurants but not with small food vendors directly. To consumers, the vicinity of food vendor stalls and the price of foods proved to be much more important than the locality of production, this did not seem to be much of their concern.

Overall the urban farming sector is declining in the greater Accra region, due to rapid urbanization in which more land is used and reserved for residency than for agriculture (Maxwell et al., 1998; 2000). The interviewees indeed confirmed that agricultural land is visibly decreasing with the expansion of the city and construction of more real estate. An additional

difficulty is water supply; urban farmers are believed to use untreated and polluted wastewater from open drains, streams and rivers for irrigation. The AMA restricted the growing and sales of crops by sharpening its byelaws on open-space farming in 1995 (METASIP, 2010). There is no sufficient regulation and control to monitor their practices and therefore neither government officials nor consumers are enthusiastic about urban vegetable farming, as an anonymous consumer uttered: 'local production is good, but the producers have to guarantee quality stuff'. However there are possibilities that might have to be explored further:

"Let's say, fish ponds. People eat fish almost every day. In Accra, there are so many areas where we could do that. Fishes like Tilapia, they are good and very expensive. So we just have to synthesize the peoples mind and give them the education. In their own small way. Or as a food vendor, let's say you sell yam, if you have a back yard, you can even turn that into a yam farm. If you are financially handicapped, you can do that and produce yam in your own back yard and sell it to generate capita and use that capita to invest in your business."
(Mr. Anim, president Ghatof, 17 Jan. 2014)

The same counts for poultry farming, mainly for the production of eggs that are widely consumed within Accra and which faces a lot of competition from outside the city and the country. Likewise to Ghanaian rice promotion, it is government policy to increase local poultry farming to become less dependent on imports (FASDEPII, 2007). Farmers in Accra see opportunities, as the following quote illustrates.

"Now there is less planting, less crops and vegetables, but poultry farming is becoming more popular. It is a good business. You always make profit with it."
(Kevin, urban poultry farmer, 18 Feb. 2014)

Though the interviewees designated that much more financial and educational investment is desirable to make these initiatives into a success. Aside from local production, there are a few other dynamics the study looked into. Referring to the complexity of food networks, Tinker (1999) in her research on street food vending already pointed out that the immense variety of foods sold and of relationships among the vendors and their suppliers make generalizations about the trade problematic, especially with the arrival of new powerful players like modern supermarket chains and other transnational food corporations (TFCs). The respondents in this research indicated that modern supermarket chains are upcoming (the South-African Shoprite in particular) but certainly up to now do not replace the long-established traditional supply patterns (see as well Field et al., 2010; Crush & Frayne, 2011). Pritchard and Fagan (1999) moreover underlined that distribution chains in developing countries tend to be much more fractured than for instance in Europe or North America, the great many small shops, roadside stalls, and mobile vendors continue to make up a significant proportion of the retail sector. The largest transnational food companies in Ghana: Nestlé and Unilever do play an important role in the street food supply. It was outlined in chapter four that that they are present in the country since the '60s. Their long history in Ghana provides a clear competitive advantage. 'Often, these actors are linked to distributors through locally embedded arrangements constructed through institutions of trust and family' (Pritchard & Fagan, 1999:15). The companies became aware and alert of local traditions and nuances. The canned and processed products they provide, and which are increasingly used by street food vendors, are distributed to local markets and small retailers, from which the vendors buy. Another option is that street food vendors get those items supplied by couriers of the company. Examples of those items are Ideal milk (condensed milk), *Milo* (hot chocolate), teabags and *Indomie* bags (instant noodles). Both Unilever and Nestlé have a processing plant in the harbour city of Tema, which lies adjacent to Accra. The other most influential company in the street food sales, the one that manufactures *Indomie* noodles has a processing plant in Nigeria since 1995. Previously, *Indomie* was only

produced in Indonesia, but because of a growing popularity in West Africa they now produce within this area. The food is as well abundantly advertised on posters throughout the city. This is a good example of how transnational food corporations increasingly spread their processing plants, distribution sites and advertisement over countries worldwide.

Picture 7. Advertisement in Accra.

Summarizing the analysis of the street food supply system we can conclude that the supply still largely relies on traditional, small-scale retail and market systems, and the strong linkage with the agricultural hinterland remains. Some government's attempts, particularly by the WIAD department, were identified to further strengthen local production. Yet much has to be done to increase production, to popularize agriculture among youth, and especially to promote the consumption of local produce. Opposite to industrialized, high-income countries in the West where we see a shift towards a preference of locally produced food, in Accra there is little trust in Ghanaian rice and vegetables that are grown within the cities' boundaries. There are concerns about processing methods and the use of contaminated water. Societal perceptions such as social justice and environmental sustainability that drive the demand for re-localized production in Western countries are not of main concern in Ghana. Overall, urban agriculture is declining because of decreasing availability of land in a growing city, however aquaculture and keeping of livestock could be good opportunities for local production. We found that direct links between urban farmers and vendors, that is often promoted in light of shorter supply chains, are not possible because of the small amounts that food vendors buy at a time and which is not profitable for farmers. Lastly we saw that upcoming supermarket chains do not yet have a noticeable impact on the street food supply, however the transnational food corporation of Nestlé did already strongly incorporate into the traditional channels of supply. Their long existing presence in the country made them sensitive to local developments and to subsequently adjust their marketing strategies to the changes in demand. In the subsequent chapters we will go further into the role of TFCs within the street food network, starting with discussing the street food demand.

5.2 Street food demand; hybridization of recipes and corporate influence

Following from the supply side, we will now turn to the dietary demands for street foods and notice how supply and demand are strongly interrelated; consumer demand can be met, but also be created. As was indicated in the introducing chapters, Accra knows a long history of street food vending. Food, cooking and eating habits are an important part of culture, with its specific customs. Yet they are under constant change. Currently the demand for ready to eat foods is growing. Some reasons are the expansion of the city, the adoption of urbanizing

lifestyles and more people commuting who like to eat their food on the way. It is likely that the present and even growing poverty gap will keep many urban inhabitants dependent on street foods because they are a much cheaper source of calories than products from supermarkets and formal fast food restaurants. This part of the case study results will show the transformations in the street foods demand and the actors and processes influencing these changes.

Ghana traditionally knows a rather simple, yet favourable cuisine, with thick, well-seasoned stews and soups served with staple foods like yams, plantain, rice and corn. Despite a growing number of international restaurants and supermarkets in Accra, offering a huge supply of imported continental products the study indicated there is an unimpaired popularity of the traditional local foods with common ones such as *Waayke, Hausa Koko, Fufu, Kenkey, Banku with Tilapia* and the like (see box 1). They still play a central role in daily food practices. They are prepared at home as well as sold in restaurants, on the streets and in chop bars. Even the new South-African supermarket chain 'Shoprite' offers freshly prepared *Waayke* and *Kelewele* (fried plantain with ginger). The sorts of food cooked were traditionally roughly divided according to different ethnic groups. For example *Hausa Koko,* a porridge made from millet or sorghum originally from the North and *Ga Kenkey,* fermented maize with cassava, served with *shito* (a Ga word for pepper with fish) and spicy red sauce, that is mostly prepared by the Ga, the indigenous people of Accra. Yet now this got much more dispersed, the ethnic recipes became part of the national Ghanaian cuisine. Appadurai (1988) argues that food can indeed play an important role in imagining nations. He furthermore describes in his article on the creation of a national cuisine in India via cookbooks, that food boundaries are dissolving relatively easily as compared to other ethnic and class boundaries. A certain pride of the national Ghanaian cultural heritage, with reference to their forefathers and mothers, was omnipresent. They get a place especially because of the expanded global space (Wilk, 1999). Typically, Ghanaians could say they have not eaten all day if their meals did not contain any soup, stew or pepper sauce, without this, they are no 'real food'.

"Mm traditional means, our own food, Ghanaian, African food, you see our own food. Like something, like, we have continental dishes, we have like your food, but when you say traditional, is our own food, our own way of preparing our food. Like Fufu, Kontomi with soup or sauce." (Alberta, member Osu, 31 Dec. 2013)

Traditional menus within a culture largely rely on customary practices and supportive believes; the authority and legitimacy of those customary practices are in particular based on their long-established status and all kind of positive attributes connected to it (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997). One of them is the nutritional value that is strongly associated with traditional foods. More than once the statement was expressed that the local, traditional foods are more nutritious than foreign (or also called 'continental') foods.

"So we have to go back to our local food, it's more nutritious."
(Grace Ofosu, president GTCA, 30 Dec. 2013)

There certainly is a long-existent influx of 'new' recipes and products emerging in Ghanaian society, in the streets and on the markets. As earlier studies concluded: "… in the course of the second half of the 20th century, there has emerged a West African street-food culture that has built on traditional African elements while incorporating European and even Asian foodstuffs" (Kraig & Sen, 2013:399). 'Non-traditional' products such as bread (made of imported wheat, not cassava), served with butter and fried eggs and tea have already been 'in the system' for a very long time; they can be found at any time of the day, are widely accepted and show an increasing number of vendors.

Street vendors, as small entrepreneurs, illustrated to be very creative in spotting new business opportunities and respond to changing diets and consumer demands (see also Omari et al., 2013). They continuously apply new innovations that leads to a greater variety of food products; a variation in tastes, in packaging, in the combination of food ingredients etc. (Guerrero et al., 2009). Two of the most remarkable new trends, are the upcoming of vendors selling *Indomie* (instant noodles, mostly accompanied with eggs or sausages) and *check-checks* (ventures that sell fried rice, mostly served with fried chicken, *Shito,* and cole slaw). These two types of foods have increased enormously in popularity over the last couple of years. Pinali and Kwhaja (2004) have called these '*copycat*' street foods where western-based foods are 'localized'; food stalls that try to mimic fast food outlets and their branded products. Another designation is 'local fast food' (Musaiger & d'Souza, 2007). Those are foods made and served quickly using traditional recipes and adjusted to the local taste. In Ghana the 'local taste' is typically hot and spicy. The categorization into traditional and continental foods and how exactly the nutritional aspects are connected to it were however interpreted in different ways and largely disputed, and above all, fluid. Many different responses were given to the question on the meaning of 'traditional' and makes clear, in light of the theory on *glocalization* and conventions, that this is a constructed and negotiated concept. A good example is rice. Rice consumption rapidly grew after independence, especially in urban areas and increasing consumption continues today. Interestingly enough, *Jollof rice* (cooked in tomato sauce with spices) and *Waakye* (rice with beans) are widely accepted as traditionally Ghanaian, whereas the upcoming *check-checks* are interpreted as new, continental food. The difference herein is the cooking technique; stir-frying instead of boiling the rice and the different flavour that is given to the food by seasonings.

In a changing society towards a faster pace of life, quick and easy cooking might be preferred. Especially in a growing city like Accra, as Sonnino (2009) referred at cities as food system innovators; it is in these areas where transformations go fastest and new demands and innovations are made. Starting vendors try to seize those new opportunities and are responsive to the growing demand for street foods, also among a growing middle class. In a neighbourhood where other types of food are already covered, they broaden the offer. Furthermore the traditional foods take a long time to prepare; it is done from scratch and is very labour-intensive work. Apart from expanding the offer, a reason often given by vendors selling *Indomie* and fried rice, was indeed because it 'moves faster'; more customers can be served. Also a gender gap becomes evident. In Accra mostly men run the *check-checks*, and you see few men selling the traditional recipes (Omari et al., 2013). A plausible explanation is the customary practice of women passing on their knowledge to their female offspring and not particularly to their sons. The food products offered also depend on the time of the day; traditional recipes with mainly root staples can mostly be found in the morning, for lunch and in afternoon, and fried rice and noodles are generally presented in the evening and at night in small ventures. Although also this is changing, as this statement on fried rice by a chop bar owner and executive of the association shows, the strict lines between 'traditional' foods sold in chop bars and foreign foods at 'table tops' are blurring.

"It is there but we were not used to selling that in chop bars. The food vendors are the whole time. They change what they sell, if somebody comes, I want this... then you add it."
(Bertha, chairperson Kaneshie, 4 Jan. 2014)

Consumers are however not the only ones who instigate the vendors' broadening of the range of food products they offer. Differing influencing powers underlie these comprehensive hybridizations and changes in food preferences. Other important actors in this street food network are the transnational food corporations. Early in the research process, the attention was drawn towards the Nestlé Company. Their brands are visibly present and most vendors and

other stakeholders in the street food network enthusiastically mentioned them as sponsors providing training and products. In one of the interviews with a Nestlé marketing manager she explained the way they work with the traditional caterers. The company noticed that the street food sector is a growing sector and that the vendors are using their products in the preparation of the foods they sell.

"We realized that gradually people are eating more outside than in-home. So if we then only stick to our in-home business, there will be some years to come that Nestlé business will be shrinking." (Bridget, Nestlé, 4 Feb. 2014)

About eight years ago they set up their own companies' associations, *Maffag* for food vendors using Maggi products and *Nestag* for those selling beverages, mainly tea, Milo (hot chocolate) and Ideal milk. They present themselves as 'partners in change' helping vendors to grow their businesses, and a win-win situation with them training and sponsoring the caterers who on their turn purchase and visibly promote Nestlé products. And with success, Nestlé products are indeed visible everywhere and the vendors like to be associated with the company; they proudly wear *Maggi* aprons and t-shirts and decorate their tables with *Maggi* tablecloths. As mentioned earlier on copycat foods: the street food vendors like to imitate the branded products, they like their venture to be seen as a '*Maggi place'*. This is free advertisement for the company because hotel and restaurant managers would make them pay for it. They make use of door-to-door delivery where a salesperson advertises the Nestlé assortment, and makes special offers that if the retailer for example buys an extra amount of Ideal milk cans, they add a frying pan or container to preserve their rice, for free. The company tries to fit their strategies to local practices in order to find the best affiliation, thus making indigenous food appealing to the public while maintaining the local taste.

"They have their own local way, that they love so much, which we like. Street foods should be different from restaurant food. Street food is Ghanaian; you taste our spices in it. We want them there; we don't want them to act as the restaurant people." (Bridget, Nestlé, 4 Feb. 2014)

In this phrase with 'our spices' she seems to refer to 'Ghanaian spices', however they are thus more and more interchangeably used with '*Maggi* spices'. As Omari et al. (2013) pointed out that the traditional spices such as ginger, black pepper, aniseed, cloves, thyme and nutmeg have been gradually reducing over the years and are replaced by imported spices, seasoning and flavour enhancers. Nestlé at the so called 'product usage workshop' they provide training and instruct people on how to use Maggi in their soups and stews. In one of those workshops in Tamale, the biggest city in the North of Ghana, their way of working became clear. It was a festive event lasting almost a full day and gave a good impression about the enthusiasm for the company that respondents had been talking about in interviews earlier.

Box 3. Diary notes, 13 Feb. 2014

After the participants had arrived in buses from the entire surroundings, with transportation also offered by Nestlé, everyone got a t-shirt that they joyfully put over their traditional clothing, which had a comic effect on me and was a clear visual indication of hybridization. The workshop started with an opening prayer, followed by a 'warming up'. The presenter on the stage yelled 'Nescafe', responded by a loud and in unison 'gives you a good feeling'. And 'Ideal milk', 'is the best', repeated two or three times and several times throughout the day. The day was filled with talks on the proper use of Maggi products, like not to add extra salt. The informative talks were interspersed with loud music and a dancing competition to keep the participants concentrated and to make sure they had a good time. Prices, like food cans, pans and aprons were handed out to the winners. There was a lot of laughing and enthusiasm. In the meanwhile food and drinks were distributed; meat pies and hot chocolate, and later fried rice with fried chicken. There was ample room for questions and comments on the use of the products. Women came forward and explained what for them the benefits are of Maggi powder in comparison to cubes in their stews, Jollof rice and Tuo Zafi; 'it is easy and quick and the latter become hard after some time, so powder is more convenient'. Two ladies did a cooking demonstration on the stage on how to prepare fried rice with fried eggs, using Maggi seasoning. Also there was a little part on financial management, explaining for instance they have to calculate their expenses and the profit they want to make (and to be careful not to give away too much food to friends and family, but to treat their practice as a real business). At the end of the day there was room for sales, with the products highly piled up outside of the building and the women waiting in line to buy the boxes with discount and promotion articles. 'You buy our products, and we are going to serve you better'. In the time of waiting some women did their usual praying (in the North the population is predominantly Islamic) on the little plastic Maggi tablecloths they had just received.

Pictures 8 & 9. Promotion materials

This is a good illustration of how a food-related transnational corporation internalizes its power into the local retail food economy (Philips, 2006). They penetrated the local street food sector by replacing natural seasonings and products. Maggi became synonymous with all seasoning spices (even if they are from a different brand). As Pritchard and Fagan (1999) describe on Nestlé in South-East Asia, 'it has become an iconic signifier of the incursions of global brand name capitalism in the diets of many Southeast Asians' (p.12). The same can be said for Ghana, where the company also has a long history and thus slowly integrated into the diets. 'Nestlé utilises sophisticated marketing and branding strategies to attach value to its products beyond the factory gate' (ibid: 14). They want to attach concepts such as 'value', 'quality' and 'healthiness' to their products and reinforce the idea that the *Maggi* brand is one 'they can trust'. This seems to be exactly what is happening within the street food network in Accra, as

endorsed in the interview with the Nestlé marketing manager when she mentioned their realization of the growing significance of 'out of home' products. The corporate name gets connected to the food stands and the products that are sold. In other words: the public convention, the recognition vendors and consumers give to the *Maggi* brand, and other Nestlé trademarks, gets strengthened. However, the response towards the products varies, among the general public, the government as well as consumers associations. The president of one of these consumers associations, Mr. Tay, explained in an interview that the new food products, as developed by TFCs like Nestlé and Unilever are embraced, as well as criticized and accused of making false health claims in developing countries where lack of legislation or enforcement of the existing legislation permits it. Such companies do invest in the development of micronutrient fortification, in an environment where according to the FAO and WHO, many people face deficiencies of such micronutrients like iron, vitamin A, iodine and zinc. They thus operate in line with WHO policy that promotes a scientific and technological approach in deficiencies in nourishment of the population in developing countries (see e.g. Phillips, 2006). Most *Maggi* tablets are iron fortified and thus contribute to health and nutrition in Ghana, yet these strategies can also be interpreted in light of expanding their market share. Or as Beardsworth and Keil (1997) argue that the South is caught up in the contradictions of the modern food system concerns on the use of food additives and loss of 'naturalness'. In the subsequent section we will continue on these changing food quality demands and the pursuit for higher hygienic circumstances within the street food network that are partly instigated by global institutions and dynamics.

To recapitulate the main points of street food demand in Accra, it has been noticed that the change of the demand takes place through varying processes. We saw first of all a growing demand for '*copycat*' street foods, in which western-based foods are mimicked; yet adjusted to local taste. Beside the distinct ingredients, the most important difference in the classification between 'traditional' and 'foreign' foods seemed to be the cooking techniques (frying or boiling) and the associated time of preparation. In growing city with a fastening way of life, quick and easy offerings are increasingly demanded, such as *check-checks* and *Indomie*. Major influencing forces are the transnational food companies; they stimulate new food innovations. They introduce new spices, products that contain micronutrient fortification and increase their market share by free advertisement, provided by the vendors who want their stands to be seen in light of the established brands. The companies endeavour to create trust in their branded products by all sorts of health claims they connect to their products and are quite successful at doing this. However, also counter forces are at stake. The notion that local, traditional foods are more nutritious than continental foods was often expressed. The study showed there is an ongoing popularity of indigenous foods. Hitherto, new influences thus lead to an expanding variety of demand, and not to a cultural homogenisation of diets as is feared by some authors (see e.g. Pingali and Khwaja, 2004; Drakakis-Smith; 1991). They assume that once the change from traditional foods to processed food is made, this is irreversible because it is easier to prepare and less time-intensive. We do not know what will happen in the future, but at present the Ghanaian traditional foods continue to enjoy great status and certainly do not fade away in a modernizing city. Not signifying though that no changes take place. The food recipes, its preparation and the circumstances of cooking and selling are not static. The next subsection will highlight hygienic transformations, which we found to be instigated by a mix of global standards and local innovations.

5.3 Changing hygienic standards and food quality demands

"Yes there are a lot of changes. You know those days a chop bar would be made of wood, just a couple of boards, then you just have a bench and a table and say 'this is a chop bar'. You have a bowl with water to wash your hands; one towel for everybody and that was it. But it has come to a time when it's been revolutionized. When everybody has its own napkin, everybody has its own soap and water to wash hands. And it has improved tremendously."
(Mr. Nii, owner Asanka Locals, 29 Jan. 2014).

This is an illustration in the pursuit for better hygienic circumstances within the system of street food sales. The transformations on hygiene, and on diets and cooking techniques as described in the previous section, are a complex interplay of a changing society with people adjusting to it and actively initiating new changes at the same time. Both global influences, with private sector actors and international standards, and consumer demand, for different products as well as for more hygienic circumstances, proved to be key driving forces for a reconstruction in hygiene criteria that are applied to the street foods in Accra.

Generally street foods have a bad reputation among the public, yet they are patronized at a large scale. A major aspect that is outside the direct control of food vendors themselves are the vending surroundings, inter alia: waste disposal, water and drainage facilities; potentially causing environmental contamination of the foods. Especially the open gutters were repeatedly bracketed together with street food sales; nearly all informants would connect the unhygienic circumstances of street food sales to the open gutters of Accra. Furthermore consumers often verbalized doubts about the street food vendors' knowledge on and the application of hygienic food handling practices; they expressed worries yet at the same time this did not hold them back from patronizing the street foods. Proximity and the personal appearance; the 'neatness' of the vendor and the place of sales were more important. Usually the established personal relationship and experiences from the past created trust among consumers in the vendors from whom they often patronize the food. As was indicated while reviewing the literature on present research and activities on street foods, most attention goes to projects on improvement of hygiene and food safety. Foreign NGOs and international institutions like FAO and WHO support many of those projects. They sponsor the programmes and public campaigns, visible on the billboards spread over the city, presenting their rules as essential for public health. The increasing attention for health, quality and nutrition of food is supposed to have an effect on the street food network and to support the transformation towards more hygienic practices. It is important to realize that those standards are not neutral, yet they have a particular (western) base. International collaborations through agencies like FAO are a driving force for change; they are a powerful player when it comes to setting the sanitary regulation norms. Examples are first the quality schemes of the Codex Alimentarius (a set of standards and guidelines related to food, food production and food safety that was set up by the United Nations in 1962 in the call for more international regulations in the system of increasing trade). Second, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP); a self-control system that all companies and people related to food preparation, processing, handling, packaging, transport and distribution can use to increase food safety by analysing potential food hazards (WHO, 2004). How is dealt specifically with the HACCP system within Accra's street food network, will be discussed in the subsequent chapter. Overall in our contemporary global food system there is a bigger role for global governance and such expertise systems (Phillips, 2006). There is a growing standardization in both the areas of production, and at the level of consumption in the form of labels and packing, in order to establish a system of trust. The push towards more expert based quality systems, the industrial conventions, is supposed to resolve uncertainty about quality by

establishing such norms and standards. However as argued in the network and convention theory, these new global standards do not translate one to one to different local contexts; they are contested and negotiated. And they are a mix between private and public standards. The local street food setting provided a context for face-to-face knowledge exchange and the predominantly tacit communication of hygienic practices proved to be highly influential in the hygiene assessment by consumers. For the situation in Accra seems to apply the same as to what Friedberg (2004) (in Field et al., 2010) argued about the situation in France where traditionally, private standards have been little codified and rely on interpersonal relationships and a mutual understanding of French culture to communicate standards. Against the background of global standards, at the streets of Accra, the research indicated that for the most part small innovations and technological improvements are applied at the local level, according to local circumstances and understanding.

What was mostly referred to was the improved hand washing techniques and the change from stalls that covered their food with nets, to the glass boxes in which the food is saved and enables the consumer to see what is inside. Both can be increasingly noticed. Funny enough people continue to call the glass boxes 'sieves' as they called the nets in the 'old days'. One informant from the Food Research Institute (FRI), Mr. Tortoe enthusiastically notified the little innovation you see every time you visit a (successful) vendor; 'first from a simple bowl and her stew, next time she bought a gas stove and a hotplate to keep it warm'. This was according to him based on what they had heard from others in their surroundings, and mainly on what was taught in trainings. Consumer organizations were one of the actors playing a role in the demand for good quality food. They educate people and make them aware of their rights as consumers so they will demand healthy and safe food. The chairman of one such organization made clear the role they have played in Ghana especially during the '90s when knowledge on consumer rights was virtually absent.

"Because for a long time the issue of consumer protection had not been on the agenda, on the government agenda, in the sense that it was not a priority. The most urgent was for consumers to get consumer goods, food on the table, they don't think about the quality of the food in that phase. That is where the consumer issues come in, giving them the right for quality of food. Does this have the right balance, the nourishment and all that. So the issue has been to first get food security, not lack of nutrition. Nutrition is now coming only recently, mostly in developed countries. So food security was on the agenda, but not nutrition. It is only now that those things are coming." (Mr. Tay, president Consumer Association of Ghana, 31 Jan. 2014)

This particular consumer organization has been part of a committee, working with the FRI and the GTCA on street food improvement by preparing certain programmes to educate the vendors and to ensure hygienic, quality food. They especially tried to enlighten the vendors on the rights of consumers since they cater for large groups of customers. The customers are not only local residents; also tourists are patronisers of the street foods. As highlighted in chapter four there is a link between tourism and street food vending, and in particular the GTCA since they fall under the Ghana Tourism Federation (Ghatof). The generally higher hygienic standards foreign tourists demand are impacting local practices; to leave a good image of Ghana to visitors, vendors are expected to live up to those standards. This is thus another example of 'global' influences integrating into 'local' practices and thereby most likely accelerating the ongoing changes towards standardization. However once again, as derived from the data of this research and also resulted from the study of Rheinländer et al. (2008), vendors' knowledge on biomedical food safety does not seem to translate directly into actual safe food practices; habitual practices largely prevail. It was for instance noticed that the type of ventures you predominantly see, highly varied among different neighbourhoods. There were more old, unsteady structures with nets in poorer areas, and bigger, more stable structures with glass

boxes and better equipment in richer parts of the city. This corresponds to the standards that are commonly applied at home. Atkinson (1995) and Mensah et al. (2005) made the important remark that street foods are hence not necessarily less hygienic than foods prepared at an in-home setting.

In all, this part of the research has shown that concerning the hygienic criteria of the street foods in Accra, local aspects like sanitation and open gutters and perceptions such as personal and venture appearance, largely prevail in the estimation of food hygiene. Small innovations like hand washing facilities and improved structures to present and store the food are perceived as much more significant than standardization schemes initiated by international institutions. The emphasis is on very small and practical changes, which might be initiated by international programmes, yet have a very local implementation.

5.4 Conclusion

In this inquiry on the current global and local dynamics within the street food network in Accra, many interesting findings were brought to the surface. We critically analysed the state of affairs and the different influences on the network. Some conclusions can be drawn, on how the supply system, the food recipes and food practices get modernized, adapted, transformed or resisted, based on negotiated conventions. The chapter started with the supply chain towards the vendors, as an indispensable part of food vending. Most products that are used by vendors, raw, fresh and processed, are bought on the urban open markets in Accra and are produced within the region of West Africa. Rice is the major exception. The preference for imported (Asian) rice was highlighted; the main reason for this choice was the mistrust in local rice production. Current attempts are made by the ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) and the Women in Agricultural Development (WIAD) department to promote local produce, however there is a long way to go to raise consumer enthusiasm for locally produced products. Agriculture within the city boundaries or in the periphery of the city is generally not perceived as a good option because of a lack of space in this expanding city and the use of wastewater. Moreover, direct links between farmers and vendors were not possible due to the small amount the vendors purchase at once. Two options for urban agriculture, namely aquaculture and poultry farms, were identified and could possibly increase self-sufficiency and give a boost to the local economy. Furthermore, despite the rising presence of supermarkets, they do by far not yet fulfil the role of main food provider; vendors, as well as individual consumers, continue to use the traditional food supply systems of markets and small retailers. We did see an increase of transnational food companies incorporating into the supply system, they make use of the existing retail channels that are based on trust and familiarity. Thus new hybrid relations are formed where formal and informal supply networks interact.

Secondly we looked into the changes in recipes and dietary demands. The respondents indicated the number of vendors is growing in general because of higher demand. Furthermore the street vendors adjust their food offerings to changing consumer diets, with examples of check-checks and vendors selling *Indomie* noodles. A clear hybridization of food recipes in the streets of Accra was detected. New products are added as well as new innovations in traditional food products are made. This is often accelerated by the influence of transnational food companies. The brands of mainly Unilever and Nestlé are visible all over the city and the food vendors like their businesses to be associated with the companies. Especially the *Maggi* brand is popular; its spices are increasingly used in all kinds of recipes. The companies are actively promoting their (micronutrient fortified) products and give training on how to use them. Hereby they aim to create trust and connect concepts as 'healthiness' and 'quality' to their

products. With their strategies of constructing trust by introducing new spices and seasonings, products with micronutrient fortification and free advertising they incorporate their power into the street food network. Vendors are largely enthusiastic about the new products. Nonetheless up to now, 'foreign' street foods seem to co-exist, complement and integrate with existing traditional foods, such as *Fufu, Waakye* and *Banku,* rather than replacing them as is sometimes feared. A mix of 'foreign' and 'traditional', or 'glocal' flavours and recipes was noticed. The results showed how local street foods are deeply embedded in daily food practices and how these practices survive in the context of global-local interactions, or even flourish in a rapidly transforming society with multiple global influences.

Similarly this is the case for hygienic food criteria. Generally food hygiene criteria are steered by the development of higher (international) standards and demands by more conscious consumers. International influences, such as foreign tourists visiting the country and an increasing number of Ghanaians travelling overseas, function as a catalyst of these changing standards. However the case study found that when it comes to hygienic practices, the focus is on small innovation that fit to the local situation. Global standards have not yet tripled down to the local level of street foods and not much standardized practices were noticed. Tacit and face-to-face knowledge exchanges continue to be the most important basis on which hygienic criteria are assessed. And besides, despite the bad reputation of street foods, they are not necessarily less hygienic than foods prepared at home. This more depends on the neighbourhood; the same practices are generally applied at an in-home setting (Atkinson, 1995).

Overall we can state that globalization processes are long present in the street food network of Accra. Clearly there is an increasing role for transnational food companies and international institutions fastening these developments and broadening the scope of influence. Street food vendors seem to use and translate these global forces for changes and improvements in their local street food businesses, referring to *glocalization* or *hybridization* processes. A wider demand for instance offers new business opportunities. Vendors mostly apply small-scale innovations, indicating a strong embeddedness of food practices largely based on habitual ways of cooking and eating. In the interplay of local and global powers all involved actors produce new meanings as they undertake their food-related practices, and continuously reshape their conventions, or intersubjective identification of rules. Vendors, consumers, government and private sector actors justify their actions and choices within these conventions, which are communally established and retained. After describing the current dynamics concerning several aspects of the street food network, the next chapter will take up the results on its organization. It will highlight the role of the local government by implementing the regulatory environment, and the position of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association with its activities within the organization of Accra's street food network.

Chapter 6: Collective organization in a disorganized setting

This chapter will give insight into the organization of street food trade in Accra and the role that is played by the local government and the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association as a civil society organization. It starts with analysing the regulatory environment concerning street food vending and its execution by local government actors. The findings will shed light on the performance of local governmental agencies to regulate this particular type of commercial activity. Subsequently we will focus on the activities by the GTCA and show how the association relates to, gets influenced by, cooperates and negotiates with other actors involved in the street food network. The results illustrate the role of the association in light of the ongoing hybridization processes of global and local developments as described in the previous chapter. Applying the critical-constructivist approach, we both analysed the activities of the various actors of the street food vending network critically, as well as we looked constructively at possibilities for change. In earlier writings on the empowerment process (see section 2.3) we identified several levels on which empowerment can take place. One of them is at the level of organizations, with the components of intra- inter- and extra- organizational empowerment (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). In this chapter we use the same division and subsequently discuss the consequences for community empowerment. The chapter presents on the one hand the empirical findings concerning the perspective of government officials in their endeavours to regulate street food vending. And on the other hand the perspective of the GTCA executive leaders on their views and efforts for empowerment. It is important to recall the association is a membership-based organization, meaning that the executives as owners and managers of the organization are at the same time users of the services (Unifem, 2005). The perspective of regular food vendors, members and non-members of the association, and their aspirations for personal empowerment will be discussed in chapter seven.

6.1 The regulatory environment

The local government plays a determining role in regulating Accra's street food network, by enforcing their specific bylaws, performing their inspections and by monitoring the functioning of the street food vendors. It is argued that in the globalizing food system there is a decreasing role for nations states (Phillips, 2006), yet there are still the national governmental agencies that provide the legal framework in which both market players (TFCs) and civil actors operate. In chapter four, 'setting the scene', already a short introduction was given into the way the local government regulates street food vending. In this chapter we will further elaborate on it. Due to growing cities, urbanizing lifestyles, and the economic situation with high inequality, the demand for street foods is increasing and more people are forced into informal employment or simply perceive this as a good opportunity to make money. Yet there are growing concerns and complaints from citizens regarding the street food vending.

The institution that is responsible for the regulation and monitoring of the street food-vending network, including market sites, is the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), and particularly the environmental health agencies, which are a separate department within the AMA. These agencies are responsible for allocating spaces for food vending, managing waste disposal, cleaning of drains and providing sanitary services like toilets at market places. The environmental health officers (EHOs) are in charge of verifying that food vendors and market women ensure food safety. They inspect the places of cooking and vending and check whether the women have undergone a health examination in which it is stated that the person is healthy and does not carry any communicable disease. The social relevancy of the environmental health officers (EHOs) comes forward in the following quotation:

"If the AMA officer is doing his work well, this will bring a lot of change. They can spell out what is wrong with a food joint and state that they are not operating according to the law. He has to go back to make sure that the notice was complied. A person can be taken to court, but most of them comply." (Mr. Auditsey, AMA coordinator, 30 Jan. 2014)

There is however a huge contrast to what is formally obliged and what is done in practice. According to Bobodu (2010) street food vending, as part of the informal sector, is poorly understood which causes the lack of enabling policies and good regulation that is actually enforced. Indeed, the official way to start a food-vending joint is to go to the AMA, to consult on a proper place for selling and to get all the right documents, such as the personal health-screening certificate. As became clear in this research, none of the vendors solicited went through such a process of official registration prior to start off. In practice all respondents simply started at a place they found suitable. Most certainly this contradiction can be generalized to the whole sector and also has important impacts. For example, the food vendors notified that, while they are already operating, local government officials do check them. Those EHOs come to check their ventures and stress the fact that they need to get their papers in order. At times vendors face an ambiguous and exploitative attitude by these officers. Usually the vendors are given some time to improve the deficiencies; nonetheless bribes are a daily reality and frequently accepted as a temporary solution to the absence of papers or improper use of public space.

Furthermore, examples of the repressive attitude by the local government were visible through occasional 'clean the streets' acts. In the neighbourhoods of Osu and Labadi, on many wooden structures along the roads – of which several used for food vending – red crosses were painted with the text 'remove now, AMA' plus the date of painting. After this date the users of these structures officially got seven days to remove them. Though again, exceptions were made and many unofficial 'solutions' were possible. In order to verify the vendors' statements and to further investigate the issue around regulation and monitoring, the several interviews with governmental officials and accompanying them on one of their inspections let to more insight. At one metropolitan health unit the following was observed.

Box 4. Diary notes, 10 Jan. 2014

By the time I got to the office I was told to wait for the person in charge, he was out to get a lottery lot. When he got back I explained my purpose and he referred to another guy who first wanted to get his breakfast. I waited a bit longer; in the meanwhile people were reading the newspaper and discussing their personal lives. After his return, he and another lady put on their white coats with big AMA letters on the back and they were ready for their mission – it appeared they had not planned to go out at all, just because of my request, that made me wonder how often they actually visit the food vendors. The first place was a fried yam and fish seller, located under a tree at the site of the road. The officers' approach was friendly and respectful, as they said: 'it is their source of income so we don't want to take that away, but we want to make sure they sell safe and hygienic food to the public'. The place and the woman looked neat to me, the oil looked fresh and she used a glass box to save the food, yet the tree was a problem because things could fall down from it. She also did not have her health certificate. The officials made a report, stating what was wrong and gave her a week to improve the situation (I doubted whether they would go back within this time). Then we went on to the next vendor, a Waayke seller. She only had her stall that looked ok, the place of preparation was in Nima, so they could not inspect this kitchen and no report was made. The last one was a place where they sold Kenkey and fish, a family business. They cooked in a pot on the floor under a quite low ceiling and ashes were flying around, no health certificate could be shown. The officers explained the health risks to them and wrote the report. One of them knew the owner, a nice old lady – I again wondered what would happen afterwards. It was clear they

focussed mainly on the environment of cooking and only on things that could be immediately observed; nothing was said about basic food hygiene. What also surprised me is that they do not work at night times, they are public officers that stop working at 18h, meaning that all vendors selling at night – there are a lot – do not get checked at all.

From the observations during the research it became evident that the EHOs mainly focus on the direct environment in which the vendors sell rather than on personal hygiene of vendors or the food preparation itself. The officers expressed their main concerns about the direct environment in which vendors sell, by the roadside. They mainly referred to the many open gutters, where the vendors sell their food next to. Hereby emphasizing that there is no good waste management structure and drainage system in Accra. The informants pointed out that several governments in Ghana over and over again promise to change this situation but up till now without much success. Furthermore they adverted to an important change of some political arrangements indicating that, in the '90s their department shifted from the ministry of public health to the ministry of local government and rural development which made it much more difficult 'to get things done'. The EHOs got more connected to political power instead of contributing to organize better hygienic circumstances and thus public health.

"Back then they did get prosecuted, people would run to clean up if they saw you coming for inspection. Now we are 'politically handicapped'. Politicians don't want to prosecute 'offenders' because of their political position; it makes them less popular. They are afraid to loose votes if they do so." (Halima, EHO, 13 Feb. 2014)

In addition to their powerlessness because of politics, the public officers complained about too little support and resources in general. That the EHOs get the blame for not doing their work properly is according to them not their fault but the result of a lack of men power and logistics. They do not get sufficient means to perform well. Among the public officers a strong demotivation could be sensed. There was an attitude that nothing really happens with their reports anyway, so why bother the daily struggle. Indeed a lot of complaints were expressed about the performance of AMA and EHO officials. Moreover, several informants stated that the regulation is there, but that the problem is that the law is not enforced. Furthermore they emphasized that formally these two departments were the only public institutions directly involved in the street foods network, yet since a couple of years more food hygiene responsibilities have been shifted to the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA)[28], which causes ambiguity in accountability.

The FDA was previously only in charge of controlling pre-packaged food; to register all food products, both imported as locally manufactured, and for the safety in formal restaurants. Since six years the street food sector falls under their umbrella as well. This happened after they got a lot of complaints from the general public, who held the FDA responsible for the food that was at times unsafe for consumption. Then they included non-packaged food and aimed for more cooperation between the FDA and the EHOs. Representatives from the FDA train EHOs since it turned out that the knowledge of the latter on hygienic practices and food safety was very limited. The EHOs stay responsible for the implementation, and are instructed to pay more attention to food safety issues and personal hygiene, beyond mere attention to the cooking and sales environment. This exemplar of institutional rearrangement can be interpreted, as an illustration of the call for higher hygienic circumstances within the practice of street food vending.

---

[28] Formally known as Food and Drugs Board (FDB)

"FDA as an institution is to protect public health and safety. Ok, so as part of our activities we have to insure that food eaten by the general public is safe for consumption."
(Jacob, FDA, 26 Feb. 2014)

For all the activities and services the AMA is supposed to provide, they generate revenues from taxes that are collected by special tax collectors, coordinated by the Ghana Internal Revenue authority (GIR). These persons go to the markets and walk on the streets to ask all vendors and even hawkers for their obligatory tax contribution. However, no transparent tax collection scheme is in place and also here, corruption is more than an incident. Ghana 'suffers' from this huge degree of informality. For example many streets have no names and proper numbering does not exist. This hinders tax collection by local authorities, and thus the generation of revenue that is much needed to enable the advancement of service delivery to citizens. Though the often-assumed practice that street vendors do not pay taxes at all is evidently not true. In addition to the direct taxes that most vendors pay, they often also pay indirect taxes like bribes. Many women complained that taxes are increasing, yet that nothing is improving in return; they do not understand what happens with the money that is collected. One woman recited in details how she has to bribe the officials in order for them to leave her alone. In the very same environment in which she has been selling for over five years now, she did not see any upgrading of the dirty and dusty streets.

This research found that the GTCA also has a stake in tax collection. The government gave them a mandate to help the GIR in collecting taxes from food vendors and chop bars. Since over twenty years now they are partly responsible for this task. According to Mr. Ansong, the public relations officer (PRO) of the association, they have been able to explain to the food vendors the need to pay taxes. The association gets a commission on the amount they collect. On their turn they hired tax collectors that do the job for them and meet every Monday at the same office. They buy the tickets in advance at the GIR and also get a commission for their work. There are four categories, a, b, c and d which is equivalent for the amounts of Gh ¢ 40, 20, 15 and 10, depending on the size of the venture or chop bar, which officially has to be paid quarterly. The supposed additional advantage for vendors is they can use these 'tickets' (see picture 9) to go to the bank and get a loan, though as becomes clear in the following illustration, it is doubtful whether this is actually done or at least explained to the vendors. The notes below provide some understanding of the tax collecting practice.

Box 5. Diary notes, 25 Feb. 2014
My appointed was with Mr. Labadi, a tax collector that I saw every week at the meetings in Nima, and one of his colleagues. During the walk I got a good feeling of the huge scale of informality. We walked around the neighbourhood of Nima, the lady responsible for this area seemed to have a fair idea of whom she wanted to visit. Their approach was friendly; they would talk and explain to the vendors that they had to pay (most of them had already been 'educated on tax paying' since they were around for quite some time already). They would joke with them and laugh. The vendors sometimes complained but the atmosphere remained fine. They would never force anybody, so that made it easier. The responses varied; some would say that the owner was not there, or that they just started so that they should give them some time, or that they did not have money at the moment and that they should come back later during day when they had made some profit. Also one lady had not been paying taxes for around two years so they tried to make her pay 40GHc at once, but she was not able to do that, so then they settled for 20GHc. I got to see many things I had not seen so far, like all the little 'kitchen' that were situated in small patios, it was a labyrinth of houses and then on the patio the women can be found gathered around big pots where the stew is boiling, spreading wonderful smells. Everyone would respond very positively on my presence. One lady, a baker gave me 4 meat pies and Mr. Labadi wanted to give me 5 Cedis for transportation when I left. That is strange, he

---

needs it much more than I do, since he was referring a couple of times to the little money that he was making. Also he complained that the GTCA does not care about them anymore since they started the workshops and they got their money from this practice. They do not any longer pay them in advance to buy the tickets at the GIR as the association used to do.

Pictures 10 & 11.Inspections.

It is clear by now that the wish to control and regulate the enormous amount and still growing number of food vendors in Accra is a challenge. The dispersion and informality of food vendors further complicates the enforcement of existing regulation and collection of taxes. Some resolute proposals were put forward:

"We want to press a legislation that food vending on the street should be only on a food market." (Bella, owner Traffix, 29 Jan. 2014).

"Governments should make it part of their plan and when we build markets, or when we build bus stops, you know roads, they should have it in mind that these people need to be a part of it so that you can allocate portions for them. We can provide toilet facilities and maybe water facilities so that it helps them, yes. But currently a system of such is not in place. It is a proposal." (Naomi, GSA, 31 Jan. 2014).

Attempts to better organize food vendors were already done at some places, to western example of food markets and echoing the concept of food courts as applied by contemporary food chains in mainly shopping malls. In Tema, the harbour city next to Accra there is a special food market, and also at for example Agbogloshie market there is some space reserved for vendors to sell food. However the dynamics of food vending and trade are not always sufficiently taken into account and the attempts did not succeed. A market was constructed right behind a busy bus station, Nkrumah circle; the goal was to have food vendors set up their ventures there. Since it was not right on route of the many commuters, contrary to what they are used to, the customers stayed away. An additional complicating factor was the high amount of taxes asked which the vendors where not willing or able to pay (Mr. Ansong & Mr. Tortoe, personal communication; Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008). This example makes clear that the very way of 'messy' and arbitrary organization of the street food vendors which is an eyesore to certain inhabitants and planners, is at the same time the strength of this system, and much appreciated, by sometimes the very same people when looking for some quick and relatively cheap food to eat.

Overall, from the analysis of the regulatory environment we can conclude that the local government is not capable to effectively control and monitor the street food network and besides, is unable to execute some of its basic tasks. We saw that there is a considerable difference between formal regulations and what is done in practice. The sale of street foods is

typified by great informality and disorganized circumstances. In the authorities' attempt to better organize the city and its vendors a repressive attitude is often times demonstrated. The shift of EHOs' responsibilities to a different ministry, and the connection to political power that emanated from it, further complicated efficient functioning of the governmental officials to contribute to better hygienic circumstances. Furthermore the shift towards more responsibilities to the FDA concerning the safety of street foods causes confusion; the tasks are not yet clearly divided and effective cooperation between the FDA and EHOs is lacking. More streamlining should take place. Also concerning the tax collection, which happens in a quite arbitrary fashion, a more transparent and better-coordinated structure should be set up. The government could take a more participatory approach by consulting both vendors and consumers for their needs. This way they can better adjust their policies and practices to the contemporary circumstances. By incorporating the informal and chaotic character of the street food sales into city planning and by providing appropriate space to food vendors, a very vibrant, yet organized street food network can occur. The next section will focus on the role of one specific civil society actor: the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association, on their functioning and possibilities for empowerment within the context that was outlined.

6.2 Collective organization; the GTCA

Regardless of the fact that many small Ghanaian entrepreneurs like to work independently, associational life is flourishing. A lot of groups and voluntary organizations can be found, especially trade associations (Clark, 1994; Lyon, 2003), but also many other professional associations. At the location of the weekly GTCA executive meetings for instance, also a women hairdressers and a male barbers association held their gatherings. The 'wish' to belong to a group or association is, according to several members deeply ingrained within the Ghanaian culture:

"Every work that you do, everyone has an association. So as food vendors it is important to have one too. Since I am working I need to join an association." (FGD, Kotobabi, 28 Jan. 2014)

The literature did indicate the great potential of collective organization for an improvement of the collective image (Moeffe, 1991; Kincheloe, 2005), raising political voice, active citizenship and improving self-regulatory mechanisms (Levin et al., 1999; Fukuyama, 2001), and building capacity (Dolphyne & Ofei-Aboagye, 2001). However, currently the majority of the total amount of food vendors is not member of any association, Tortoe et al. (2013) indicated that approximately only 25% of the vendors are member of any food vending related organization. Most vendors on the street were not aware of the GTCA's existence at all, yet some showed great curiosity. The dispersion of the street food vendors, the fact they are not located at one spot, as is the case for most traders associations, makes it much more difficult to organize the street food vendors. It also illustrates the need to form a strong collective to stand up for their rights and represent their issues. The executives and some authority representatives indicated they wished all vendors belonged to an association. They want to organize all vendors, to set the standards and to train all of them, 'to bring as many people under their umbrella', similar to the taxi drivers in Accra that have to pertain to an organization (Hajia, vice president GTCA, personal communication). Miss Hajia would like to see more support from the government in this attempt, although she also emphasized that neither the GTCA nor the government could force vendors to become a member of the association. Indeed, the initiative for organizing collectively should come from the people themselves. Collective organization and voluntary association always revolve around shared interests; there should be reasons why people get together and strive to achieve common goals.

"We are hoping, that is our wish that the organization the GTCA will include every food vendor, in that you have been to school, you have been to trainings, that has to include our local food. So with this organization that those who are low, can learn and improve with the cooking so that they can cook the Fufu, Banku and Kelewele. That is our hope and our wish."
(FGD, Kotobabi, 28 Jan. 2014)

In light of what has been discussed in the previous chapter on food hybridization and hygienic standards, we will look at the goals, perceptions and activities of the association and their integration with market and governmental actors.

6.2.1 Internal functioning and leadership

The GTCA applies a very informal way of organization. This is manifested by the casual contacts among executives and members, along with meetings and workshops that are characterized by no clear plans and timetables. The informal networks of neighbourhood groups arise naturally and are self-made among its members. In addition there are very limited technical instruments available to formalize their presentations, inscriptions, dissemination of information etc. They for instance do not have any computers in their office, although they wished to have them for better registration of participants and members. 'Modern' characteristics do influence the organization yet have 'local' appliances. An example is the written constitution that was established in 1998 and is printed in the membership card, which is a little blue booklet. Every member is supposed to get this document when registering and having paid the application fee of ¢15. In the constitution, all their aims, rules and clauses are taken up. It also includes very practical articles, for instance on how much money members can count in case of death or severe disease and the procedures that should be followed. The GTCA is furthermore spread over a wider geographical area and currently have more literate executives than in the past. Besides, within each regional branch they hold several positions such as a president who presides all meetings, the treasurer collecting dues and keeping record of all financial transactions, and a secretary who keeps minutes at the meetings. The association can hence be typified as a 'traditional-modernized' association, with a mix of 'western' and 'local' influences (Little, 1957).

The executive members that were involved from the start recalled that the association has made considerable improvements over the last couple of years. At the beginning the executives used the association just for their own entertainment, to get some time off from work and to get to see other places; they would travel to some touristy sites within different regions of the country. This was very much appreciated and getting to know other people and places is seen as contributing to knowledge expansion, yet did not have much effect on the broader span of the street food network. Now they got 'more serious', as they said and expanded their scope. Accra used to be one branch but a few years ago they divided themselves into different zones to facilitate better organization and to get people involved within their neighbourhood groups.

"We tell them how to cook well, by getting purchases. Sometimes you go to the markets and you get spoiled purchases. We are talking about that. We tell them: do this, do this. So I know we are moving forward. Now because of the association we have the power to go and teach them and tell them do this, do that. It's because of the association that gives us power to help them." (Grace Ofosu, president GTCA, 30 Jan. 2013)

Leaders with a vision and charisma to act as change agents are believed to enhance and facilitate the empowerment process and this was hence explored. Mainly at the regular meetings at the office in Nima their way of organization could be observed.

Box 6. Compilation of diary notes Monday morning meetings

Officially the meeting starts at ten o'clock, though as expected, it starts a few hours later and people would slowly walk in and blame the traffic. When most executive members were present (they did not all come every week) they started the meeting while the secretary took notes of all what is said, noted down the zones that were present and the dues that are paid. There was no agenda. They discussed things such as how the workshops in the previous week went and how and when to organize the next one. Sometimes there was some quarrel about the organization, for instance when they opined that a particular person was not contributing enough. In the meantime food and water sachets were purchased from vendors close by. When they felt they had discussed everything they wanted (some things couldn't be discussed because not everyone was present - which was never the case but apparently made sense to them) the meeting was closed with a prayer and everyone went home again. There is clearly a difference between the very active and motivated executives who truly want to improve the street food situation and the lives of the vendors, and the ones of whom I sometimes get the impression they use the association to enrich themselves. Also in education there is a big difference, not all of them are even literate. The women are always beautifully dressed with jewellery and all. They are definitely better off people with bigger chop bars themselves, some with around twenty employees. They would focus a lot on the money they got from the workshops and proudly count the notes. Though I get a very different, much more positive impression from the association when I look at the documents in which they describe their activities and achievements; they do get things done, and also about the workshops the participants are generally positive.

Contrary to what is stated in their constitution the executive members, the leaders of the association are not democratically chosen by official elections. The nomination of them goes more or less naturally. Most have been with the association for a very long time, they are all food vendors themselves, some own bigger chop bars. There have not been major changes or elections over many years, only the position of the president, nationally and at the district level changes once every few years. Partly this is due to their informal way of organization and also the lack of money is given as a reason, because the organization of elections costs money. In a new area it happens that one woman starts organizing the meetings and then she gets chosen by the members to be the chairperson for that area. The members explicated, without exception, to be happy with their leaders. Also some governmental representatives had a good impression about the pursuits of the organizations' leaders.

"I think they are doing a good job, they are trying to empower their members, you know. To be able to do what they are doing and doing it well so that they can make money from it, so they can also protect their customers, you know we can have a better system."
(Naomi, GSA, 31 Jan. 2014)

However, when it comes to leadership, not everyone was that positive about the functioning of the association and its leaders. According to quite a few informants the organization was 'not all that strong'. One of the members of whom the executives themselves are most proud of, because he is a successful businessman who established two huge restaurants selling local dishes, was most critical on the leadership capacities of the current executive members.

"You know in Ghana it is like, you are the older, you are the eldest, you are the most popular, you are in the game for a long time. But if we have very vibrant, energetic leaders... Because of… well you need a very strong executive, people who know about these things. People who are young, who can move. You know, people who can help in educating the members and financially, that is one aspect that you need. The hygiene put aside. It is important that they

have a strong 'front' that can push them forward. If they want to move, they need strong,
vibrant executives who can move forward."
(Mr. Nii, owner Asanka Locals, 29 Jan. 2014).

What we have seen up to now is a varied picture about the performance of the association, its internal structure and its leaders. With on the one hand improvements compared to the past situation, yet on the other hand critical notes that the conditions and actions for real progress are not present. Moreover, there is a considerable difference between the aims and clauses written in the constitution and what is actually done when it comes to internal organization aspects such as elections and the registration of members. Informality prevails and sincerity of some executive members was doubted. In the next section we will zoom into the current goals and activities of the association to further explore the inter-organizational empowerment component (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004).

6.2.2 Current aspirations and activities

The official goals of the association are written in their constitution (see box 2). A main duality can be distinguished by contributing to one; providing safe food for Ghanaian consumers and two; seeking the general welfare of its members. The perception and the meaning of these common goals do however vary among different individuals and are influenced by the developments in society. Therefore their interpretation, importance and effectuation may change over time. The construction of meaning or 'the framing process' for such collective goals is a constant action performed by all stakeholders involved. Throughout this process people come to understand and create what the association is really about; they form their conventions. Often there is a discrepancy between the viewpoints of different actors in the network and between objectives and reality, as this case study also illustrates clearly. Nevertheless it is important to attempt to detect a certain collective identity and vision as it is expressed by the executives and other allied actors. This way we discover what the association means to them, what the importance is of the association and subsequently what is done at present to achieve the aspirations. This section represents the efforts by the GTCA, by implementing actions and disseminating information, which might contribute to the accomplishment of the organization's goals and to improve community life.

"Our local food is getting lost in the system. We are now doing your country food, it is not right. We don't know how the foreign food, it comes processed, it's killing our local food. Do you get it? The foreign food is killing our local food.' (Me: 'Why is this happening?') 'We don't know. The foreign food is just taking over our local food, we don't know why. But that is why we traditional caterers have to stand up." (Grace Ofosu, president GTCA, 30 Jan. 2013).

This was one of the first reactions that the incumbent president expressed when asking her about the association, their activities and their goals. The executives and advocates of the association often expressed the fear for disappearance of traditional foods and foreign foods taking over in the rapidly transforming city of Accra. Another lady, Miss. Bella, one of the main supporters of the GTCA seemed to have initiated this thought and took action.

"I think 2000 it was, I decided to bring out our local dishes, because they were getting lost and more of the foreign food was taking over from our local dishes. So I decided to work with the traditional caterers, so we can bring out our local dishes so they don't get lost".
(Bella, owner Traffix, 29 Jan. 2014)

Her international restaurant 'Traffix' is located next to the Accra national theatre, where she sells both continental and traditional recipes. She is undoubtedly aware of the interest foreign tourists may have in authentically Ghanaian food products. Indeed the consumption of food is indispensably part of the country experience of international visitors, who will remember the colours, tastes and smells of the local delicacies. However under influences of globalization there is a fear among passionate caterers like Bella that the traditional dishes, especially the less common ones, might be forgotten and will disappear. In the view of the wish to defend the local food recipes, the GTCA decided to organize a cooking competition with as goal to rediscover 'forgotten' recipes, to popularize them and to bring them back on the Ghanaian menu. It is noteworthy, however, that apart from FAO also Unilever sponsored this programme on rediscovering forgotten recipes. One of the criteria of the competition was the traditional value of the food. The participants were judged on the indigenous dishes they presented and how well they stuck to the original way of preparation.

"We have our old ways to prepare, we want that type. The Northerners consulted their grandmothers, the Ashanti consulted their grandmothers and they teach them how to prepare and they got it to the competition. The food you will see there is very different."
(Mr. Ansong, PRO, 9 Jan. 2014)

The team that was responsible for the program travelled around in all the ten regions of Ghana. They came to the development of a list of traditional dishes, reaching a total number of 273 'authentic' Ghanaian recipes. The wish by the association to preserve the Ghanaian cuisine goes further than by solely organizing such cooking competitions. They take the ambition very seriously and at the moment they want to set up their own caterers school in Accra. This is their highest prioritized goal for the coming years. With this school the association intends to train the local street food vendors, and also other people who are interested to learn something about the traditional dishes.

"We need to eat our local food. So our main reason is to get a place at Traffix and build our structure there to train children, even school children to make our local food that our forefathers left behind, it is getting lost. So if a foreigner comes, he can eat our local food there."
(Grace Ofosu, GTCA president, 30 Jan. 2013).

Furthermore the executives expect that this training centre will contribute to a sense of unity among them and all the members. What they hope is that it will strengthen the association and its image. It will be the place where they can have their weekly meetings and it will provide them with more visibility and acquaintance. They subsequently hope to attract more members and to get a stronger position in the local context and in relation to the authorities in Accra. Though, the absence of a clear plan of how to achieve this goal and inter alia the difficulty to acquire land within Accra might complicate the realization of the establishment. Nonetheless, the members did endorse the plans and expressed their enthusiasm:

"So for us, I don't know, with our leader, there should be a strategy to bring all those people together so that we with all our ideas, we can bring it together and the local food we can present it very attractive." (FGD Kotobabi, 28 Jan. 2014).

Besides this relatively new ambition, there are more aims the association primary stands for. As indicated before, one of them is to make members see the need for healthy and hygienic cooking methods to ensure safe food for the Ghanaian consumers. Throughout the cooking competition that we discussed, the executives became even more conscious of the need to

teach food vendors on these aspects. They took the whole spectrum of gastronomy[29] into account and realized the need for training for more knowledge on food hygiene and nutrition. They then decided to concentrate more on workshops on hygienic food practices. In Accra the GTCA started to organize the workshops about two years ago, before that they did it in Ashanti region, in the centre of the country. Coming years they hope to expand this activity to the central and northern regions. The association organizes those trainings in cooperation with the AMA and FDA, and are often sponsored by Nestlé. Box seven contains a description of one such workshop, the first that was attended.

Box 7. Diary notes, 4 Dec. 2013

"It took me some time to get there, I got lost because apparently there are many Presbyterian churches in this neighbourhood, directions are explained vaguely and there are no street signs, nor they have names at all. They would say something very descriptively like 'right behind, opposite or near' some big building or familiar place. But again I got a very warm welcome by one of the executives. My first impression was that it was a bit chaotic; women walked in and out and especially towards the back, people were talking. About half of the church was full. Outside the executives were taking pictures and issuing the certificates, for which the women were called in the meanwhile of the talks and have to pay 10GHc. The trainers were speaking enthusiastically – both in the Twi and Ga language - with a lot of hand gestures. They explained to the attendance things on safe and hygienic food practices and demonstrated this with help of food products and other items they had brought. Often they yelled 'Hello!' to keep the attention. The women, I only saw about four men among the approximately a hundred people present, appeared to be listening attentively, some a little less though and were half asleep, especially towards the end. After the closing prayer, it took them too long and some commotion arose. They got impatient and wanted to go back to their businesses. A trainer that gives these workshops all over the country told me that especially in Accra people are in a hurry because life is more expensive here and they do not want to lose time to make money. They had to wait for the handing out of the certificates that was not done orderly. When calmness had returned, they were called one by one by their names and then they could go home and the second group came in. A lot less people this time. I was asked to give an introductory talk (the women would like a 'white lady' to do this). I improvised something about that I liked their traditional food, and that hygienic practices by them were important for me, as a tourist, not to get sick and collective organization would help for them to improve their circumstances. Loud applause followed…"

Pictures 12 & 13. Issuing the certificates.

---

[29] Gastronomy can be defined as: 'the practice or art of choosing, cooking and eating good food' (Oxford dictionary). This all-encompassing term subsumes everything that has to do with human nutrition as a whole: palatability, cooking techniques, nutritional facts etc.

The GTCA uses several means to assemble the women and they apply an open policy. When they organize a workshop they make an announcement on the radio and they ususally go around with a van in the neighbourhood to inform people about the workshop. Also the announcements are made in churches, the places where most workshops are held as well. At times the trainings are organized at some open space within a community; making it an easily accessible, communal activity that anyone can join.

"Now when they give trainings, they want everyone to come. Allow them to join. Open policy is very good. Maybe then they see the advantages of the association."
(Dr. Tortoe, FRI, 20 Dec. 2013).

The workshops are organized on an irregular basis; there is no timetable or official follow-up. Unfortunately, due to the informality of organization, financial and other capacity constraints, still only a small proportion of the total amount of vendors gets trained at all. Besides, many conflicting responses were given when it comes to the effectiveness of the trainings. More on this issue from the vendors' perspective will be discussed in chapter seven. The location seemed to be of crucial influence on the efficiency of the workshops; out of observations on the concentration of the women and questions afterwards we arrived at the conclusion that open spaces with many people around were not very helpful for effective learning. One trainer expressed his dissatisfaction with the informality of the location. According to him training should be given in an enclosed room, with a few people and with a follow-up, to test the woman's knowledge. He suggested organizing training for three months for instance and then doing an evaluation to measure the difference in knowledge about hygienic practices between women that attended the workshop and those who did not. Others on the other hand stressed the improvements that are taking place and exposed their positive view on the matter. For instance this man who has been involved with the association for around ten years.

"When we started it wasn't like this. Now it is better organized. Let us improve it.
To get someone from a nobody to somebody, how can we train that person?"
(Mr. Mensah, trainer GTCA, 9 Jan. 2014).

"It is just like going to school, gradually in addition to your knowledge."
(Mr Ansong, PRO, 9 Jan. 2014).

Another significant undertaking the GTCA was working on is the development of the 'Code of hygienic practices for traditional caterers', mainly in cooperation with the Ghana Standards Authority (GSA). It was an initiative coming from the GTCA branch in the central region of Ghana. They approached the GSA with a proposal to develop a national standard to use as guidance for their activities. The funding came partly from the GTCA itself. The standards authority demands that at least half of the costs are paid by the applicant, they rest is then paid by this government institution A lady working for the GSA and directly involved in this project was very positive about the initiative, as was equally shown in a letter from the executive director of this institution to the GTCA: 'We take this opportunity to commend your association for taking this step in ensuring safe food for all.' They used the international system of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) as a framework to identify potential food hazards in the street food sales. Three main aspects were recognized: the preparation of food, the establishment where the food preparation and sales takes place, and the staff itself. Within these areas they identified all the critical control points for health dangers and subsequently developed the Code. In their endeavours they try to stay as close to the living worlds of the vendors as possible, to increase the likelihood that the code will actually be used. It can be used by anyone interested and also for instance to prepare training materials. The high illiteracy

rate does complicate the use of the document and therefore the translation into understandable training programs, with for instance images, is essential for the success of it.

Apart from the development of this code, the association furthermore aims to stop the practice of hawking of hot cooked food. For reasons to ensure food safety as well as for the safety of the vendors themselves and other pedestrians, since walking around with hot soup or stew on one's head is quite dangerous. Overall they want to improve the quality of the food and to upgrade the image of the street food vendors. The contribution to a better image of the food vendors within the society can be interpreted as an attempt to reconstruct the negative perception most people have of the street food vendors. The pursuit for certain (higher) standards can be classified as positively affecting the sector. Better hygiene might give a boast to their businesses because people who now avoid them might be tempted to purchase the street foods as well.

In this section we highlighted the contemporary aspirations and activities of the GTCA in Accra. The study found that in addition to the official aims taken up in the constitution, especially the pursuit to keep the indigenous knowledge of the traditional Ghanaian cuisine alive is very valuable to the executives. One way they want to achieve this is by establishing a caterer school where the cooking of these dishes can be taught to food vendors as well as to others interested. While ensuring hygienic food practices remains their focus. They try to achieve this by giving trainings and workshops and by developing a Code that emphasizes specific critical points of food safety that vendors have to pay attention to. In the discussion of these outcomes the collaboration with other institution already came up, in the next part of this chapter we will further go into this matter.

6.2.3 Cooperation with other organizations

For an association to achieve their goals and to bring about a larger effect, it is important they look beyond their own boundaries. Collaboration with other organizations and institutions, and participating in alliance building are believed to be essential elements (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). Aforementioned authors called this the inter-organizational component of organizational empowerment. First of all as indicated by many informants, the GTCA functions as a main gateway for authorities as well as for the private sector to reach the food vendors. This happens with the intention to invite food vendors for training or certification programmes, as well as to help vendors present themselves on celebrations like farmers' day or Independence Day. The set of contacts the GTCA has provides a good entrance to reach the food vendors and the association can help in gathering them. An example is the case of health screening which the vendors are obliged to do each year. To facilitate vendors to actually get this certificate, there are certain places in the city where this is organized once a year by the government's health institutions. The AMA and EHOs inform the association, which on their term notify their members in the different neighbourhoods. Also international NGOs usually work with the bigger, established associations and use them as portal to reach the target group for their programs and research. An example is a study commissioned by WIEGO (Alfers & Abban, 2011) on occupational health and safety for indigenous caterers in Accra that cooperated with the Indigenous Caterers Association of Ghana (ICAG), which was formerly part of GTCA. Other examples are from the International Labour Organization (ILO) that developed together with the GTCA a document on rules and regulation on child labour, and DFID (British development cooperation) that sponsored the FRI to train around three hundred food vendors on hygienic practices. These examples can be denoted as 'passive cooperation'.

On the other hand, there are several instances of 'active cooperation' in which the GTCA takes the initiative and they cooperate with various public and private institutions for training and

sponsorship. With examples such as the organization of the workshops and the development of the 'Code of hygienic practices for traditional caterers' depicted earlier. The GTCA is in this sense capable of organizing affordable training to the Ghanaian women who would normally not be able to pay for such programmes.

"As for mobilization of their members, I think they are doing fantastically well."
(Jacob, FDA, 26 Feb. 2014).

Furthermore, the cooperation with other organizations that have similar goals, may lead to the sharing of knowledge and facilitate the gain of more resources. This can be very useful for empowerment of organizations and beyond. Yet it is not a strategy that the GTCA seems to apply. The study indicated several instances that pointed at mistrust rather than willingness to cooperate. One example was the approach by the president of the local NGO 'women vision 3000', an association seeking more women participation in community development. This lady, Miss. Charlotte, visited the weekly Monday morning meetings in Nima a few times and looked for cooperation. She used to be an active member of the GTCA but now expanded her scope and started her own initiative. She wanted to organize a food fair with different ethnic dishes, to enjoy the local food and to educate vendors on hygiene at the same time; thus very similar to GTCA activities. The association executives were however not enthusiastic at all. In these meetings there was a lot of discussion on how and where this activity could take place. The chairpersons of the different neighbourhoods where as it were 'defending' their own area. They were afraid that this lady would 'steal away' their members. She eventually left disappointed and no partnership was established. Similarly there was friction between the GTCA and the ICAG; they separated. The two associations have the same goal but do not cooperate due to leadership issues. As said before, they both fall under the Ghana Tourism Federation. The new president of Ghatof, Mr. Anim actively strives for more cooperation and to 'get everybody on board'. He opines that the traditional caterers can give a big push to local food and its appreciation and more cooperation would be beneficial to contribute to that ambition. He has regular contact with the executives to see in what ways they can make improvements and strengthen their cooperation. He does give an explanation however for the lack of it:

"You know in life, there are some people that are always there to put other people down. You know in Ghana there is a joke that is called the 'pull him down' syndrome (Phd). And it's true. So because of this people love to go solo, they love to do things on their own. Not like countries where companies that are even doing the same job, come together and join themselves to add value to what they do. There is not that here. Even when you do all right and then there is something, people will think mm, let me mind my own business. Ok, but we will get there, because it is through education that we will also get there."
(Mr. Anim, President Ghatof, 17 Jan. 2014)

Furthermore the lack of money for effective organization and training was brought up very often. Resource identification and procurement, of people and skills, funding, space, and other material requirements for operation, is an indicator of a well-functioning, empowering organization (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). The informants stated the GTCA needs funding for their programmes, and without this funding they were crippled and could not execute the programmes as they wished for.

"To get money. Money, money, money, money. At times you want to go to a place, you don't have money. You have to write letters. Because you know, all is about money and finance."
(Grace Ofosu, president GTCA, 30 Jan. 2013).

The GTCA executives, mainly the president and the PRO (public relations officer), were actively writing letters and applying for funds, sometimes through their parent organization Ghatof. For the workshops they get supported by the AMA and the FDA, they write a letter as to where and when they want to organize training and they get trainers assigned. At time of research they were applying for, and then received, a specific fund from the council for technical and vocational education and training (COTVET), for business development training. A selected number of members could later participate in this training to hopefully enhance their businesses. Also alternative ways to get more (financial) support were put forward:

"The goal is for the association to grow and then to maybe be able to solicit for more loans, so that their businesses can grow. Some associations give out loans, but this one doesn't."
(Rejoice, deputy chairperson Kotobabi, 20 Feb. 2014)

To realize this proposition however, much more cooperation with banks and credit institutions is necessary. In chapter seven we will further elaborate on issues of economic empowerment.

Lastly, cooperation does occur among the different branches of the association throughout the country. The executives regularly have contact or travel to the headquarters in Kumasi, where representatives from all different regions meet and they discuss the progress of the association and its activities. This can be helpful to define their strategy and to learn from each other. Additionally, the executives from Accra try to set up closer links with their counterparts in rural areas, with as goal to collectively buy certain food products. Through these direct links to farmers, and thus skipping the middlemen, plus stronger bargaining power as a collective, the products can be sourced at cheaper costs. Also the association attempts to make arrangements with a state rice farm, to have a relatively secured supply of local, good quality rice at a decent price. Important to notice is that this is not yet a strategy that is executed; it is an objective they try to establish in the future. Again, the lack of capital is given as a hindrance that permits the possibility of buying in bulk and organizing these arrangements (Hajia, vice president GTCA & Mr. Ansong, PRO, personal communication). Yet mostly a clear plan of action was lacking.

All in all, this section highlighted a few important discoveries. With as main finding that the association predominantly functions as a portal for government, NGOs and private sector training programmes. Other organizations and institutions use the GTCA's network to reach the food vendors. Meanwhile the associations' own endeavours to establish durable collaborative arrangements with other organizations to share information and to gain resources are rather weak. Especially a lack of trust is to blame here. To reinforce the inter-organizational empowerment component of alliance building in order to strengthen their position and mobilize support for their cause would be desirable. Also the association could do more to create credit systems by cooperating with financial institutions to improve the financial situation of its members. Currently most initiatives are not executed, yet the potential is there, given the network of active members already established.

The next section will present the results for the cooperation of the GTCA with government institutions: the extra-organizational component of organizational empowerment (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). It will discuss the efforts of the GTCA to influence public policy and practice, to change the broader system of which they take part.

6.3 The GTCA and community empowerment

The community is in this thesis defined as the broader social-economic and political context in which the food vendors operate. Associations are considered to contribute to an increase in

social capital and thereby to facilitate cooperation and trust among citizens leading to collective action within the society (Putnam, 1993). As indicated throughout this study, street foods are essential for the food provisioning of the Accra urban residents. There is a need for vendors to provide efficient and acceptable services to the great many purchasers. In the first section of this chapter we presented the regulatory environment as provided by the local government. Here we will elaborate on how the GTCA strives to carry the vendors' voice to decision makers. To both defend the rights of the vendors, improve their conditions and possibly reconstruct their negative image, as well as to ensure healthy food. One aspect that can contribute to community empowerment and improve community life is by generating successful advocacy through citizens' participation.

"So we have Ghatof and the ministry of tourism. Since they (the vendors) cannot get access to them that is why you are there as executives, so they bring their problems to you. You link them to the federation that is why you are there as executives, they bring their problems to you, they pass them to the federation or you can even invite the federation and the ministry and sit down while they are also there and then you talk about their problems. And see how we can collectively address their problems." (Mr. Anim, president Ghatof, 17 Jan. 2014)

At times the GTCA gets invited to governmental meetings to consult them on certain topics. A concrete example was the meetings they had with the Ghana export promotion council. A lot of vendors import their utensils from outside the country; therefore they wished for tax exemption for their members. Those negotiations were proceeding, with Ghatof's president as spokesmen. However, the executive of the association complained that 'the government' would not listen to their demands and needs. They stated that they are well organized and also recognized, but when they get invited to the programmes and meetings their views do not get listened to. Also most members had mixed perspectives on the associations' political influence, as will be further elaborated upon in chapter seven. These findings correspond with results from Whitfield (2003) which pointed at the discourse of leaders of social organizations that often revolve around the need for the government to 'create space' for their voices to be heard, and to release control and share power over decision-making. Furthermore, Maxwell (1999) pointed at the absence of a political platform in Accra for political space to permit debate. When in the course of this research was attempted to get in contact with the ministry of local government and rural development on the issue of street food vendors, there was not much response. The person in charge appeared not to be so interested in the matter. To be able to have an influence in the local food network the vendors do need to be included in local politics (Dupuis & Goodman, 2005).

The fact that the GTCA does not belong to any political party might have to do with their lack of influence on politics; they do not have a strong lobbying power. A study on trader associations at Ghanaian markets found that those associations often do get involved within politics of the local government (Lyon, 2003). Those trader associations were able to establish some powerful connections to the district assemblies, which is the AMA in Accra. They were thus able to generate advocacy and to successfully lobby for their interests. The question is then how actively the GTCA strives to change this situation and to get more political influence to express their grievances. Critics thought this issue was more a default on the part of the association than unwillingness of the side of the local government.

"Yeah, well it is not the link to the government; it is the association executives who are not that strong." (Mr. Nii, owner Asanka Locals, 29 Jan. 2014).

There was a lot of pointing fingers at each other, one would blame the other and vice versa. When talking to the EHOs and asking about the GTCA, while doing the inspections, they

replied with 'we don't know them (the GTCA), they should come to us and we should cooperate; education is fine but not the certificate they have to pay for, we educate them (the vendors) every time we visit'. The executives exclaimed on the other hand that 'it is the AMA officers that should come to us, they should make one with us; they check the caterers so they should go and advice the caterers to become members'. They claimed the GTCA was best able to gather the vendors for whatever training or cause and in this way improve the situation of street food vending. However on the site of the association there was little outreach towards government officials to cooperate and to collectively address the issues they face.

By organizing the workshops and food fairs the association does indeed possibly contribute to improved hygienic circumstances and as a consequence, better public health, improved community life and a more positive image of the vendors. Nevertheless, for an enhanced social-economic and political position of the street food vendors in Accra, much more is needed. As eloquently expressed in this quote: "the act of collective organization alone is inadequate to overcome an organization of power. In order to produce an effective resistance, people have to acquire the ability to activate a collective organization" (Sadan, 2004:46). The association could take up a more pro-active role in increasing its political voice and influence the often times repressive regulatory environment, mainly in the fields of illegal space occupation and tax paying. The GTCA does not lobby at the address of the AMA to improve the situation and is thus indeed, like most professional associations, more in-ward looking than pursuing political goals (Lindell, 2010). By a better collaboration between the local government and the association, a lot of change for the empowerment of Accra's street food network could be established.

6.4 Conclusion

The previous subsections made an attempt of revealing the organization of the street food network and the role of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association herein. The focus laid on 'the agency of the local' (Massey, 2004) in the context of growing global influences in the rapidly expanding and modernizing city of Accra. Described earlier as the ongoing *glocalization* processes that were identified. The street food organization has been illustrated by first discussing the regulatory environment of street food vending, as executed by the AMA and EHOs. These institutions are responsible for the legal implementation of bylaws as set by the local government. A description was given of the inspections by the environmental health officers, and on the tax collection system. It showed the important day-to-day influence of the AMA on the street food network, as well as the difficulties the governmental officers face because of the informal organization and the great dispersion of the vendors. We learned there is a great difference between regulations and actual practice, and an arbitrary approach of alternately support and repression is applied. Attempts were made by the local government to better organize vendors on food markets that were specifically created for this purpose. Yet hitherto this was without much success because of the very nature of street food vending, with as major advantage the offer of quick food on the way of commuters and other inhabitants of the city.

Then we looked at the collective organization of the GTCA. The GTCA would like to see all vendors under their umbrella and to function as the main standard setting body for the craft of traditional catering. At present only a small share of the total amount of food vendors are member of this occupational organization. Even so, the association does try to improve the street food network by mainly addressing the hygienic circumstances. They organize workshops with the aim of transferring knowledge on hygienic food practices. Those are open to all vendors and are increasing in number and quality over the last years. They furthermore try to

stand up for the local food culture and recipes. The research demonstrated that the executives perceive the growing diversity of foods, with more 'foreign' influences as a threat. They are afraid of the local foods disappearing and 'getting lost in the system'. Therefore one of their aims is to establish a caterers' school where the cooking of traditional foods can be taught, in order to revalue local foods. Cooking competitions were already organized all over the country to bring out the traditional recipes from the different regions of Ghana.

The research has also shown that the style of organization of the GTCA is very informal, which is compatible to the network as a whole. The GTCA does have goals, yet no clear outlined path as how to reach those. They do have potential to function as a self-regulatory mechanism (Levin et al., 1999), and to act as a socializing agent (Hyden, 1997) by sensitizing vendors on tax paying and standard setting, but for effective application some major improvements have to be made. The GTCA proved to be good at gathering vendors and to function as a gateway for other institutions, organizations and private sector players to reach them, both national as international ones. This way those actors offer assistance and can at the same time manifest their criteria into the street food network. Hence, even so the association does not actively operate internationally, they are involved within impulses reaching far beyond the local arena (Lindell, 2010). However, the GTCA's own political influence proved to be rather weak. Not much collaboration with the local government was sought in order to address their grievances and strengthen the association's position and that of the food vendors. A more active approach to sensitize the general public and the local government on the benefits of street food sales could facilitate a more positive attitude towards this essential activity for public health and wellbeing of Accra's citizens. One reason for this deficiency was the low level of the leadership capacities of the executive members, in the sense of change agents; those were generally not highly valued. By their attempts to improve the hygienic food practices executed by the food vendors they possibly contribute to a reconstruction of the negative identity that is often ascribed to street food vendors. Although the GTCA could put more effort in their own objective of 'addressing itself to the problems of sanitation and health' by lobbying and demanding this basic service at the local government level. Thus on the one hand Accra's municipality should provide a political platform for more participation of such a civil society group, yet on the other the GTCA should more actively approach the cities' authorities and claim their rights.

Furthermore effective cooperation to unite forces with different associations that have similar aspirations within the area was lacking. An important cause was the mistrust towards them and the worry for loosing members, and as a result, money (generated out of dues and certificates) and influence. They do at times solicit for funds at other institutions, but real durable alliances with other associations are not yet created. Also no arrangements currently exist with financial institutions for credit or loans for its members. Cooperation within the GTCA, with branches throughout the different regions of the country does happen, to exchange knowledge and experiences. They could further expand those bonds by including collective purchasing groups and setting up stronger links with their rural counterparts for direct purchasing of local food products. Here lies a great potential for the empowerment of the network, by ensuring a more local supply. In their attempts to protect the traditional foods from 'getting lost in the system' they could at the same time promote local production and cooperate better with other stakeholders to accomplish this.

In order to get the complete picture of the GTCA's contribution to an empowerment of the network we will in the subsequent and last empirical chapter present the findings from the viewpoint of regular members of the GTCA and other non-member street food vendors.

7. The vendors' perspective on empowerment

In the previous chapters we have presented the empirical findings for a few aspects of the street food network. We identified several contemporary dynamics; in the food supply towards the vendors, and in the changing demand for recipes, for local food products, hygienic standards for street foods and food quality. In addition we discussed the roles of the local government and the GTCA, mainly from the perspective of professionals and executives. This chapter will turn to the personal level, the vendors' perspective on their own circumstances and the effect of their membership of the GTCA. It will start with the current difficulties and aspirations as expressed by the vendors, members and non-members. To be able to say something meaningful about the empowerment process we need first a certain starting point and a direction towards what the women aim to achieve. Subsequently the experiences of the workshops will be highlighted. These workshops were revealed earlier as one of the key activities of the association. However, also after the workshops acquaintance with the association was low, other informal ways of getting to know the GTCA were found. Vendors then, based on expectations of membership and beliefs in collective organization effectiveness, decide to join the association or not. An elaborate description will follow on different forms of empowerment derived from membership. First psychological empowerment, both at the individual as the collective and political level, then economic empowerment, with an emphasize on the rotating *Susu* saving system, and lastly the issue of sponsorship by TFCs that in the eyes of the vendors play an important role in the advancement of their businesses. So we start by giving an overview of the difficulties vendors face and what they aspire for the future. After we discuss the different processes of empowerment.

7.1 Difficulties and aspirations

Awareness of one's situation is necessary as starting point in any (self-) empowerment process, including the concepts of consciousness, identity and agency (Carr, 2003). Therefore this section will begin with a critical analysis of the current situation with the difficulties the food vendors encounter and the feelings of devaluation and powerlessness they experience. Or as argued by Staples (1990): 'self-definition is the foundation, as well as the heart and soul, of any conceptualization of empowerment' (p. 38). In interviews and focus group discussions on the questions how the women see themselves and about the main difficulties they face concerning their businesses, a wide range of answers was expressed. Mainly they referred to their financial problems: the constant lack of sufficient money and the limited access to financial credit. They had limited knowledge of the banking and credit system, could not get any loan or the interest was too high. They said to often have to struggle to make ends meet and showed to be creative in applying different income generating activities throughout their lives. Many women have had multiple jobs during their life span, from trader selling raw ingredients, to retailer of clothing, to seamstress, to secretary. In case the street food venture was not a family business they took over from their aunts, mothers or sisters at some point in time, they started the business because they perceived it as the best option to earn some income. Furthermore, as part of their financial constraints, they spoke about the rising food and cooking fuel (gas and charcoal) prices. The rising prices along with low purchasing power of customers make the food vending commerce very difficult at times. When food prices rise, they cannot equally increase the price of their food items because no one will buy from them. Women verbalized that they then try to manage by giving smaller portions or to make more profit from other items. Besides, they frequently have to make the tough choice between feeding their children and paying school fees. In times that school fees have to be paid, children often get less to eat due to financial constraints and the women's desire for good education of their children (Maxwell et al., 2000). The vendors

indeed indicated their businesses would slow down, with less people patronizing their food in these times. That the business is unstable was a general response.

"The business goes up and down. Sometimes the market is good, sometimes it goes down. People have to eat, but you have to manage. Once you have to pay school fees, you have to manage. It is management how to spend it." (Alis, Osu chairperson, 26 Feb 2014)

Another predicament is in many cases the absence of a fixed place or permanent structure; the majority is occupying their spot of sales illegitimately. Contrary to the impression gained from the friendly officers, women indicated to often meet trouble with AMA officials or get suddenly evicted by the legal owner of the piece of land with whom they have an informal arrangement. In these situations the women felt powerless. They have to move from one place to the other. Not being secure of their sites is an important cause for the lack of investment and further expansion of the street food businesses (Bobodu, 2010). Additionally, a few women mentioned the taxes they have to pay are too high, however as described in the previous chapter, the amounts and the frequency with which they pay them strongly varied, which makes the interpretation of these findings a bit problematic. Also, because the tax collectors (and EHOs) do not work after 6pm., the women selling in the evening or during night-time never got checked. Besides, often it was not clear what taxes the women referred to; sometimes they meant taxes on the food ingredients or cooking fuel (the value-added tax), thus connected to higher food prices and less profit, instead of the obligatory income taxes. The physical aspect was articulated as another complicating factor of the street food vending activity. The work is labour intensive and tough since the vendors make little use of mechanized processes. The women selling traditional dishes mainly use traditional cooking techniques, like pounding *fufu* with a mortar, stirring the corn and cassava dough in huge pots, and kneading it by hand. In addition, most women have to carry the food over considerable distances: the raw products from the market and the cooked foods plus all the utensils from the place of preparation to the place of sales. Also they make extraordinary long days. Depending on the time of sales and the kind of food sold, some women get up as early as four o'clock in the morning and go on until late at night. They have to go to the market, to get the best, cheapest and freshest products and prepare everything, and if possible continue until all food is sold. Various slightly bigger joints did have personnel or family members helping them. However, according to many respondents to find trustworthy employers was complicated. It often happened that new apprentices come, are trained and then suddenly leave again, costing the vendors a lot of valuable time and effort. In worst cases the helpers stole money if the owner was not around, generally the informants opined that assistants could not be trusted. Lastly, the absence of a formal safety net signifies that in case of illness there is no compensation or whatsoever; no social protection is in place.

Having indicated some of the difficulties and feelings of powerlessness that came forward in this research, we continue with the aspirations; what are the aims of the women involved in food vending. The phrase most frequently expressed was 'we want to grow our businesses'.

"We are all dreaming our businesses should go up. You always have to grow, it shouldn't be static. Small, small. You have to try to grow, one day, one day." (FGD, Osu, 16 Jan. 2014)

The actual meaning of this wish varied considerably. Some women wanted most of all to improve their structures, now for instance a simple tabletop or a few shelves knocked together, to a permanent and bigger structure that withstands the heavy rains. The rainy season would cause much damage to their venture. Also to expand their ventures by putting up more tables to serve more customers was heard. Others dreamed bigger and aspired to open up more ventures, or to buy a plot of land and own a big restaurant. A specific time frame was never given since 'everything depends on the money' and they could not predict how things would

work out for them. The lack of money and direct family dependency; the revenues generated are used for direct family expenditures such as food, medicines and school fees instead of investments in the business, was a major internal impediment, as also found in Bobodu's survey (2010). However, the fact that the women made some money independently was important to them and already contributed to feelings of empowerment and a sense of worthiness (see also Clark, 1994). Note moreover that various women did not wish to change any major things at all; they were generally satisfied with their current situation, yet most did want to 'learn new things'.

A remarkable finding to the authors' opinion is that the women do not see each other as competition; they refer to other food vendors as colleagues or even friends or sisters. They usually have a good relationship with other vendors around them; they lend money to each other and spend their time chatting if their stands are close or if they sell side by side. Thus despite the fact that they basically sell the same products, there is a lack of perceived rivalry; they would all enounce that 'the food speaks for itself', and customers will come as long as you do your food 'nicely' and you keep your place 'neat'.

"Yes, there are three of them in this lane only. No competition. Because of that, we present our things well. We make sure that it (Kenkey) doesn't ferment too much, to give it a nice aroma and I put in a lot to really make it come out well so that more people come and buy."
(Helen, member Kotobabi, 27 Feb. 2014)

Clearly the vendors face many difficulties, with the main ones of: financial constraints, illegal or insecure space occupation, and the repressive attitude by governmental officials, high taxes and the physical hardship of the work. The next step is then to give recognition to strategies they apply to overcome them, to change their situation and to achieve their aspirations. Most vendors indicated the wish to grow their businesses as their principal ambition. Yet, what do the women do to obtain more control over their lives and businesses and to make their dreams reality; what is needed to achieve this and from whom do they expect support or assistance? As set out in the methodology section (chapter 3), most information from vendors was derived from both members and non-members of the association in order to understand the reasons for membership, the expectations and the benefits the GTCA provides. We will continue with the gains the broader community might get from the organization of the workshops and how well the association is known within the street food network. Subsequently the reasons for membership will be brought to light and thereafter the benefits.

7.2 The workshops and acquaintance with the GTCA

The workshops that are organized by the GTCA all over Accra and regularly since the past few years are one of the main attempts that are currently undertaken by the association to make improvements in the local street food network.

"We want everybody to be trained; you don't just wake up and then selling without any knowledge. We want everybody to know that if I'm selling fish, or Banku, or rice, this is what I'm supposed to be doing, this is what I should do. We are also taught how to plan, to plan your business as well. So we would love if they would come, we hope and pray. We have many members, many, but more should join."
(Alberta, member Osu, 31 Jan. 2014)

Everybody is welcome to attend the workshops. Topics such as nutrition, food safety, cholera prevention, environmental sanitation, personal hygiene, food handling and information on

preservatives are on the agenda of these programmes. The training can be seen as capacity building: to enhance existing knowledge and skills. We saw indeed that the current customary and traditional practices and knowledge are complemented with new information. The training content and materials are developed with the help of international NGOs, the WHO and governmental institutions like the FDA. These institutions sponsor the programmes as well. Additionally Nestlé and Unilever often provide their sponsorship. Some insight in this activity was already given in chapter six (see box 7), yet to explore the value for the vendors themselves, it is necessary to look at it from their perspective. Small focus group discussions were organized afterwards to ask what the attendees had heard, learned and remembered. Nonetheless, whether the knowledge obtained in these workshops is applied in practice, and hence the real impact, was outside the scope of this study.

Participants indicated some basic knowledge they learned at these workshops. Topics on food handling, personal hygiene and customer care were mentioned; the use of lime and vinegar to clean food products, to provide balls of water for hand washing and separate balls to clean the plates, not to pound *fufu* and receive money at the same time, etcetera. The information on customer services was about the relationship they should establish with their customers, how to attract them and how to deal with them. Though most women stuck to their opinion that the food itself was decisive. None of them had a specific strategy to attract more customers. Furthermore it was advised to well adjust the amount of what they cook to the amount of customers, often they cook too much and the food gets spoiled or hazards occur if the foods are reheated the next day. Also there was some explanation on the use of preservatives. Actually it was said there are some 'fake' *Maggi* cubes on the market, which are dangerous and can give you cancer. The attendees were warned not to use those - remark the company that sponsored the workshops. Contrary to what executives stated in the interviews, there was no information given about finance and entrepreneurship, it was purely about hygiene and cooking itself.

Most participants admitted they mainly came to the workshops for the certificate. However, a lot of confusion was expressed about the certificate, what it served for exactly and whether they had to carry it with them at all times. The in general low educational level and high rate of illiteracy of the female food vendors has to be taken into account. This was also given as one of the reasons why the organizers did not want to take an exam to test the knowledge of the vendors before handing out the certificates; they want the training to be accessible to as many women as possible. Though this more appeared to be connected to the profit they could make from the certificates and the huge degree of informality in the street food trade and its informal way of organization in general. The vendors were supposed to put the certificate at their food stands for customers to know they had been trained. Interestingly enough when asked to customers, no one said to be looking at any certificate, they did not really care. Other factors such as proximity, familiarity with the vendor and taste of the food would be decisive in their choice for a certain vendor. Similarly to what Rheinlander et al. (2008) found that in the consumers' perception of hygiene, they mostly emphasized on cleanliness, personal neatness, proper manners, aesthetic appearances and personal trust relations with the vendor.

For this study it was essential to explore the actual acquaintance with the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association within the street food network. From there on we looked at incentives for membership or reasons that withhold people from it. The majority of the vendors at the streets had never heard of the association. When mentioning it, some were curious others had no interest. Most of the members got to know the association via acquaintances or on invitation by the chairperson of the area where their venture was located. Other women got it recommended by AMA officials or Nestlé representatives who made them aware of the association. The workshops were expected to be a perfect occasion where vendors could get to know the association. It was surprising to find out however that quite a few women at these workshops

turned out to be no food vendors at all, they had heard the invitation and had decided to come out of curiosity, or accompanied a friend. When asking the participants after the workshops about the association, most had no idea why and by whom this was organized. It was not clear to them that the training had been organized, or at least was initiated, by the GTCA. They thought it was a program set up by the AMA or FDB. Hence they could not give a thought through answer about membership; they first wanted to know more about the association for them to know what could be expected. Yet, some doubtful suggestions were done, mainly on training and assistance: 'learning new things', financial aid (loans and advice on how to save) and protection from government officials especially concerning space occupation.

"They can give you new information, maybe about new ways of cooking, like how to reduce the amount of time of cooking, tips on how to shorten this. Also about 'traditional' dishes, since this is in the name... how to prepare our own traditional dishes. It can bring new things and improvements." (FGD, Kotobabi, 28 Jan. 2014)

Some vendors on the other hand were not interested or even had an outright negative opinion because of bad experiences in the past or general mistrust in associations. They did not see the use of being a member or did not recognize any benefits and thought of dues as a waste of money and saw meetings as a waste of time. Those vendors for instance preferred saving on their own, declared they knew exactly what they were doing so did not wish for any training or opine that knowing how to cook their *fufu* or *banku* was enough. Some made comments such as 'they are not reliable when you need them' and 'the leaders cannot be trusted'. Furthermore, the lack of time was an often-heard excuse; some women who did want to join but could not find the time, with the food vending business as a very time consuming and hard work. Especially if they did not have any help from paid assistants or family members, or they could not leave their stands alone with the assistants since they did not trust them enough with the money.

This subsection presented the general acquaintance with the GTCA and the vendors' perception of its benefits at the community and personal level. The study pointed at the workshops on hygienic practices as main perceived advantage for the wider community. A better knowledge on food hygiene may lead to safer food. The certificate received after attending such training is highly valued by vendors, yet not so much cared for by consumers. The patronisers of street foods rather look at for instance personal neatness and aesthetic appearances of the vendor and the place of sales than at certificates. The association is largely unknown among vendors. Acquaintance with the GTCA happened relatively sporadically and subsequently the expectations of and believe in the association among vendors varied greatly; from interested to enthusiastic to outright negative. What was furthermore striking is that the focus of the GTCA activities seems to inadequately connect to the difficulties and aspirations that were articulated by the vendors. The GTCA mostly concentrates on hygienic issues, whereas vendors express the wish for help on issues such as knowledge on credit obtainment and protection from oppressive governmental officials. In the rest of this chapter we will further amplify on this apparent contradiction and try to identify the extent to which the association meets the needs of its members.

7.3 Membership

The motivation of an individual to become an association member or not, depends among others on the persons' attitude and beliefs of the group effectiveness; it starts with identification with the group and having faith in collective efficacy (Gutierrez, 1995). As highlighted in the GTCA constitution by an old Akan adage: '*Baanu so a emmia',* meaning 'it is easy for two

people to carry a heavy load'. By women realizing their poor situation, they start seeing the need to mobilize themselves; described in the literature as the *conscientization* process, in which the individual becomes aware of the political dimension of their personal problems (Carr, 2003). Many empowerment theorists and feminists have identified the group as ideal venture to realize change; 'the group offers the opportunity to find power in unison that is more effective than most solo performances and thereby acts as a forceful vehicle in relations with larger systems and communities' (ibid: 19). With a group, mobilization toward social change can much easier and more effectively proceed (Gutierrez, 1995). However, these notions are according to my informants not a straightforward conviction. This was noticed in the mistrust in associations as expressed by several women and also the following quote shows that believe in group efficiency was not so self-evident.

"You have to convince the person to become a member, you can't just go and see somebody cooking there, hé my friend, you have to join the association. No, you have to convince the person. Tell her the benefits of joining the association."
(Mr. Ansong, PRO GTCA, 13 Jan. 2014)

Moreover, membership of the GTCA was in most cases not such a rational choice, but more depending on the circumstances; for instance because they already knew someone who joined the association or they got it recommended by representatives. An exception it was when vendors decided to become a member after a workshop, given the lack of promotion. Furthermore, as an alternative, with religion and church having a substantial function in Ghanaian society, a church was designated to also provide the social benefits and a feeling of belonging to a group. They are believed to fulfil a similar role when it comes to social security and its function as a safety net, as expressed in the quote below. This woman sells opposite of the place where one GTCA zone group meets. She was still doubtful about membership, especially because of time constraints, yet did have confidence in the association.

"An association is like a church, you get a lot of benefits. Every organization should have some benefits. I have been cheated, but I think that this one is reliable. I see them coming every week and the number is increasing." (Joyce, non-member James Town, 15 Jan. 2014)

In case vendors did decide to become a member, the most suitable space where the personal empowerment process of the vendors can take shape and can evolve is at the zonal level, in the different neighbourhoods where they get together for their meetings. Also the executives directed right in the beginning to these meetings to get an understanding of what is going on in the association. Only a few zones, out of the thirteen in which the GTCA had divided Accra, presently contained active member groups. The group in Osu is an example that was visited weekly during the fieldwork period.

Box 8. Diary notes, 22 Dec. 2013
This weekly meeting is held outside, at the side of the busy Oxford street, in front of the supermarket Shoprite and next to the fast food restaurant Mr. Bigg. There is one table for the two chairpersons, Charity and Alis; they share this position. The members are sitting on chairs in front of this table. They wanted me to sit at the table, right in the middle. I felt a bit uncomfortable, I really stand out because of my skin and lots of people were walking by. I would have preferred just to sit amongst them but they would not let me, I got a special place. Slowly more members arrived. After the opening prayer they made me introduce myself, they were curious what I was doing there. I told them my name and that I am a student doing research. They seemed to like that and said they were happy having me in their midst. Then everyone introduced him/herself (only one man present) and saying what they were selling and where. Almost all of them sell fried rice, plain rice, Jollof rice and Indomie. The reason they

---

came was mainly for saving and they just liked to get together. I asked them to pretend like I was not there because I wanted to see how their meetings go. The secretary mentioned the names and people would be coming to the table to pay their dues or the amount that they saved for the *Susu* that week. For the rest everyone was just sitting there. Looking bored, sometimes answering their phone and staring into the distance. After some time the meeting was apparently over, when they started the closing prayer. So that was it for this week.

A high degree of what can be called a 'wait and see attitude' could be noticed. Most women came to meetings without many expectations; they just got together, paid their dues, and sometimes *Susu* contribution and waited for whatever would be discussed. Also was noticed that the majority, despite their declaration of regular visits, did by far not come every week. In other neighbourhoods meetings were not even held every week. Often they would refer to the headquarters in Nima, 'everything comes from there' and 'they decide what is being discussed'. Contradictory is that at the meetings in Nima they would refer to the neighbourhood meetings to get a good understanding of the vendors' difficulties and pursuits and that the executives discuss in Nima what comes from the different neighbourhoods. Despite the many contradictions and the impression awakened that not much was discussed or done, the women certainly pointed at some benefits that helped them improve their businesses.

In the three sections following we will elaborately discuss the benefits and different forms of empowerment that the study identified; how does the GTCA support in strengthening the position of their members. The rest of the empirical findings of this chapter are thus derived from vendors that are actually member of the association only. It will start with psychological empowerment, both at the individual as the political level and then go over to more instrumental forms of economic empowerment and sponsorship by private sector actors. However to strictly separate those two elements is impossible; the findings show the social and the economic domain are highly interconnected.

7.3.1 Psychological empowerment

With psychological empowerment we refer at the individual feelings of empowerment: increasing self-esteem, self-confidence and a sense of agency (Rowlands, 1997). The perceived effects of membership can roughly be divided in two dynamics, both for receiving information; 'you hear about things' and the other way around, because 'you can voice out'. The former is more at a personal level, while the latter is connected to political influence. This section will discuss them in sequence.

Individual level

> *"When we meet it is very casual. We pay dues and have some small talk. It is not about the business, more about our personal lives. We have a cordial relationship."*
> *(Juliana, member James Town, 15 Jan. 2014)*

Getting involved in social organization can give a certain sense of social security and it attends to the human need 'to talk about things' and of sharing ones' personal issues with people who have similar experiences. The literature indicated that especially in urban settings of developing countries, where kin-networks are attenuated, the social element of getting together is highly valued (Ardener & Burman, 1995; Hanson, 2005). In addition, Atkinson (1995) argues that balancing the three major roles of reproduction, production and community management become more and more difficult for women in the urban setting; membership of a collectivity might help in alleviating these demanding tasks. In this study, by the many conversations with

the women, the importance of social support through belonging to a group, and the associated psychological and emotional comfort became evident. One example answer on the question 'what are for you the benefits':

"Mmm, the association you are in.. sometimes, maybe.. We like to visit one another, maybe if your friend is sick you let them know, one or few people will come and greet you and pray with you, that will make you feel good." (Rejoice, deputy chairperson Kotobabi, 20 Feb. 2014)

The women talk little about their businesses per se, a fortiori about their private lives and circumstances. However, this seemingly futile activity, sometimes interpreted as mere women gossiping, is in many cases essential for more tacit knowledge exchange and advice and can lead to more self-esteem and feelings of control over their lives. Corresponding with Lord and Hutchison (1993) who found in their research on people experiencing powerlessness that the process of participation itself was empowering. Some indicated that the sharing of ideas really helped improving their businesses. In the meetings they get valuable information on a wide range of topics, such as about marriage and relations in the family. They judged this as inspiring and exciting. Also the executives, as food vendors themselves that are generally in the GTCA for a longer period of time already, said to have learned a lot from the association, in the meetings and trainings.

"I learn from the members as well, in meetings, as a form of knowledge sharing. You cannot know everything; it really improved my life in terms of knowledge sharing." (Haija Cicilia, chairperson Nungua, 16 Jan. 2014)

Furthermore it was very important for the women to feel united. In a recently formed group in Kotobabi, what they would like to achieve was 'oneness in the group so that they can really help each other'. As well as in James Town where a strong sense of community is generally present because of its history as a fishermen town. A member replied that 'it is about cohesion, about uniting', with respect for each other as a principal component, especially because of the different ethnic backgrounds. People from distinct ethnic groups would sometimes hold certain prejudice and mistrust to one another. Getting to know other people, 'that's how you learn more'. A wider exchange of knowledge and partaking in different activities, including travelling, can indeed contribute to an empowerment process and is valued as such (Rowlands, 1997). Travelling, and even solely visiting other neighbourhoods can give new insights on how things are done in other areas. For celebrations, like the 'end of the year party', members from all zones are invited and the contacts thus go further than the direct environment. Together they enjoy music, dancing, sharing food and drinks, with printed t-shirts with the logo further contributing to a sense of belonging and group identity that can help in feelings of strengthening their position within the society.

In addition to ethnicity, age plays a key role in Ghanaian society; old age is seen as synonymous to knowledge. Elderly deserve great respect and there is a respectable age hierarchy.

"We have a mixed group in age. Some 'grown-ups', elderly. The elderly, older women can help, they bring order when there is confusion. We do share ideas, the elderly are in charge."
(Me: 'Is this a problem sometimes that you can't say what you want?')
"Opinion sharing can be difficult when an older person is talking, you have to back off. But it is good, because you can learn from them."
(Juliana, member James Town, 15 Jan. 2014)

Picture 13. GTCA neighbourhood group in James Town during the 'end of the year party'.

In the focus group discussions the respect for elderly could clearly be noticed; when an older looking person spoke, the rest was quiet. When looking from the empowerment perspective, it can certainly hinder younger girls or women. As one young woman revealed about her assistant whom she could not tell certain things to do for her because she was a 'grown-up'. In effect she was not helped much by this lady for her business. Respect for old age is also clearly manifested when it comes to funerals, which are extensively celebrated in Ghana. Posters of deceased people, with their age explicitly mentioned can be found on many walls and houses throughout the city. It is called the 'celebration of life' and a great number of people are invited to the funerals. Attending funerals and supporting the relatives of the deceased turned out to be of major importance within the GTCA. As also noticed by Sadan (2004): an association can function as protection against powerlessness, in times of illness after loss of a loved one. This was indeed mentioned as one of the reasons for membership; the emotional support provided in case of death, sickness, and also birth giving. Additionally, 'ceremonial functions, especially funerals, are important to strengthen members' emotional commitment to the groups' (Clark, 1995: 279). Especially for leaders it is important to attend these life events. In one of the executive meetings the decease of a member was discussed for more than half an hour; the cause of death, then who would attend the funeral (they agreed on all chairpersons plus one member from each zone), what the financial contribution would be (depending on the dues the person had paid during her membership) and red fabric was bought to wear as a headscarf (red and black are the funeral colours). The same counts for giving birth. One respondent who just had given birth to her first child explained how the members of her group in James Town and beyond took part in the naming ceremony and that she got money (a fixed amount for birth giving, as determined in the constitution) and presents. And how she had appreciated this. Both examples show how the social and economic elements are strongly connected, or to phrase Ardener and Burman (1995): 'friendship networks are a resource, because 'social collateral' is a prerequisite not only for successful entrepreneurs but often also for social and economic survival' (p.9). Moreover these events illustrate how the contacts go further than the direct environment, can be helpful for knowledge sharing and lead to feelings of empowerment.

As already mentioned, religion plays an important role in Ghanaian society. Also within the GTCA religion is a predominant element in all their actions and at each activity. At the start of every meeting or workshop there is an opening prayer and they always close with one, it would say something like:

"That God may help us in our decision-making and our businesses and may take us all back to our homes safely." (Meeting Osu neighborhood, 19 Jan. 2014)

In Ghana there is a majority of Christians (around 70%), Muslims make up around 17% of the population (mainly in the Northern part of the country) and a small percentage of people adhere traditional deities, or mix both[30]. Religious tolerance is high. The religions of Islam and Christianity peacefully coexist; adherents of both religions see God as one and the same and the differences are not perceived as problematic (Hajia, personal communication). All respondents in the different neighbourhood groups confirmed that religion is not a problematic subject within the GTCA. The central role religion and faith play in Ghana do influence strongly the feelings of personal empowerment. It is God who more or less decides what happens in your life and whether you will be successful. Often people started their sentences with 'We pray that…'

"Only God can empower, but it will pass through your business."
(FGD, Kotobabi, 21 Jan. 2014)

"It's God who gives luck. But you are in charge of your own hygiene etc. and that can influence the amount of customers; that will attract them." (Yamonaye, Chairperson La, 20 Jan. 2014)

With this last quote nicely illustrating how faith is combined with a sense of self-responsibility, and hence agency to affect ones circumstances. The belief that individuals cannot steer everything themselves, yet do have a certain control to influence their life situation.

Collective and Political level

''Numbers count' and you are not being recognized if you are on your own, you stand a lot stronger when you are a group."

"If you belong to a group, people recognize you. You cannot know everything yourself as a human being."

"The government knows about you, you get recognized by the authorities."

"Alone you can't get help, being in an association you can channel your interests, and maybe solicit for funds."

"The association you see, sometimes, if you need something, if you are in the association it is very easy to get that thing done, than just an individual. It's a good thing."

"One day when they come around (the AMA)… I am not in any organization so they can close the place and stop me from selling."

(FGD, Kotobabi, 21 Jan. 2014 & Osu, 12 Jan. 2014)

These quotes from focus group discussions with a recently formed group in Kotobabi and one existing for a few years now in Osu give a good illustration of what is referred to when talking about collective empowerment. As becomes clear, for the women it is important to be

---

[30] http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/general/statistics.php

recognized and to have their voices heard, and they assume this can only be realized by being in a group. However, also many critical notes were disclosed.

"Unfortunately the organization is not all that strong."
(FGD, Kotobabi, 28 Jan. 2014)

The previous chapter already demonstrated that indeed the link from the GTCA to Accra's authorities, to demand better circumstances for vendors, is weak. Various members thought that the government was 'too far away' and they did not expect actual influence at governmental level. The issue of space occupation is a good example; women indicated this as a real problem. Yet when asked for concrete cases in which the association supported them on this matter, none could be given and they were uncertain whether this would be the case in the future. They said they did not have trouble with the AMA in that area or they doubted whether the association was strong enough to have an influence on this grievance. Members referred to 'these people that are at Nima' (the executives) that if you have any problem you can consult them. Nevertheless nothing was done with their remarks, and above all the tools to do something about the situation are largely absent. It thus looks as if the perceived collective power is more rhetoric and connected to a feeling of security that comes from collectivity than that real change can be made. Phrases such as 'voicing out' and 'getting heard' more appeared to be a discourse that was repeated by many informants. This corresponds to findings by Unifem (2005) that membership based organizations often have limited power and abilities to provoke substantive gains for their members. Also when it comes to the provisioning of services to improve the working conditions of the street food vendors, such as water supply, sanitation and rubbish collection, that governments largely fail to provide in urban areas like Accra (McFarlane, 2012); those issues are not addressed by the association. Despite the fact they acknowledge these problems and then complain about the circumstances, there is no active approach towards local government officials. However the feeling of getting recognized by the authorities is apparently comforting enough to mention as a benefit of membership and leads to psychological empowerment, regardless the lack of real change. The next section will highlight the more tangible benefits, by zooming in onto the economic level.

7.3.2 Economic empowerment: dues, the *Susu* system, formal banking and credit

Financial progress is for the women in the informal business of food vending the most important and urgent aspect of the empowerment process. There was not a single interview or other meeting without the financial situation and the issue of capital being discussed. Therefore this merits further attention. Overall, interest in financial needs of women has been of increasing concern in local and international development agencies over the last decades, because of the recognitions that income-generation and finance are key in improving the standard of living of women and their families (Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey, 1995). Currently, the Ghanaian economy is growing, yet with high income inequality among different socio-economic groups (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). This, along with rising food prices is putting many residents in a difficult position, particularly those in the informal economy like food vendors.

"Everyone is having problems, especially financial problems."
(Alis, chairperson Osu, 26 Feb. 2014).

One way the members of the association try to cope with these difficulties is by paying dues. The women have to pay around five Ghana Cedis (GH¢) per month for the social organization of meetings and gatherings like funerals and birth giving. This amount is not refundable, though

you can count on a certain amount when you need it, in case when something happens to you or a close family member.

"The contribution can help you if the business is declining."
(Joyce, member James Town, 15 Jan. 2014)

Another subject that was indicated by many informants as helpful for the progression and survival of the business and their income was the topic of saving. This theme strongly came to the forefront during the data collection. In addition to knowledge sharing, training, emotional support and the feeling of being 'backed up' by the collectivity, group saving was for the majority of the women a weighty motivation for membership and active participation. In most cases the informal group saving systems were highly valued. There was however no consensus on the success and effectiveness of the group saving system. Also some women declared they prefer saving on their own. In order to understand these differing judgements, the explanation of the various traditional Ghanaian *Susu* systems and their historical embeddedness will be combined with the findings on their present functioning within the street food network. What explains their popularity, why do so many people still choose *Susu* among many other options?

The book 'Money-go-rounds; the importance of rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAS)[31] for women' edited by Ardener and Burman (1995) gives an excellent overview of the significance of these groups around the globe. In the case study on Ghana (by Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey): 'Mobilizing cash for business: women in rotating *Susu* clubs in Ghana' the data of this study are completely endorsed. Historically in West Africa, where incomes are low and with an absence of a formal social security network, the ROSCAs have proved to help to meet the challenges of the impoverished and the destitute. The group *Susu* works as follows; the founder and the members negotiate a uniform amount that is to be paid at regular intervals by each member, mostly weekly intervals. The amounts of the groups were small, around five Cedis; the names and contributions are noted down in a little notebook each time that is paid. They decide, by agreement or balloting, who receives the amount at what time which continues until everyone had her turn. They are complete cycles on their own, making this a flexible and cost-effective strategy. The saving activities can be suspended for long periods and people then re-group at any point in time when the economic circumstances of the members have improved (Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey, 1995). Another form of saving, also called *Susu*, is by making use of an itinerant (male) collector who goes around the streets and markets collecting dues from the women. They receive their savings at the end of the month minus the collector's commission. This is more used at market places because of the close distance and fixed stands. It is however a relatively unsafe system; various women recited that they had been 'cheated' by the collector who had disappeared with their money. Besides, instead of getting interest, they pay for this service. The group saving systems is usually better trusted because the women know each other and they meet each week at the same place. Though safety is not guaranteed, also in these groups it happened that "some had chopped the money" (FGD, Kotobabi, 21 Jan. 2014); meaning that some members of the group had run away with the money, not paying the rest they owed. Still the likelihood for this to happen is small and in general the groups function as a safe, simple and inexpensive system of savings mobilisation in which the members have frequent access to their savings, hence providing an informal insurance or safety net. The social pressure of mutual trust, obligatory feelings and perhaps personal pride are among the driving forces that sustain regular payments (Ardener & Burman, 1995). In the comparative studies from different African and Asian countries and edited by these authors, much evidence was found that associations designed to meet other aims, like the GTCA, set up a ROSCA to take

---

[31] Defined as: "an association formed upon a core of participants who make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or in part, to each contributor in turn" (Ardener & Burman, 1995: 1).

advantage of their discipline and moral imperatives. The obligation on members of a ROSCA to meet to pay their contributions may provide justification, structure and discipline to their social gatherings. In this study the same was observed.

"We meet every two weeks but as we start the Susu, we have to meet every week. Because the money, we have to come together every one week."
(Rejoice, deputy chairperson Kotobabi, 20 Feb. 2014).

The women also explained that if a person is not able to come to a meeting, they go by at their house or food stand to collect the money. The contact between the members is even facilitated with the arrival of mobile phones that everyone possesses nowadays. The money, time and energy spent on socializing in these meetings might engender valuable knowledge exchange and is thus far from being 'wasteful' or 'uneconomic', a justification for membership and the financial viability of the ROSCA. According to Bortei-Doku and Aryeetey (1995), age-old traditions for pooling labour, food, utensils and implements for mutual benefits, exist in most Ghanaian cultures (among the various ethnic groups). These group rotations are thus strongly embedded within society. 'Local' rather than bureaucratic knowledge is crucial. The traditional social obligations to help kinsmen, and sometimes neighbours and workmates, quickly come into effect as word gets around among members of the ROSCAs. They are committed to helping each other through lending their savings or by adjusting the order of rotations if one member needs the money; this flexibility can rarely be matched by distant, impersonal, banking systems. Again stressing the strong social element that underpins the economic and the other way around. Indeed some women seemed to value the social support and security even more than the financial benefit. Furthermore Appadurai (2004) describes in his work on several NGOs endeavouring the rights of the urban poor, the essentiality of financial discipline of saving for community building. Daily saving is referred to as moral, or even spiritual discipline.

One of the remarkable findings is that the *Susu* system does not fade away with the increasing number of more developed financial institutions; they are not replaced but continue in co-existence to each other. Many food vendors belong to several saving systems; some join various *Susu* groups at the same time and also have formal bank accounts. Thus knowledge of the banking system does not preclude the use of indigenous system. In Ardener and Burman (1995) is explained that ROSCAs are not the equivalent of banks or credit unions, since the aim of each ROSCA meeting is that by the end of the meeting all the resources shall be distributed and in member's hands. The formal – informal dichotomy in which formal economic rationalities are put versus informal social ones is not adequate. The rationalism of modern global capital seems to be incompatible with local systems; they are founded on different cultural and ideological imperatives, yet they can co-exist. Furthermore are the indigenous institutions more adaptable to the countries' economic needs than models introduced from industrial societies elsewhere. You only need small amounts and it is more short term. The women seemed to feel more comfortable with doing their things 'small-small' and gradually, it makes them feel freer. Appadurai (2004) refers to it as 'indigenous microcredit' that remains outside the state and banking sector. It is estimated that in Ghana, in spite of forty year of formal banking in the country, around 55 percent of the total money supply is held outside the banks (Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey, 1995).

"Because the money is not enough to go to the bank and save."
(Myriam, member Kotobabi, 29 Jan. 2014)

"I prefer the local system instead of banks, there are too many formalities. I am personally not interested in getting to know the banking system."
(Juliana, member James Town, 15 Jan. 2014)

Despite these responses and the popularity of local saving systems, a great variety of replies were expressed about both the traditional and the modern system, and the wish to learn and use the formal banking system. There seemed to be a quite ambivalent judgment towards formal banking and credit systems. On the one hand there was a call for more knowledge on the obtainment of credit and loans, as was previously highlighted in chapter six and in the subsection of 'difficulties and aspiration' in this chapter. Credit is generally very difficult to obtain for workers in the informal sector. Suggestions were made by members for the association to provide them with more knowledge on getting loans instead of just relying on what they contribute themselves in the form of dues and *Susu*. Some women complained that very little was given in return for their dues and it did not help for improvements in or expansion of their business. On the other hand, many respondents had a negative perception of banks and microfinance businesses. There was a considerable mistrust in those institutions. The vendors criticized the financial institutions for demanding too high interests in their pursuit of trying to take advantage of the little profit they make. One member, the only male respondent, narrated about those high interests that are demanded and if you are unable to pay, they confiscate the vendor's goods. His refrigerator and other utensils were removed twice from his little venture. Despite the fact he had been a member for a long time, he had never heard of any credit possibilities at the association. According to Mr. Ansong (PRO of the GTCA) the association functions as a guarantor for their members in case they cannot pay the amount they have to pay back. However, the incident of the confiscation clearly caused some doubt about this service by the association. The same counts last of all for organizing and stimulating collective purchase. This was introduced in chapter six and could be an important contributor to economic empowerment. Some members indeed would like to see the formation of collective buyers groups to get their purchases, food and other utensils at a cheaper price.

Such a structure is currently not in place. Despite some comments by the executives on attempts to set this up, there was no clear strategy and it did not sound very convincing. In the future the GTCA could try to provide this service by supporting members to actively cooperate and buy their purchases collectively in order to improve the economic circumstances of its members.

To recapitulate the component of economic empowerment we can conclude that the GTCA most strongly contributes by the *Susu* saving groups. The members in a particular neighbourhood form these groups and weekly put in money that they subsequently divide among themselves. It gives structure to their meetings and provides a feeling of social security. The dues are used in case of life events such as funerals and birth giving; yet do not give a substantial boost to their businesses. Some members call for more knowledge and support of obtaining credit and loans at formal financial institutions. However at the same time a momentous mistrust in those institutions was expressed. Considerable improvements could be made by the association through cooperating with credit institutions and by the formation of collective buyers groups for real financial progress of their members.

7.3.3 Capacity building and sponsorship

In addition to the aspects of psychological and economic empowerment, there was a high appreciation among members for the training programs as part of capacity building; the enhancement of knowledge and learning new skills that help to improve one's business. These aspects are provided in trainings that are for the most part made possible through sponsorship. Active members that come regularly to weekly neighbourhood meetings showed great enthusiasm for several training programmes and said to have learned a lot from them. People from outside of the association mainly give those trainings.

"Normally where we go for meetings like people coming, they bring people, so people come to teach us about new things, about food preparation, about our business. So that is what we get from it." (Helen, member Kotobabi, 27 Feb. 2014)

Those 'people' could be from the FDA, instructors from other public institutions, local and foreign NGOs, or private company representatives. As indicated in the previous chapter, the GTCA is a good gateway for other parties to reach vendors because they are already relatively organized. The programmes do not necessarily focus on street food vending alone, with an example of training by the James Town health centre on family planning. Or they focus on related issues, like an instruction on first aid and fire safety and prevention techniques, which they can apply on their working sites in case of emergency. Also there are programs that are not exclusively for members of the GTCA. In that case members of a particular neighbourhood group get briefed by their chairperson and can invite friends to come if they think they are interested and it is useful to them. For some training the association executives select a group of members, because there is a limited amount of places and resources; they usually select the 'strong', most successful vendors. More than once was referred to a 'train the trainer' system: to educate the leaders and a number of most talented vendors and then to let them train others. However to what extend their knowledge indeed gets passed on to other members is not comprehensively examined in this study.

Trainings are not organized frequently, they happen once in a while when there is a particular programme and the necessary sponsorship. As aforementioned, apart from trainings by public institutions and NGOs, also the food company Nestlé was often mentioned to organize training. Also do representatives of the companies frequently visit the neighbourhood meetings. They are received warm heartily. When asking about the benefits of the association, most vendors referred to 'Nestlé people', who invite them to programmes and come to the association.

"Mm, the association… Especially these Nestlé people help us. Because through this association, Maggi people through this association.
Big, big companies through this association, so it is good."
(Alis, chairperson Osu, 26 Feb. 2014)

"They bring their products to the association, tablecloths etc. They do make promotion, so when then those things are there, the prices is a little bit lesser.
If they have workshops, we go there, it is ok."
(Alberta, member Osu, 31 Jan. 2013)

"When they introduce a new product, they introduce it to us, the members, first to try it before they bring it onto the market."
(Veronica, member James Town, 15 Jan. 2014)

These quotes point to the great enthusiasm for the corporate companies, especially because of the material benefits they receive. The members explained that the donations by the companies and the samples with the new products they get to prepare their dishes helps them in their businesses. This is in addition to the well-targeted trainings. Here we also see the entanglement of the GTCA with corporate food companies, and the blurriness when it comes to what is organized by which association. For example the chairperson of Osu, Alis, made clear how they had first organized themselves and later they were formed into a group by Nestlé, they thus now belong to both the GTCA and the *Maffag* group. Vendors seemed to get a more tangible feeling of empowerment by the corporate companies that know how to reach them via the association and supply them with their products. Besides the benefits on material items, the

company also organizes many of the trainings on business management and record keeping; they like to keep up their image as 'partner in development'. Practically all vendors indicated to want to expand their businesses but most of them at the same time denoted their lack of knowledge on how to do this and the wish to obtain this knowledge. In a training they would get information on record keeping; to note down all incomes, expenses, credit sales and purchases, in order to have an accurate control over ones business and to make the right decisions. In case they would want to get a loan, banks also ask for those records to be able to estimate the viability of the business. Especially the part on business management is an area not covered by the GTCA and is taken up by different actors instead.

The most remarkable discovery on the topic of sponsorship and thus private sector influence is how Nestlé as market player incorporates into the GTCA as a civil society organization. By providing training they help the vendors expand their knowledge and learn new skills, yet also penetrate their power into the association. The influential power by Nestlé points at a certain contradiction. On the one hand the association executives see foreign influence as a danger to the local cuisine, yet on the other they embrace those food companies for the sponsorship of their programmes and trainings and thus giving them more space to implement their corporate strategies into the local food system. In the discussion we will further reflect on this notable finding and place it into the broader scientific picture. Particularly how this constitutes a transforming effect on the governance triangle of state, market and civil society institutions.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided insight into the vendors' perspective on their life as street food vendors and their experiences of empowerment at several fields. As a starting point to discuss the empowerment processes, we began with highlighting the difficulties. Mostly were mentioned the financial constraints, the illegitimately of space occupation and thus their trouble with local government officials, and the physical aspect because of the tough work. An approximate 25% of the total amount of the food vendors becomes member of an occupational association, including the GTCA. They see advantages in collective organization and believe that an association can assist them in overcoming their difficulties. Also they suppose it might help to reach the most frequently heard aspiration of 'growing our businesses'. The study found that the familiarity with the GTCA is quite low and that membership is not highly necessary to experience some benefits of the association. Various activities that the association organizes are open to all vendors who are interested, such as the workshops on hygienic practices. Besides, some vendors made explicit their mistrust in such professional associations. Members of the GTCA however did indicate they get some additional benefits from their membership. We classified those benefits into psychological empowerment (feelings of improved self-confidence and a sense of agency), economic empowerment (financial progress) and capacity building that we discussed in order. First of all, membership provided vendors with a certain feeling of social security. The personal relationships with other vendors were highly appreciated since they can share mainly their personal issues as well as information on their businesses; 'you hear about things'. This last remark is something that also private sector actors respond to. The research pointed at the role of the transnational food company Nestlé. It showed how this particular TFC got interconnected with the association by making use of the GTCA's network of members and offering them training and sponsorship. The increasing entanglement of the GTCA with the corporate food company became apparent. The members indicated that they actually were most enthusiastic about the support they received from 'Nestlé people' that could reach them through the groups established by the GTCA. The study indicated that at the moment these actors are better able at meeting some particular vendor's needs than the association is.

Furthermore, at the collective level, members got the feeling they can 'voice out' to get heard by the local government. However, the connection with the local government proved to be rather weak. Hence we concluded that the political influence through the association is more a positive sentiment than a possibility for real change. This corresponds to earlier research that concluded that associations often lack the resources (financial, personnel, and skills) to effect long term change (Tostensen et al., 2001). It points at an occurrence in which 'people are conscious about their situation but not able to get out of it' (Sadan, 2004:46). The feeling of empowerment is indeed in fact often different than having real power in the political sense, yet can be just as meaningful (Rowlands, 1997). Alike most such organizations, the GTCA is more in-ward looking than out-wards. They are more concerned with their own members, than that they have a broader view and political purpose. This is consistent with the goals of the association, which are primarily focussed on the wellbeing of their members (see box 2). Nevertheless it is not very helpful to constitute change within the broader network.

When specifically looking at the goals of the association and the question whether they achieve those, we found varying accomplishments. From the results can be concluded that they best succeeded in their first goal that is, 'to make members see the need for healthy food and help them maintain and attain better and efficient cooking methods'. Much training mainly focused on these aspects and was appreciated by the vendors as such. Though in the researcher's opinion some improvements of the workshops could be made to improve the effectiveness, for instance by applying more punctual time schedules and taking an exam afterwards. Furthermore did the GTCA largely succeed to their aim of 'seeking members general welfare in sickness and hospitalisation, in death, funerals and national disasters'. They do this by visiting funerals and naming ceremonies and donating the additional financial support. Particularly the funerals are an example of how the benefits that are both social and economic in nature are strongly interconnected. The support contained on the one hand the social aspect of moral support form co-members and on the other hand the financial benefit of a monetary contribution from the association. Less successful the GTCA proved to be at 'seeing to the members growth and progress'. In terms of economic empowerment, the members feel most supported by the association because of the informal *Susu* saving groups they set up in a neighbourhood group and that function as a safety net. While knowledge and information on financial management and the formal banking system, is not provided by the association. Entrepreneurial skills are necessary to develop and grow the ventures into long-term profit making small enterprises. Although by members this knowledge was wished for, in trainings no such information was given. As indicated earlier, a fortiori TFCs fill this gap and thereby deeper integrate into the network.

The association turned out to be not sufficiently powerful to make a real change in the vendors' lives; clear difference in the success in ventures or knowledge between members and non-members was not noticed. There was a discrepancy between the wish 'to expand their business' and the presence of actual pragmatism. Especially the informality of the sector; the insecurity of space occupation and the arbitrary and sometimes repressive attitude by the local government had a strong impeding effect. The women did not or simply could not express a real long-term vision because of the great much insecurity they faced. To enhance the empowerment of the vendors the association could thus in particular improve their co-operation with the local government and with other association that have similar goals to claim their rights and to unite forces.

Chapter 8: Conclusions & Discussion

This thesis work was set out to get a better understanding of the current street food network in Accra, the continuing changes and its organization. It was set up in light of the most recent theories on globalization of the food system, its impact and responses and by using the theory on empowerment. It was created using a critical constructivist approach; by first critically examining the current developments within Accra's street food network. We analysed the actions and responses by the stakeholders involved, with a focus on the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association. Secondly we aimed to identify possibilities for an empowerment of the network. The concept of civic organization is believed to have a great potential to improve both the network itself, as well as to strengthen the lives of the vendors involved. In the ongoing globalization of the agri-food sector a growing power of corporate food companies is noticed and often feared. Critics expect this to lead to a disappearance of traditional food practices and cuisine and a decreasing self-control of people on their food. Furthermore in light of empowerment, the vendors' position needs strengthening because they make up an important part of urban food provisioning and they face growing difficulties in a rapidly urbanizing city. Accra is one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa. Many earlier studies highlighted the potential for associations to improve the street food conditions. They identified their possible function as role models and agents of change. Hitherto little was known about their role within the network and how they react in the rapidly changing environment in which they operate. This research aimed to fill this gap and to specifically connect globalizing food system dynamics with empowerment theory.

The chapter continues with highlighting the most important results of the study to answer the research questions. For the all-encompassing conclusions we refer to the closing sub-sections of each empirical chapter (chapter five, six and seven). Here we will interpret the findings in the broader context of the scientific literature that was set out in the theoretical and conceptual framework in chapter two. After answering the research questions we will discern what other results the research pointed at. These two aspects together will lead us to an answer of the problem statement. In the second sub-section we will reflect on the research. We will discuss the methodology and theory that was used and the main limitations of the study. This way we will further identify to what extend the problem statement has been answered and what remains uncovered and therefore open for further research. We will subsequently close this last chapter with recommendations for the science and policy field, and for the GTCA.

8.1 Addressing the research questions; main findings

Based on an extensive literature review we formulated the following problem statement that we aimed to answer in this study:

> *In the context of a globalizing food system, how does the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association contribute to an empowerment of the local street food network of Accra?*

That was subsequently divided into three sub-questions:

1) What global and local food dynamics can be recognized, what is the role of the different stakeholders, and how do they influence the street food vending network of Accra?

2) How is the street food network organized, what is the function of the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association and how can their role be strengthened?

3) What effect does the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association have on the lives of food vendors, and how can the empowerment of the individual members be enhanced?

8.1.1 Hybridization

Overall, the street food network of Accra is dynamic and growing rapidly. Gradually more people are taking up the business of food vending and also a wider variety of actors are getting involved. The main finding concerning the global and local food dynamics is that we can certainly speak of '*hybridization*' or '*glocalization*' processes. Global forces do not simply enforce their power upon local actors in a top-down fashion as was assumed in past acculturation theories; they interact and integrate with the existing local practices.

The study pointed at an increasing diversity of food offerings and some small changes in its supply system and the hygienic food practices that are applied. We indicated first of all that by and large the food supply towards the vendors remains based on traditional ways of urban food provisioning, via small-scale retail and open-air markets. The rising role of supermarkets of which is often written about in the literature (see e.g. Crush & Frayne, 2011; Tinker, 1999) did hitherto not get much effect on the street food network in Accra. We did find a significant external influence from the transnational food company Nestlé. This company makes use of the traditional small-scale supply systems and direct delivery of cans and packages at the food stands. Here we see hybrid relationships where the formal and informal supply networks interact. The long presence of TFCs in the country made them sensitive to local preferences and customs. As a consequence they also adjust their product offerings to the local taste. Concerning the sourcing of locally produced products, the raw material, consumers and vendors often expressed a negative attitude. Locally produced products were rather mistrusted than wished for. This was especially the case for local Ghanaian rice production that has a bad reputation. Likewise this counts for urban crop growing due to an insufficient supply of sanitary water for irrigation. Besides, the convenience and vicinity of food stands and products turned out to be more important than the locality of production. Direct purchase from urban farmers by the street food vendors is not viable at the moment because of the small amounts of vegetables vendors need each time. Secondly, on the side of food demand we noticed an increasing demand for quick western-based foods. Those were referred to as 'local fast food' or '*copycat*' foods; foreign originated foods are mimicked; yet localized by means of adjustments to the local taste. They usually require different cooking techniques than traditional foods. Fast foods like *Indomie* instant noodles and *Check-checks* (fried rice) are increasingly taking up a larger share in the street food offer; they are integrating into the network. This can be related to the faster pace of life in a modernizing city. Though, despite these occurrences that were observed, the Ghanaian indigenous foods still show an unimpaired popularity. Many positive characteristics are attributed to the foods, such as the notion that they are more nutritious. As for the widespread assumption that traditional foods perish under influence of global forces (see e.g. Pinali & Kwhaja, 2004; Drakakis-Smith, 1991) no evidence was found. The third dynamic, on changing hygienic food practices within the street food network is to some extend connected to international standards. In the global food system a shift is noticed towards more standardized and expertise control systems that are supposed to create trust among consumers (Phillips, 2006; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001) However, what we found in this study is that mostly small innovations take place, such as hand washing facilities and the better storing of foods. When consumers estimate food hygiene they concentrate on aesthetic circumstances and

personal neatness of the vendor. Correspondingly an international system like the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) gets a very local application. The focus of hygiene is in Accra on small improvements by the local food vendors.

These results endorse the contemporary thought among food social scientists that globalization of the food system is a contested and interactive process (Morgan et al., 2006; Dupuis & Goodman, 2005). Transformations do not take the unidirectional course of powerful actors imposing their force on the less powerful, as it was formerly believed within the political economy theory (ibid). Instead they integrate within local food practices and preferences that are strongly embedded within society. A constant negotiation between global and local forces takes place within the food chains, so it can factually be referred to as the *glocalization* or *hybridization* process. What was observed in Accra's street food network can accordingly indeed be well explained by an actor-network approach (Whatmore & Thorne, 2004; Murdoch et al., 2000; Law, 2009). The theory pays equal attention to the diverse actors that are involved within the network, as well as to non-human actors (such as new innovations and technological improvements). It takes the interplay of all 'actants' into account. Street foods can be seen as a hybrid space where 'traditional' and 'modern' meet and mix. Elements of both the 'traditional' paradigm as well as contemporary global market influences are combined. We in fact saw a counterforce where a local actor, the GTCA, started to defend the local cuisine, within the context of global influences. Indicating that a strengthening of national identities and an integration within global markets at the same time, are no contradictory processes (Wilk, 1999). Tacit and habitual knowledge is passed on from generation to generation, yet outside influences are taken up and often used to enhance certain customary practices. Particularly tourism can play a contributing role in the revival of the local cuisine and associated culinary traditions. Continuously changing circumstances under the influence of globalization, have led to an even more active, dynamic and flourishing food processing industry in the urban setting of Accra.

8.1.2 Weak embeddedness of the GTCA in the political setting

After looking at the organization of the street food sales in Accra, we can conclude that the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association plays a limited role. The GTCA is largely unknown in the street food network and only a small portion of the growing amount of street food vendors is member of the association. They would like to get all vendors involved and to function as the main standard setting body for the 'art' of traditional catering. They mainly focus on the appliance of hygienic food practices by organizing workshops and by developing the 'code of hygienic practices for traditional caterers'. In this sense they are the providers of updated and extended professional knowledge and builders of normative frameworks for enacting knowledge in practice, as Rusaw (1995) identified as important functions for professional associations. However the real impact of the GTCA and its possible function as a change catalyst is limited. On the side of the local government, we identified a severe gap between formal regulation and actual implementation of these regulations. Generally a repressive attitude was manifested and there is furthermore little clarity about the responsibilities of different governmental institutions. This, plus the arbitrary tax collection system makes an effective control of the sales of hygienic street foods difficult. The network is typified by a very informal way of organization and street food vending has a bad reputation among the general public. Hitherto, attempts to organize vendors on a food market failed. The street food network dynamics are inadequately assessed and understood by the local authorities.

In the literature the group is often highlighted as the most appropriate entity to constitute social change (Carr, 2003; Guttierez, 1995; Rowlands, 1997). However as it became evident

throughout the study, this is not such a straightforward process. The research showed that the association more plays a role as a portal for other associations. Several governmental institutions as well as private sector actors use the member network of the GTCA to reach vendors for their programmes and can hereby enact their power. Inter alia due to weak leadership, the associations' own initiative to defend the rights of the vendors and to express themselves at the field of public policy is minor. The assumption among some members that they can 'voice out' because they belong to a group is thus more psychological than it has a real transforming effect on political arrangements. Others generally doubted the strength of the association. Also the cooperation of the GTCA with other associations for knowledge sharing and alliance building is limited. Much distrust was shown in the intentions of other associations with similar goals. There was thus no evidence for the supposition in former research that associations straightforwardly contribute to an increase in active citizenship, cooperation and trust (Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 2001). The members did realize that their personal problems are connected to the political situation (Rowlands, 1997) and blamed the government for not doing enough to support them. This is the *conscientization* process that the practice of empowerment is believed to start with; the reflection of oneself in relation to society (Carr, 2003). If we apply the three different phases of the empowerment process that Guttierrez (1995) distinguished (see section 2.3), we recognized that they did not actively pursue the last phase. The members did identify themselves with other vendors as a group and they also blame the 'system' rather than the group, but did not yet mobilize themselves enough toward social action. We realized that an important precondition for the association to be effective is for them to be embedded in the political system. The GTCA has to seek to become an actor that can actually play a steering role in the network. In other words they have to reinforce their vertical linkages within the street food network, beside the mostly horizontal ones they have created up to now. This is part of the emancipatory transformation as an element of the critical constructivist approach in which a particular social actor can change the current suppressing circumstances (Bohman, 2013).

Thus to strengthen the role of the GTCA within the context of the street food network and by using the concept of the intra- inter- and extra- organizational components of empowerment (Zimmerman & Peterson, 2004) they could start with their own internal organization. To effectuate real change they have to replace their character of an inward-looking association that is focussed on their members toward a more out-looking one that can achieve long-term political goals. They could try to attract higher educated and motivated individuals that are willing to actively engage themselves and to form a strong front. And furthermore to shape the public opinion to put vendors in a more favourable light as opposed to the negative image that is mostly ascribed to them now. The great advantage of the GTCA is that they formed themselves and they exist for quite some time already. This is in contrast to many associations that are formed by foreign NGOs and tend to fall apart easily (Seferiadis, 2009; Lyon, 2003). However, to make the next step towards increased community empowerment they need to seek for durable relationships with other organizations and address their grievances at local government institutions to influence public policy and practice. Their civil engagement into political organization is yet to be developed. On the side of Accra's authorities, street vendors should be taken more into account in city planning and be better appreciated for their vital role in the cities' food provisioning. They have to create an enabling framework in which the vendors can work legally and comfortably. Also a political platform should be created for more consultation with citizens for their needs and to subsequently better adjust public policy and practice concerning Accra's street food provisioning. The chaotic, informal way of organization is at the same time the strength of the street food system. The city authorities should include the great many food vendors in their city planning. This way the local street food trade, or the 'traditional craft of cooking' can flourish in this undeniably dynamic field.

8.1.3 Limited impact on individual empowerment

The study found a limited effect of the GTCA on their contribution to enhance empowerment in the personal lives of the vendors. We did not find evidence for a difference in the success of businesses between members and non-members. At the same time the expectations of the association were not that high; most vendors did not opine that an association such as the GTCA could help them in effectively improving their circumstances and enable them to get more control over their lives. The main difficulties that were expressed and for which the GTCA could be of support were the financial constraints and the trouble vendors face with the local government because of a lack of official papers and the illegitimately of space occupation. The limited political influence of the association and thus their lacking ability to defend the vendors we already addressed. On the domain of economic empowerment the GTCA mainly contributes by means of the *Susu* saving groups. For further financial progress credit systems should be set up, and alliances with credit providing institutions could be established. In addition to credit possibilities, it appears that forming collective buying groups does have potential. The GTCA executives and several members expressed their wish to organize such an initiative. This could support local sourcing and at the same time be financially beneficial for the vendors. It would give them stronger bargaining power and the opportunity to buy in bulk, which is cheaper than buying in small amounts as they generally do now. The study hence indicated there is some discrepancy between the organizations' activities and the vendors' needs. The GTCA mainly focuses on the knowledge of hygienic food practices, which is appreciated yet not enough for the advancement of the businesses of the women.

The association did add to a psychological empowerment (self-esteem and a sense of agency) of the members by contributing to a feeling of social security and support. The women appreciated to share information and to talk about their personal lives, 'you hear about things', was a statement often expressed. Regardless of the little real impact the association might have on the lives of the vendors, they do provide an important social role. The members also use the association to distract themselves from the tough and busy lives they live. They exchange information, have their social contacts and laughing, music, dancing and entertainment is an important part of their activities. To increase the aspect of personal empowerment they should start with a fundamental discussion on what the women want to achieve, how they want to reach those goals and how the association could support them on this.

8.1.4 Conventions and private sector influence

After having answered the three research questions, there is one aspect in particular that became apparent in the research and merits extra attention in this discussion. Although a certain role of the private sector actors was already presumed based on the literature study, its actual prominence within the street food network was remarkable. Its comprehensive role was not expected in this magnitude and was the most distinctive result of this study. It is an exemplar of how the roles of the state, civil society and the market within the governance triangle defining food policies and occurrences slowly transform, however in a different way than in Western countries. We saw in the literature that was mainly based on a Western context, Europe and the US, that civil society actors are becoming to play a more significant role in determining food policies and practices. They try to create more 'space to manoeuvre' and alter the conventional food systems. We conclude however that the GTCA, as a civil society actor, did not develop their food definitions independently, but that they are greatly influenced by the power of the transnational food companies. The TFCs use several strategies of increasing their visibility and constructing trust in their products. They first of all connect health claims to their micronutrient-fortified products. They introduce new spices and seasonings that

make the cooking process faster and give training on how to use those in the traditional recipes. In the training workshops they also provide all sorts of company branded products, granting them with free advertisement. This way they incorporate their power into the street food network. Vendors largely embrace the new products. The two spheres of markets and civil society are hence differently interconnected than in the model that we presented earlier (see figure 1). We therefore propose an adjustment to the figure for this particular situation (see figure 3). The model looks slightly similar to the former situation in industrialized countries. A situation in which the state and the market were supposed to strongly influence the civil society, and in which citizens took a more passive role (as discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.2). Nonetheless, the local city authorities of Accra (the state) play a limited role within the organization of the street food network and the effect of the market actors with its value driven strategies is substantial, yet not perceived as overpowering but integrating.
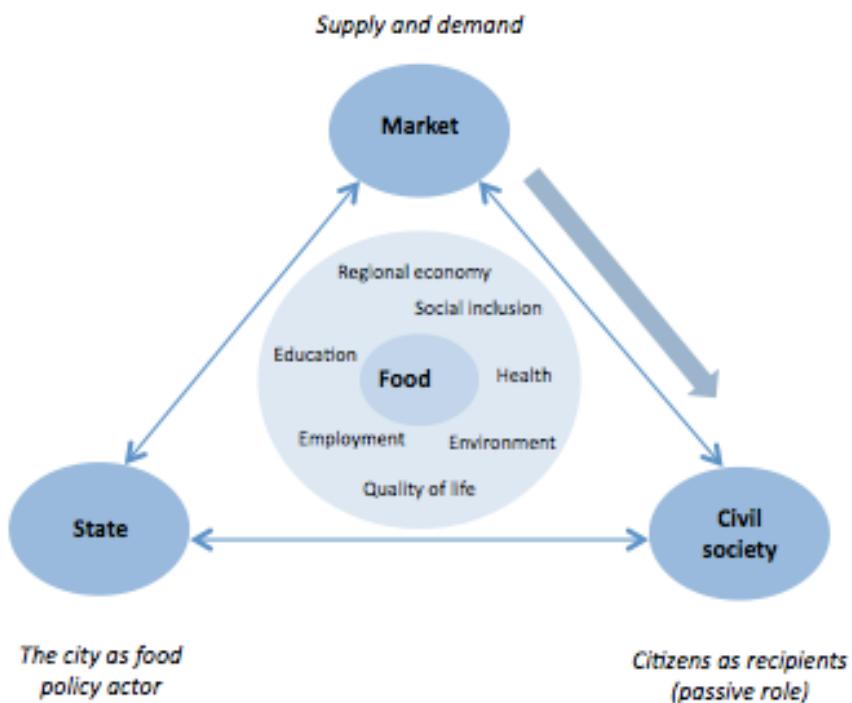

Figure 3. Accra's street food governance triangle.

However when considering the concept of food democracy in which all actors in the network have somewhat equal power to shape the food system (Renting et al., 2012), we see that this is certainly not the reality in the street food network of Accra. Regardless the fact that the power of the market players is not all-encompassing and they rather participate in the system, they are considerably more powerful than both the civil society actor (the GTCA) and the state (Accra's municipality). There is an increasing concentration on the retail and processing strategies of TFCs like Nestlé. This actuality also points at an interesting contradiction. On the one hand the study found that the association executives feared foreign influence and perceived it as a danger to the local cuisine. A main objective therefore was the establishment of a local caterers school to teach about indigenous Ghanaian dishes. Yet on the other hand they embrace those food companies for the sponsorship of their programmes and trainings and thus giving them more space to penetrate their power into the local food system. They thus want to protect the traditional foods, yet do nothing to change the system that might endanger their gastronomy. This paradox does not seem to be noticed by the GTCA executives. Also, contrary to what the

name of the association made us assume, all vendors (referred to as 'traditional' caterers) can become members, irrespective of what food items they sell. All these occurrences together provide a good insight into the many complexities and contradictions that are present in the street food network, and which are characteristic for the food system as a whole. Often local empowerment and global capitalism are positioned as opposing forces, yet they might go hand in hand and co-develop. Referring at the win-win situation the Nestlé representative pointed at, and the enthusiasm that is expressed by the street food vendors for the support they receive from the company.

With the theory of conventions that was outlined in the theoretical framework, we can discuss the complexities in more detail. It was argued that conventions that are based on an intersubjective identification of the rules among the actors involved can be contradictory, their agreement is constantly discussed and they therefore also change over time (Oosterveer & Sonnenveld, 2012). The street food dynamics that were illustrated are indeed clear examples of how judgements on food products and practices rely on prior knowledge and are continuously negotiated among the vendors, the consumers, authorities and private sector actors. The four types of conventions that were acknowledged in the literature (see section 2.1) endow us with the possibility to point at some interesting inconsistencies and changes among the different notions to judge food quality and practices. A first example is the domestic convention that is based on trust and loyalty, like local food products that are often attached to place and tradition. The study found that the reputation of traditional Ghanaian foods is still high, whereas the trust in raw material, the products that are produced within the country is quite low. Many consumers and vendors preferred imported food ingredients because they thought this was of better quality, while they did highly appreciate 'traditional' Ghanaian dishes. The foods itself are thus not seen as a 'barrier to progress' in the course of development, yet its local supply could be further strengthened by improving the image of local production. Moreover as argued before, to clearly demarcate 'traditional' foods is not possible given continuous changes and the new innovations that are applied. We claim that with the newly developed spices and seasonings that are added to the 'indigenous Ghanaian' foods, the term *'glocal'* recipes can be rightfully used.

Furthermore we can say that the industrial convention, that is expected to resolve uncertainty about food quality by external party inspection and control, is undergoing some changes however is far from standardized. The example was given about the HACCP system that is supposed to bring some clarity in the hygienic circumstances. Such a control system slowly integrates, yet consumers continue to primarily use interpersonal relationships and mutual understanding to base their judgements. There is certainly a basis in which global control systems integrate with a local demand for improved circumstances, leading to a reconstruction of food hygiene practices. The civic convention that focuses on the ideas about collective interest and common welfare, knows a distinct dynamic than the western notions that were highlighted from the literature. The perception that local and short food supply systems are generally more socially and environmentally beneficial (e.g. DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Oosterveer & Sonnenveld, 2012), does not find support within Accra's street food network. At least this is not so much of concern of the consumers. Hence when placing this in the ongoing debate in industrialized countries on shortening supply chains and promoting direct links between consumer and producers, we can conclude that these occurrences know a different awareness. Whereas in European and other Western countries there is an increasing demand for locally produced food because of ideological beliefs, in Ghana this is more characterized by necessity. We thus have to be very attentive on the classification and perceptions that are made about certain food products in a local context. The assumptions we might have are often not reflected in reality. This case study was an excellent example of how the construction of what is 'good' or 'bad' in both production and consumption issues is a complex and continuing

process. As is likewise observed within the closely connected public convention, the recognition that is given to trademarks and brands. We saw that particularly the *Maggi* brand belonging to Nestlé holds a strong position and is of increasing importance. It is enjoying great acknowledgement and changes the perception of healthy food by the positive attributions of micronutrient fortification. Notwithstanding that the question on what 'healthy food' actually is will probably be everlasting. In this thesis this was indicated by on the one hand the many concerns about processed foods and on the other hand the promotions of and enthusiasm for the fabricated, fortified foods. In the course of advancing technologies and the focus on added food components, there is a disconnection of natural products and its origin to health. Subsequently supplements are added to assure 'healthy' food. This furthermore points at the interesting discussion of the compatibility of innovation and 'traditional foods' in the perception of consumers (Guerrero et al., 2009).

Overall, we can state that the private sector has a strong influence on the street food network. They support the vendors with improving their businesses; nevertheless they do this with their own corporate empowerment in mind. If we strictly look at the concept of empowerment and the associated capacity building, which entails providing people with the resources they need to make their own choices and take control over their own lives, we see some opposite interests here.

In summary to give an answer to our problem statement:

> *In the context of a globalizing food system, how does the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association contribute to an empowerment of the local street food network of Accra?*

We can state that the Ghana Traditional Caterers Association plays a limited role in the empowerment of the local street food network. Their cooperation with other organizations and with the local authorities is not sufficient to make a real impact. They are too much focussed on themselves and their members. There was some discrepancy between hopes and thoughts of what the GTCA did or could do and what happened in reality. A clear difference in the success of businesses between members and non-members was not found. The private sector actor, the transnational food company Nestlé, turned out to be a powerful player within the network. It strongly influences the developments in Accra's street food network with a progressing incorporation. At the same time the results of the study discerned an integration and negotiation of those foreign, global powers with local practices and traditions rather than the overtaking hegemonic power that was assumed in the past. In this rapidly growing and modernizing city, many traditional manners do not fade away. We saw this clearly in the food demand for indigenous dishes and habitual practices, as well as in the instance of continuous popularity of the traditional *Susu* saving systems. However, for the GTCA to enlarge the possibilities for a reformation of the network and more local empowerment, the association has to take up a more pro-active role to cooperate with other actors. This would provide them with the opportunity to become a more leading player in the street food network and for more empowerment within global influences. They could then truly start using 'food as a weapon for transformation' (Vivero, 2014).

8.2 Reflection

Reflecting on the research process, the methodology and the theory, a few remarks can be made. Most of all the objectives for the research proved to be quite ambitious. The dual objective of both making a contribution to the theory on the globalization of the food system and to local empowerment was quite extensive for a Master thesis like this one. As it is

probably the case for every research project, the time and resources available for the study were not sufficient to get an all-encompassing answer to the problem statement.

The theory on globalization in the food system is extensive and most of the research on which the theory was based comes from the context of industrialized countries. It turned out to be fairly complicated to use these western-based theories and apply them on a development setting. The mechanisms and perceptions are very distinct. The discussions that are at present ongoing in the West are not yet so much awakened in a country like Ghana. Most consumers are more concerned with 'food on the table' than that they can be with for instance localized production. The entanglement of civil society organizations with the corporate companies' policies demands further investigation. It is worthwhile to explore more on this relation in the context of a developing country. Can this be seen as a strategy in which the formal sector incorporates into the informal sector as an expansion of their commerce, or do the informal food vendors rather take advantage of those companies. Does it create more 'space to manoeuvre' for civil actors? The construction of such manifestations is a constant interplay that deserves more scientific consideration. The same applies to the construction and the interaction of the different conventions that are continuously established. It would for instance be worthwhile to further investigate how the bad reputation of local produce arose and how this can be altered. An in-depth analysis of the supply chain was beyond the scope of this study and is an important matter for additional research.

Lastly, the empowerment theory was well applicable to the case. This allowed a careful analysis on processes that took place at the different levels of individuals, organizations and the wider community. To combine the two theories turned out to be challenging. It took some time to distinguish what should be included given the broadness of the topic and the great many areas involved. For a future research a narrower demarcation of the subject should be designed. The critical constructivist approach was useful for its focus on power structures. The case study provided a good example on 'how power operates', and with some actors in the network that are more powerful than others. In the aspiration towards more 'food democracy', we should continue searching for ways to better include everyone to achieve just and sustainable food structures.

8.3 Recommendations

Future research

- To further investigate the link between civic organization and corporate strategy in a setting of developing countries. More insight is necessary on how they interrelate and 'use each other'.
- Studies on consumers to more specifically investigate their perceptions of 'traditional' and 'foreign' foods and their preferences in line of the convention theory. Also looking into the influence of marketing and branding as increasingly important corporate strategies.
- A detailed network analyses for more in-depth information on how better co-operation between local authorities and civil society groups can be established. The factors of success and failure for building formal alliances could be investigated.
- The possibilities for more localized production, especially for urban poultry farming and aquaculture.

- A careful investigation of the supply chain and the relationships between rural suppliers and the vendors as food processors. Hereby also examining the possibilities for collective buying groups.
- A study on how to better adjust credit facilities to the vendor's needs and how to make loans accessible to them.

To the GTCA

- Increasing their efforts towards alliance building. More cooperation with both other organizations as well as local authorities is indispensable for achieving their goals and to become a more influential actor within the street food network. This way they can change their position as merely a gateway for other associations and actively pursue their aspirations.
- More dialogue among the executive members and the other group members in the neighbourhoods to better adjust their activities to the needs of the women.
- Aim to attract more young and well-educated executives who actively want to engage in the organization and can help the association in enhancing their position and improving its activities.
- Improve the quality and formality of the workshops and also to expand the number of topics from solely food hygiene issues to themes such as entrepreneurship.

To the local authorities of Accra

- To take on a more positive attitude towards street food vending. More recognition and acknowledgement towards the vendors and the essential service they provide to the people of Accra.
- To engage street food vendors in their city planning and provide appropriate space and sanitary services for them to sell their food. They have to allocate more resources to first well investigate the networks and then to invest in appropriate policies and practices. In other words: to establish an 'enabling environment' and to invest in infrastructure.
- To create a political platform for debate and consultation with Accra's citizens to express their needs and in order to offer the appropriate space for civic organization groups.
- To set up more efficient monitoring and control systems which are fair and transparent. This to guarantee food quality, and for non-discriminatory and efficient tax collection. They should allocate more resources, financially as well as manpower, include night shifts and disconnect the work of these officers from political influence.

Epilogue

This complete thesis process has meant a lot to me, both in terms of advancements in my educational career as well as in terms of self-development. I am very pleased with my choice of going to Ghana for the fieldwork. Many things taught during my educational forming suddenly fell into place and came to life. I got to understand the different steps in such a project, with its numerous steps back and forward. Then the whole experience of being in an African country for the first time, I will not have enough space here to express all that. I came to meet so many wonderful people and their inspiring life stories really touched me. It was an experience of a complete different reality and the three months felt like one big discovery. It was a good training for my patience as well. I got lost many times when going to different places in the city and also people would always be 'on their way' while I was waiting for long periods of time. The phrase 'I'm coming', I probably heard the most. Also during the interviews the vendors would do different things, people interrupted or customers had to be served. However, during this searching and waiting time many useful observations could be made.

A few times women shared a little prayer asking that whatever I would do with this information, my project would be successful so that I would tell their story and they would get help. Interviewees expressed their gratitude for my interest and thanked me for the interview. They asked when I would come back so that I could see the progress that would be made in the meantime. They were happy I was interested in their story. I hope I did a good job in the eyes of the people who were so kind in cooperating and sharing their time and personal stories with me, in telling, yet also interpreting and analysing their story.

I enjoyed the natural foods very much. I became even more aware of this when back in the Netherlands with all the pre-packaged and processed foods, containing much added salt and sugar. Besides, despite all the concerns and warnings, I did not get sick once from eating on the streets almost every day. In our modern food system there is a great emphasis on efficiency, economic value and food as a commodity, the connection of food to health and the naturally present nutritious value seem to be more pushed to the background. It is not argued that the 'local' is uncontested preferred over the 'global', but at least the conventional chains should be questioned. A plea hereby is made that the future of our food system should be mainly let by food quality demands and ethical considerations rather than by the economic rational. I truly hope that the traditional Ghanaian cuisine will continue to flourish and that this 'art of cooking' will be valued as such. And also that the practices of street food vending will be a means to numerous women and the small number of men for an empowerment of their lives and circumstances.

Picture 15-16. Data collection

References

Alfers, L, & Abban, R. (2011) Occupational health and safety for Indigenous Caterers in Accra, Ghana. WIEGO.

Appadurai, A. (1988) How to make a national cuisine: cookbooks in contemporary India. *Comparative studies in society and history,* 30 (1): 3-24.

Appadurai, A. (1999) Globalization and the research imagination. Oxford, *Blackwell publishers, UNESCO publication.*

Appadurai, A. (2004) The capacity to aspire: culture and the terms of recognition. In Vijayendra, R. and Walton, M. (eds). *Culture and public action.* Stanford: Stanford university press.

Arce, A. & Marsden, T.K. (1993) The social construction of international food: A new research agenda. *Economic geography,* 69 (3): 293-311.

Ardener, S. & Burman, S. (Eds) (1995) *Money-go-rounds: the importance of rotating savings and credit associations for women.* Oxford/Washington DC: Berg Publishers Ltd.

Asiedu, A.B & Agyei-Mensah, S. (2008) Traders on the run: activities of street vendors in the Accra metropolitan area, Ghana. *Norwegian journal of geography,* 62 (3): 191-202.

Atkinson, S.J. (1995) Approaches and actors in urban food security in developing countries. *Habitat international,* 19 (2): 151-163.

Beardsworh, A. & Keil, T. (1997) *Sociology on the menu: an invitation to the study of food and society.* London: Routledge.

Bell, J. (2010) *Doing your research project; a guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science.* Berkshire UK: Open University press.

Bobodu, D.E. (2010) *Small scale businesses: a case study of stagnation amongst street food vendors in Accra.* BSc thesis submitted to Business Administration, Ashesi University College, Accra. Unpublished.

Bohman, J. (2013) Critical Theory. *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* Zalta, E.N. (ed). Retrieved July 20, 2014, from: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/critical-theory/.

Bortei-Doku, E. & Aryeetey, E. (1995) Mobilizing cash for business: women in rotating *Susu* clubs in Ghana. In Ardener, S. & Burman, S. (eds) (1995). *Money-go-rounds: the importance of rotating savings and credit associations for women.* Oxford/Washington DC: Berg Publishers Ltd.

Bowen, S. (2011) The importance of place: re-territorialising embeddedness. *Sociologis Ruralis, 51(4): 325-348.*

Bratton, M. (1989) Beyond the state: civil society and associational life in Africa. *World politics,* 41 (3): 407-430.

Brown, A., Lyons, M. & Dankoco, I. (2010) Street traders and the emerging spaces for urban voice and citizenship in African cities. *Urban studies,* 47 (3): 666-683.

Carr, E.S. (2003) Rethinking empowerment theory using a feminist lens: the importance of process. *Affilia,* 18 (3): 8-20.

Clark, G. (1994) *Onions are my husband: survival and accumulation by West African market women.* Chicago & London: University of Chicago press.

Coe, N.M. & Wrigley, N. (2007) Host economy impacts of transnational retail: the research agenda. *Journal of economic geography,* 7: 341-371.

Cohen, M., Bhatt, M. & Horn, P. (2000) Women street vendors, *SEEDS No. 20.* New York: Population Council Inc.

Comaroff, J.L. & Comaroff, J. (Eds). (1999) *Civil society and the political imagination in Africa; critical perspectives.* London: The university of Chicago press Ltd.

Crush, J. & Frayne, B. (2010) *The invisible crisis: urban food security in Southern Africa.* Urban food security series no.1. Kingston & Cape town: Queen's university and AFSUN.

Crush, J. & Frayne, B. (2011) Supermarket Expansion and the Informal Food Economy in

Southern African Cities: Implications for Urban Food Security. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *37*(4): 781–807.

Czuba, C. E. (1999) Empowerment: What Is It? *Journal of Extension*, *37*(5). Retrieved May 31, 2014 from: http://www.joe.org/joe/1999october/comm1.php.

Dolphyne, F.A. & Ofei-Aboagye, E. (Eds) (2001) *Experiences in capacity-building for Ghanaian women.* Accra: Asempa publishers.

Drakakis-Smith, D. (1991) Urban food distribution in Asia and Africa. *The geographical journal,* 157 (1): 51-61.

Dupuis, E.M. & Goodman, D. (2005) Should we go "home" to eat?: toward a reflexive politics of localism. *Journal of rural studies,* 21: 359-371.

FAO (2007) *Promises and challenges of the informal food sector in developing countries.* FAO publication.

FAO (2012) *Street food vending in West African cities: potential and challenges.* FAO publication.

FAO (2012) *Selling street and snack foods.* Diversification booklet nr. 18. FAO publication.

FASDEP II (2007) *Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy.* Ministry of food and agriculture, Accra, Ghana.

Field, S., Masakure, O., & Henson, S. (2010) Rethinking localization – a low-income country perspective: the case of Asian vegetables in Ghana. *Cambridge journal of regions, economy and society,* 3: 261-277.

Fieldhouse, P. (1986) *Food and nutrition: customs and culture.* London: Croom Helm.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative inquiry,* 12 (2): 219-245.

Fukuyama, F. (2001) Social capital, civil society and development. *Third world quarterly,* 22 (1): 7-20.

Giddens, A. (1990) *The consequences of modernity.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Government of Ghana (2012) *Food safety action plan.* Ministry of food and agriculture food safety task force. World Bank and Africa Agriculture and Rural Development (AFTAR), Accra.

Government of Ghana (2012) *Ghana national urban policy action plan.* Ministry of local government and rural development, Accra.

Grant, R. (2009) *Globalizing city: The urban and economic transformation of Accra, Ghana.* New York: Syracuse University Press.

Granovetter, M. (1985) Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology,* 91(3): 481-510.

Guerrero, L., Guàrdia, M.D., Xicola, J., Verbeke, W., Vanhonacker, F., Zakowska-Biemans, S… & Hersleth, M. (2009). Consumer-driven definition of traditional food products and innovation in traditional foods. A qualitative cross-cultural study. *Appetite*, *52*(2): 345–54.

Gutierrez, L. (1995). Understanding the empowerment process: Does consciousness make a difference? *Social Work Research, 19:* 229-237.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice (3th ed).* New York and London: Routledge.

Hanson, K.T. (2005) Landscapes of survival and escape: social networking and urban livelihoods in Ghana. *Environment and planning,* 37: 1291-1310.

Hearn, J. (2001) Foreign aid, democratisation and civil society in Africa: a study on South Africa, Ghana and Uganda. *Discussion paper 368, Institute of development studies.*

Hyden, G. (1997) Civil society, social capital, and development: dissection of a complex discourse. *Studies in comparative international development,* 31 (1): 3-30.

Johnson, P-N.T. & Yawson, R.M. (2000) *Enhancing the food security of the peri-urban and urban poor through improvements to the quality, safety and economics of street-vended foods.* DFID/NRI/FRI project. *CSIR, Accra, Ghana.*

Johnson, P-N.T., Tortoe, C. & Quayson, E.T. (2006) *Handbook of street-vended foods in*

Ghana. DFID/CPHP Street food project. Col-DB Publishers, Accra.

Kieffer, C. (1984) Citizen empowerment: a developmental perspective. In Rappaport, J., Swift, C. & Hess, R. (Eds.) *Studies in empowerment: steps toward understanding and action.* New York: Hayworth press: p9-36.

Kincheloe, J.L. (2005). *Critical constructivism.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Kraig, B. & Sen, C.T. (2013) *Street food around the world: an encyclopedia of food and culture.* California: ABC-CLIO.

Kuenzi, M.T. (2008) Social capital and political trust in West Africa. *Afrobarometer working papers, nr. 96.*

Lamine, C., Renting, H., Rossi, A., Wiskerke, J.S.C. & Brunori, G. (2012) Agri-food systems and territorial development: innovations, new dynamics and changing governance mechanisms. In: Darnhofer, I., Gibbon, D. & Dedieu, B. (eds), *Farming systems research into the 21st century: The new dynamic.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Latour, B. (1993) *We have never been modern.* United States: Harvard university press.

Law, J. (2009) Actor network theory and material semiotics. In: Turner, B.S. (ed), *The new Blackwell companion to social theory.* UK: Blackwell publishing.

Levin, C.E., Ruel, M.T., Morris, S.S., Maxwell, D.G., Armar-Klemesu, M. & Ahiadeke, C. (1999) Working women in an urban setting: traders, vendors, and food security in Accra. *World development,* 27 (11): 1977-1991

Lindell, I. (2010) Informality and collective organizing: identities, alliances and transnational activism in Africa. *Third world quarterly,* 31 (2): 207-222.

Little, K. (1957) The role of voluntary associations in West African urbanization. *American anthropologist,* 59: 579-596.

Lord, J. & Hutchison, P. (1993) The process of empowerment: implications for theory and practice. *Canadian journal of community mental health,* 12 (1): 5-22.

Lyon, F. (2003) Trader associations and urban food systems in Ghana: Institutionalist approaches to understating urban collective action. *International journal of urban and regional research,* 27 (1): 11-23.

Manzini, E. (2005) Agriculture, food and design: new food networks for a distributed economy. *Tailoring biotechnologies,* 1 (2): 65-80.

Massey, D. (2004) Geographies of responsibility. *Geografiska Annaler, 86 (1): 5-18.*

Mawusi, A. (2006) Street food boom in Ghana spurs calls for better hygiene. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization,* 84 (10).

Maxwell, D., Odame Larbi, W., Lamptey, M., Zakariah, S. & Armar-Klemesu, M. (1998) *Farming in the shadow of the city: changes in land rights and livelihoods in peri-urban Accra.* Cities feeding people series report 23. IFPRI.

Maxwell, D. (1999) The political economy of urban food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. *World Development,* 27 (11): 1939-1953.

Maxwell, D., Levin, C., Armar-Klemesu, M., Ruel., M., Morris, S. & Ahiadeke, C. (2000) *Urban livelihoods and food and nutrition security in Greater Accra, Ghana.* IFPRI research report 112.

McFarlane, C. (2012) Rethinking informality: Politics, crisis, and the city. *Planning theory and practice,* 13 (1): 89-108

Mensah, P., Yeboah-Manu, D., Owusu-Darko, K. & Ablordey, A. (2002) Street foods in Accra, Ghana: How safe are they? *Bulletin of the World Health Organization,* 80 (7): 546-554.

METASIP (2010) *Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan 2011-2015.* Ministry of food and agriculture, Accra, Ghana.

MoFA (2010) *Statistics, Research and Information Directorate (SRID).* Ministry of Food and Agriculutre, Accra, Ghana.

Moeffe, C. (1991) Democratic citizenship and the political community. In Miami theory collective (Ed). *Community at loose ends.* University of Minnesota: *p.70-82.*

Morgan, K., Marsden, T., & Murdoch, J. (2006) Networks, conventions, and regions: theorizing 'worlds of food'. In *Worlds of food: Place, power, and provenance in the food chain*. UK: Oxford university press.

Murdoch, J., Marsden, T. & Banks, J. (2000) Quality, Nature, and embeddedness: some theoretical considerations in the context of the food sector. *Economic Geography, 76* (2), 107-125.

Musaiger, A.O. & D'Souza, R. (2007) Nutritional profile of local and western fast foods consumed in Bahrain. *Ecology of food and nutrition, 46* (2): 143-161.

Mwangi, A.M. (2002) Nutritional, hygienic and socio-economic dimensions of street foods in urban areas: the case of Nairobi. Ph.D. thesis. Wageningen University.

Obeng-Odoom, F. (2012) Neoliberalism and the urban economy in Ghana: urban employment, inequality and poverty. *Growth and Change, 43*(1): 85-109.

O'Hara, S. & Stagl, S. (2001) Global food markets and their local alternatives: a socio-ecological economic perspective. *Population and environment, 22* (6): 533-554.

Omari, R, Jongerden, J., Owusu Essegbey, G., Frempong, G. & Ruivenkamp, G. (2013) Fast food in the Greater Accra region of Ghana: characteristics, availability and the cuisine concept. *Food studies: an interdisciplinary journal, 1* (4): 29-44.

Oosterveer, P. & Sonnenfeld, D.A. (2012) *Food, globalization and sustainability*. UK: Earthscan.

Peterson, N.A. & Zimmerman, M.A. (2004) Beyond the individual: toward a nomological network of organizational empowerment. *American journal of community psychology, 34* (1/2): 129-145.

Phillips, L. (2006) Food and globalization. *The annual review of anthropology, 35*: 37-57.

Pingali, P. & Khwaja, Y. (2004) Globalisation of Indian diets and the transformation of food supply systems. *Inaugural keynote addressed on 17th Annual conference of Indian society of agricultural marketing*. Hyderabad, India.

Porter, G., Lyon, F. & Potts, D. (2007) Market institutions and urban food supply in West and Southern Africa: a review. *Progress in Development Studies, 7* (2): 115-134.

Pothukuchi, K. & Kaufman, J.L. (2000) The food system. *Journal of the American planning association, 66* (2): 113-124.

Pritchard, B. & Fagan, R. (1999) Circuits of capital and transnational corporate spatial behaviour: Nestlé in Southeast Asia. *International journal of sociology of agriculture and food, 8*: 3-20.

Putnam, R. D. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Quaye, W. (2012) *Technology development and market access: from a food sovereignty perspective*. PhD thesis, Wageningen University.

Rappaport, J. (1984) Studies in empowerment: introduction to the issue. In Rappaport, J., Swift, C. & Hess, R. (Eds.) *Studies in empowerment: steps toward understanding and action*. Hayworth press, NY: 1-8.

Renting, H., Schermer, M. & Rossi, A. (2012) Building food democracy: exploring civic food networks and newly emerging forms of food citizenship. *International journal of sociology of agriculture and food, 19* (3): 289-307.

Rheinländer, T., Olsen, M., Bakang, J.A., Takyi, H., Konradsen, F., Samuelsen, H. (2008) Keeping up appearances: perceptions of street food safety in urban Kumasi, Ghana. *Journal of urban health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine, 85* (6): 952-964.

Riet, H. van't, Hartog, A.P., den, Staveren, W.A., van (2001) Non-home prepared foods: contribution to energy and nutrient of intake of consumers living in two low-income areas in Nairobi. *Public health nutrition, 5* (4): 515-522.

Rowlands, J. (1997) *Questioning empowerment: working with women in Honduras*. UK: Oxfam.

Rusaw, A. C. (1995). Learning by association: professional associations as learning agents. *Human resource development quarterly, 6* (2): 215-226.

Ryan, G.W. & Bernard, R.H. (2003) Techniques to identify themes. *Field methods,* 15: 85-109.

Sadan, E. (2004) *Empowerment and community planning.* E-book retrieved June 15, 2014 from: http://www.mpow.org/elisheva_sadan_empowerment.pdf.

Salais, R. & Storper, M. (1992) The four 'worlds' of contemporary industry. *Cambridge journal of economics,* 16: 169-193.

Salm, S. J., & Falola, T. (2002) *Culture and Customs of Ghana.* US: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Seferiadis, A.A. (2009) *Food security for the urban poor and street-food in Accra. Strengthening the local networks.* MSc thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Unpublished.

Sennett, R. (2008) *The craftsman.* US: Yale University press.

Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting qualitative data* (3th ed.). UK: SAGE publications Ltd.

Sonnino, R. (2009) Feeding the city: towards a new research and planning agenda. *International planning studies,* 14 (4): 425-435.

Staples, L. H. (1990) Powerful ideas about empowerment. *Administration in Social Work,* 14: 29-42.

Steel, C. (2012) Sitopia – harnessing the power of food. In: Viljoen, A.M. & Wiskerke, J.S.C. Wiskerke (eds), *Sustainable food planning: evolving theory and practice.* Wageningen Academic Publishers: 35-43.

Swyngedouw, E. (2004) Globalisation or 'Glocalisation'? Networks, territories and rescaling. *Cambridge review of international affairs,* 17 (1): 25-48.

Taylor, M. (2007) Community participation in the real world: opportunities and pitfalls in new governance spaces. *Urban studies,* 44 (2): 297-317.

Tinker, I. (1997) *Street foods: urban food and employment in developing countries.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Tinker, I. (1999) Street foods into the 21st century. *Agriculture and Human Values,* 16: 327–333.

Tinker, I. (2003) Street foods: Traditional Microenterprise in a modernizing world. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society,* 16 (3): 331-349.

Tomlins, K., Johnson, P-N.T. & Tortoe, C. (2005) *Street-Catering: A guide for environmental health officers, NGOs, street food vendors and food caterers.* DFID/CPHP street food project. Col-DB publishers, Accra.

Tostensen, A., Tvedten, I. and Vaa, M. (eds) (2001). *Associational life in African cities: popular responses to the urban crisis.* Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.

Tortoe, C., Johnson, P-N.T., Ottah-Atikpo, M. & Tomlins, K.I. (2013) Systematic approach for the management and control of food safety for the street/informal food sector in Ghana. *Food and public health,* 3 (1): 59-67.

Trager, L. (1987) A re-examination of the urban informal sector in West Africa. *Canadian journal of African studies,* 21(2): 238-255.

UNDP (2012) *2010 Ghana millennium development goals.* UNDP publication.

UNDP (2013) Ghana *HDI values and rank changes in the 2013 Human Development Report.* UNDP publication. Retrieved July 18, 2014, from: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/GHA.pdf

UNIFEM (2005) *Progress of the World's Women 2005: Women, work and poverty.* United Nations Development Fund for Women.

Vivero, J.L. (2014) The food commons transition: collective actions for food and nutrition security. Retrieved June 28, 2014, from: http://thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/The-food-commons-transition.

Wallerstein, N. (1992) Powerlessness, empowerment and health: Implications for health promotion programs. *American journal of health promotion,* 6: 197-205.

Weeks, J.R., Hill, A.G. & Stoler, J. (2013) *Spatial inequalities: health, poverty and place in Accra, Ghana.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Whatmore, S. & Thorne, L. (2004) Nourishing networks: alternative geographies of food. In

Barnes, T.J., Peck, J., Sheppard, E. & Tickell, A. (eds), *Reading economic geography*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. p 235-247.

Whitfield, L. (2003) Civil society as idea and civil society as process: the case of Ghana. *Oxford development studies,* 31 (3): 379-400.

Wilk, R. (1999) "Real Belizean food": Building local identity in the transnational Caribbean. *American Anthropologist,* 101 (2): 244-255.

Wilkinson, J. (1997) A new paradigm for economic analysis? *Economy and society,* 26 (3): 305-339.

Wiskerke, J.S.C. (2009) On places lost and places regained: reflections on the alternative food geography and sustainable regional development. *International planning studies,* 14 (4): 369-387.

WHO (2007) *Food safety and health: a strategy for the WHO African region*. WHO publications.

WHO (2004) *Food and health in Europe: a new basis for action*. WHO regional publications, European series, no.96. Retrieved, August 20. 2014 from: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/74417/E82161.pdf

Wolter, D. (2009) Ghana: agriculture is becoming a business. *OECD journal: General papers,* 2: 9-32.

World Bank (2010) *City of Accra, consultative citizens' report card*. WB publication.

Yenal, N.Z. (1999) Food TNCs, intellectual property investments and post-fordist food consumption: the case of Unilever and Nestlé in Turkey. *International journal of sociology of agriculture and food,* 8: 21-34.

Zimmerman, M. A. (2000) Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational, and community level of analysis. *In* (eds.) J. Rappaport, E. Seidman. *Handbook of Community Psychology*. New York: Kluwer/Plenum.

Consulted websites

Cities Alliance; cities without slums. *Changing the conversation on Ghana's cities: documentaries on fixing the urban mess*. Assessed on May 20, 2014 from: http://www.citiesalliance.org/Ghana-advocacy

Cities Alliance; cities without slums. *Ghana launces first-ever national urban policy*. April 14, 2013. Assessed on May 25, 2014 from: http://citiesalliance.org/node/3748

Ghana News Agency (GNA). *Cassava, maize composite flour launched*. June 25, 2008. Assessed on April 21, 2014 from: http://www.modernghana.com/news/171625/1/cassava-maize-composite-flour-launched.html.

GhanaWeb. *General country information*. Assessed on May 11, 2014 from: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/general/statistics.php

Institute of Developing Economies Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO). *AGE (African Growing Enterprises) file – Nestlé Ghana Limited. Assessed on July 14, 2014 from:* http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Data/Africa_file/Company/ghana04.html

Unilever. Introducing Unilever Ghana. Assessed on July 14, 2014 from: http://www.unileverghana.com/aboutus/Introducingghana/

World Bank. Ghana country data. Assessed on April 19, 2014 from: http://data.worldbank.org/country/Ghana

Appendices

Appendix 1. Overview of informants

1. Executive members Ghana Traditional Caterers Association, Greater Accra District

Nr.	Name	Position	Location/ Chair Person area
1	Grace Ofosu	Chair person	37 Lorry station
2	Nana Ansong Amoah	PRO	-
3	Hajia Sahuratu	Organizing secretary	-
4	Bertha Amegavie	Treasury	Takradi station
5	Cicilia Dadzi	-	Teshi/ Nungua
6	Beatrice Quacoo	-	La
7	Charity	-	Osu
8	Mr. Mensah Emmanuael	-	James Town
9	Naomi Odoi	-	Kotobabi
10	Mr Mensah	Trainer workshops	-

2. Governmental officials & Private sector

Nr.	Name	Organization/ company	Function
1	David Nana Anim	Ghatof	President
2	Paulina Addy	WIAD (part of MoFA)	Deputy acting director
3	Dr. Charles Totoe	Food Research Institute	Senior Research Scientist
4	Mrs. Bella Ahu	Traffix restaurant – National theater	Owner
5	Mr. Nii	Asanka Locals	Owner
6	Naomi Amo Eshun	GSA	Standards Officer
7	Ferdinand Tay	Consumers Association of Ghana	President
8	Bridget Oswell-Donkor	Nestlé	Professional department manager
9	Jacob Amoako-Mensah	FDA	Regulatory officer
10	Mr. Sampson Labi	GIR	Tax collector
11	Charlotte Armah	Women's vision 3000	Founder Executive director
12	Felix	AMA	EHO - health inspector
13	Halima	EHO	EHO - health inspector

3. Farmers

Nr.	Name	Occupation	Location
1	Zurka	Vegetable Farmer	Behind CSIR/STEPRi
2	Fuseini	"	"
3	Kevin	Poultry farmer	Labadi

4. Vendors

Nr.	Name	Location	Member GTCA
1	Alberta	Osu	Yes
2	Abigail Lokko	Osu	Yes
3	Juliana Aomah	James Town	Yes
4	Veronica Okai	James Town	Yes
5	Myriam	Kotobobi	Yes
6	Joyce	James Town	No
7	Rejoice	Kotobabi	Yes
8	Mary Sai	Labadi	No
9	Henriette	Kotobabi	Yes
10	Helen	Kotobabi	Yes
11	Linda	Osu	Yes
12	Vivian	Osu	No

Appendix 2. Topic guides

Applied to all interviews:

Beginning:
- *Introduction of myself and the research*
- *Assure anonymity, permission to record*
- *Explain that I am interested in their own opinion and encourage interrupting for additional information or questions*

End:
- *Thanking for cooperation (Medáse!)*
- *Anything to add?*
- *Exchange contacts for any more info if needed*

1. Executive members GTCA

Date/time:
Name:
Age:
Place of birth/ ethnicity:
Religion:
Highest level of completed education:
Location food stand:
Working for GTCA since:
Position association:

1. Reason to join the GTCA, aims/expectations
2. Personal motivation for this work
3. Current state of the association? (Successes/developments)
4. Goals, activities undertaken to reach them?
5. Is local production/sourcing important?

6. Problems encountered
7. Changes over the years/ major lessons learned?
8. Relationship to authorities/ other initiatives (consumer org./ NGOs? Suggestions for improvements?
9. Who should take the lead for improvements?
10. Is the association in power to make positive changes, how? What could be improved?
11. Ideal future association & street food vending

2. Vendors

Date/time:
Name:
Age:
Place of birth/ ethnicity:
Religion:
Highest level of completed education:
Family size:
Marital status:

Business itself:
1. Years of business, reason to start
2. Location of food stand & kitchen, why here?
3. Size of food joint, changes in size/success
4. Number of employees (hired labour/family)
5. Working hours

General/ Network:
1. Main difficulties relating to food vending (capital, quality of food, food prices, number of customers)
2. Relationship with other vendors – (cooperation, exchange knowledge/ experiences) → Do vendors help each other, how?
3. Is it the main source of income? Other household income sources?
4. Do you need to have a license/ permit? Important to have it? What happens if not?
5. Frequency of visits from AMA/EHO officials and tax collectors? (Amount of tax?)
6. Description of their approach? (Supportive/repressive?)

Part on association:
1. Since when member of association?
2. Reason to become a member/ expectations
3. Perceived benefits / assistance received (training, credit, social services, technical assistance) by whom provided?
4. Attending trainings/ workshops? If yes, what is it about? (Safety/hygiene, business management, entrepreneurship)?
5. Most important things learned
6. Do you have opportunities to save, how do you do this? Did it change after joining the association?
7. Attending weekly meetings? If yes, what is it about? Perceived developments/benefits
8. Chairperson neighbourhood, opinion on their performance, suggestions for improvements?
9. Weaknesses of the association? Suggestions/ recommendation for improvements
10. Do you think the association could have political influence?

Food, sourcing & customers:
1. Kinds of food sold
2. Change in the type of foods sold/use of ingredients? If yes, why?
3. Where/how prepared? Did the way of preparation/ packing/serving change?
4. Technological improvements (used materials & electronics, structure of joint?)
5. Most patronized items? Changes in demand? (type of food/ quality)? → What has been influencing this change?
6. Change in type/number of customers? Regular customers/ frequency of visits?
7. Strategies to attract more customers?
8. Wish to add more products in the future? If yes, why?
9. Sourcing of products (which market/ delivered? via wholesaler/middlemen/ producer directly), frequency?
10. Why is this the preferred source? Any changes over the years?
11. Wish to change sourcing pattern if possible? If yes, why?

Future:
1. Do you generally feel in power of your own life?
2. What are your ambitions/ aspirations for the business?
3. Why do you think this is meaningful/ contributing to your life?
4. When do you want to achieve this?
5. Do you feel capable of achieving this? What are the gaps (in knowledge/skills/finance)
6. Most important actors needed for improvements? What should they do to help improving the business?
7. Do you think the association could help in this and how?

3. Governmental/ private institutions

Date/time:
Name:
Position within institution/company:
Working here since:

1. Current situation of street food vending in Accra, changes? If yes, what influences these changes?
2. Number of vendors changing? How monitored/located?
3. Main concerns
4. What strategies to address these concerns? (Legislation, information/education, etc) (for suppliers, vendors and consumers)
5. Challenges in the implementation of strategies?
6. Government regulations (mandatory/ voluntary) and current projects in relation to street food vending
7. Responsibility of different departments, cooperation?
8. Relationship with Ghana Traditional Caterers Association
9. Cooperate/ organization of activities together? (Weaknesses/ successes)?
10. Positive impacts associated with street food vending
11. What do you understand by 'traditional' foods?
12. Path for the future… (ideal situation)? How to get there/ who responsible?

Appendix 3. Additional pictures from the research site

Market women selling rice and vegetables

Urban agriculture

Poultry farming

Banku with Tilapia

Ga Kenkey balls

Soups and stews