



# EXPLORING STREET FOODS AS AN ASSEMBLAGE

A case study of the street food sector in Kampala area, Uganda

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## Abstract

Street foods are eaten worldwide, especially in developing countries. Their low cost and accessibility cause them to be popular, especially in urban areas. Since the urban population is growing quickly, urban food provisioning increasingly becomes a challenge. Street foods however, have until now been considered unwanted and a sign of underdevelopment, poverty, lack of skill and chaos, even though they provide food for many. In many places, among which Kampala, Uganda, street food vendors are being evicted and fined since decades. The street food sector however, keeps on thriving. This thesis explores how this is possible, through the use of assemblage theory. Assemblage theory is an ontological attempt to explain the social, while doing justice to social complexity and dynamics. Analysis and field data have proven that the street food sector is the opposite of what local governments and traditional modernization theorists state; it is a heterogeneous sector, full of knowledge, skill, agency and creativity. The street food vendors keep actively assembling and re-assembling the sector themselves, through innovations in foods and vending, through collaborating and creating institutions. They thus prove that by no means they are passive victims of poverty, instead they are a heterogeneous group of capable actors that have a huge potential for feeding the city.

**Key words:** Street foods, agency, assemblage theory, actor network theory, qualitative research, Uganda

## Preface and acknowledgements

After I wrote my proposal to start working on a project on farmers in Burundi, political unrest broke out. I decided it was not safe to go there anymore, but I needed to find an alternative. It was July, and I planned on starting my research in September, so I needed to be quick. However, organizations kept rejecting me; they had no place for me, they had no projects I could join. Luckily, Paul Hebinck, my supervisor, told me about the topic of street foods. I could start doing an inductive research, as little research had been done on the topic. I was enthusiastic right away, because I like a good challenge. The topic appealed to me as it is relevant in terms of urban food provisioning, an issue I have always found interesting and challenging. Thanks to Paul, everything got settled right in time and in the first week of September, I was on my way to Kampala.

In Kampala, I have met some wonderful people, without whom I could never have done my research. An honorable mention goes out to Dr. Bernard Obaa from Makerere University, who helped me to get started and find a translator. Regardless of his busy schedule, he always made time for me in case I had run into any issues of any kind. I would also like to thank Talma Maureen and Eve Tereka, who were both amazing translators and friends, who helped me find my way through seemingly chaotic Kampala. Then, there were my friends, Isaac, Krishna, Winny and Tessie, who made my time in Uganda unforgettable.

Unfortunately, I had a rather excessive reverse cultural shock and the first months back in the Netherlands were difficult for me, writing my thesis in the library instead of being outside in the sun, surrounded by people. My family and my close friend Jurriën pulled me through. Without you, this thesis would not be finished today!

Finally, I would like to thank again, my supervisor Paul Hebinck, for the good conversations that we had, mostly about my thesis, but also about gardening and tomatoes. Thank you for your thorough feedback and all the time you invested. Without you, this research would never have been done in the first place!

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## Introduction

Over the past couple of decades there has been a growing trend of rural-urban migration, especially in developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. For the first time in history, a higher proportion of the world population is living in urban areas instead of rural areas and this trend goes together with the growing challenge of feeding the urban population (UN, 2014). In the 20th century, food insecurity was mainly considered to be a rural issue, however, since an increasing number of people are less autonomous to grow their own food and increasingly dependent on external factors this seems to be changing. In urban areas, many factors contribute to food security – not only production, but also availability, access and financial means are crucial aspects (Maxwell, 1999).

In many large cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America, foods are prepared and sold on the street on a large scale. Especially in developing countries, street food vendors play a large role in the urban food system, as they provide food for an estimated 2.5 billion people worldwide (Kraig & Sen, 2013). The street foods thus account for feeding a large proportion of the world population.

Street food is not only a cultural phenomenon and a source of nutrition, but it also is a way for many people to generate income. Street foods are long existent and embedded in urban cultures worldwide, and are cheap and easily accessible, even for the poorest in the city. The changes in urban life caused by globalization and urbanization, such as growing distance between home and work and the increased woman labor force also contribute to an increased demand for easily accessible food (FAO, 2007).

Although there has been research on street foods, little of it provides insight in the socio-economic aspects and the dynamics of the sector. There is very little information to be found on the history of street foods, especially in Africa, and on how it has come to play an important role in urban life. Since the street food sector is considered to be predominantly informal, its importance is not accounted for in official statistics – which thus tends to overemphasize the role of supermarkets and other aspects of a modernized food system such as fast food restaurants. The literature that can be found on the topic, mostly covers research on hygiene issues and quantitative data on income (FAO, 2007, 2012; WHO, 2007; Mensah et al., 2002; Mwangi, 2002). Street (food) vendors tend to be characterized as problematic, as there are many concerns about food safety and municipality regulation (Cohen et al., 2000). Local governments, for instance in Kampala, Uganda consider the street (food) vendors as a sign of underdevelopment and attempt to evict them from the streets (KCCA, 2006). However, the street food sector is flourishing as ever. In Kampala, most people eat on the streets daily.

This thesis focuses on the street food sector in the Kampala area, Uganda. In order to gain a deeper understanding on how the street food sector functions and manages to survive, one must rely on qualitative information. Because of the lack of background information on the street food sector in Kampala, it is very difficult to define a starting point for research. Therefore, using inductive methods and forming a grounded theory is evidently the most favorable way to start to gain comprehension.

The objective of this research is to explore how the street food sector functions and to create an overview of some of the major important dynamics that shape the sector. In order to do this systematically, I will make use of the conceptual and theoretical framework on which I elaborate in the next chapter. As will become clear in the course of this thesis, street food sector in the Kampala area is very complex and dynamic and street food vendors creatively use their agency to innovate and survive. In order to create a deeper understanding of these phenomena, I will use DeLanda's assemblage theory (2006), which does justice to the complex character of the street food sector.

On this theoretical framework, I base the general research question, which is split up into three sub-questions. I will then discuss the methodology that I used in order to provide an answer to these questions. This will be done in the three subsequent chapters. I will provide my answer to the general research question in the conclusion. I will also pose some new questions for further discussion and present some of the difficulties and ethical considerations I have faced during research. The conclusion and discussion section are thus integrated in one chapter.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the theory and research questions. As this has been a grounded research, the writing of the theoretical framework has been an iterative process. First of all, I will consider the most important concepts of this research – street foods, the informal sector, street food vendors and eaters. These concepts will define and nuance the definition of the 'informal' street food sector. Then, I will then discuss the assemblage theory, which will form the backbone of the analysis of the street food sector in Kampala. This conceptual and theoretical framework and the formation of the research questions was an iterative process. This means that the dynamic, complex and heterogeneous character of the street food sector in Kampala, on which I base my conceptual and theoretical framework will be further discussed and analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

### Street foods

The FAO (2012) defines street foods 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.”

This concept has, through its wide scope, proved to be a good starting point for research. However, fieldwork has shown that the FAO definition of street foods tends to underemphasize its complex nature. In Kampala, street foods are manifested in a countless number of varieties and no street food vendor appears to be the same. At different times of the day, there are different foods available. For instance, in the morning, there are quite a lot of tea stands, where people quickly have a drink while on their way to work. Rolex is a favorite dish in Kampala, which is a rolled chapatti filled with fried eggs. This is especially popular in the afternoon and nighttime. The same goes for grilled goat meat and grilled or boiled maize. Street foods thus fulfil a different need, depending on the time of the day and the definition for street food eaters seems to be flexible. Street foods can be a breakfast, a big meal or just an after-beer snack.

Also, different people work at different times of the day. Some people work early in the morning or late at night and have a side job during the day. Others work the full day, from 7 in the morning until 6 or 7 at night or even longer. Most of the street food vendors are women, although at Gayaza road, most of them were men cooking meat. Some of the vendors cook their goods at home and just sell it on the streets, other cook and sell it right away. Some of the street food vendors worked for themselves, others worked together, mainly with relatives (children or siblings). Some vendors have been able to develop their practices into a flourishing business, generating a reasonable income and having several employees. Most of these employees work for a meagre income and have more difficulties creating and sustaining a livelihood.

It gets more complex as the street food vendors have different assets. Some of them simply cook on a bucket of coal, but others seem to become more like 'street restaurants'. Quite often, there are street food vendors who put benches next to their cooking equipment, where people can sit and enjoy their meal (mainly to be seen at Arua Park). Some street food vendors cook underneath a shelter without walls. Others seem to have established themselves in open garage boxes, directly attached to the street, where they cook and have some tables and chairs. Also, there are some who prepare the food at home, and bring it to the street where they sell it. These hybrid forms of street foods make it difficult to simply characterise what a typical street food vendor is like.



The concept of street foods is workable, as a starting point for research since it is broad and leaves room for interpretation. On the other hand, it needs to be nuanced, since there is no single definition of a street food vendor, nor of a consumer. In this thesis, the notion of street foods will be explored as assemblages. This analysis of the street food sector of Kampala, attempts to create a thorough understanding of its dynamic and complex character.

## **Ideas about the informal sector**

In many places, among which Uganda, there is still a traditional idea of modernization; a country develops through a universal and linear process. This means that people consider that Uganda will eventually be like any other 'developed' (Western) country, and in order to get there, it needs to go through the same phases as developed countries did. Typically, modernization thinkers tend to think in dichotomies such as poor-rich, indigenous-western, and traditional-modern. Informal activities are thought to be a part of underdevelopment, lack of economic well-being and knowledge and a traditional society. Therefore, informal activities are considered to be just a part of the process of modernization, it is merely a phase that will eventually end (Daniels et al., 2012). Literature on the informal sector dates back to the 1970s, where there seems to be a census that the informal sector entails those that are officially unemployed (ILO, 1972; 1997).

As a result of the modernization paradigm, street foods are considered unwanted and local authorities try to speed up the process of removing the vendors from the streets. When it comes to legislation by the municipal authority, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) simply denies access to the streets for all kinds of – informal- street vendors (KCCA, 2006). Stella, a street food vendor at Arua Park tells me: "They think that street vendors make the street look chaotic and messy, which is the simple reason they want us to leave."

In contrast to the traditional ideas – the received wisdoms - of the informal sector, actors seem to have a large autonomous ability to generate income and organize themselves, which is vastly underrated. According to research in the 1970s, more than half of the people in census statistics in Ghana, were considered officially unemployed but appeared to be involved in income generating activities, varying from services to production (Hart, 1973). Also in Uganda, the statistics state that over 60% of the people are officially unemployed (FAO, 2014).

In order to avoid using dichotomies while trying to understand the street food sector, I will not consider the sector as either formal or informal. The benefit of this approach is that I will be able to have a more nuanced approach to the street food sector in Kampala. As we will see, the stereotype of the informal sector as underdeveloped, unregulated and chaotic and a lack of agency does not apply here. In order to do justice to the creativity, agency, complexity and dynamic character of the street food sector in the Kampala area, we need to distance ourselves from the notion of informality and embrace a theory that leaves room for understanding these phenomena. From now on, when I refer to any form of so-called informal activities, it will be put in quotes in order to emphasize my critical stance towards the concept.

## **Street food vendors and street food cookers**

As fieldwork has proved, it is important to make a distinction between cookers and vendors. In this thesis, I will refer to street food vendors, for the simple reason that not all vendors have cooked the foods themselves. Especially in larger street food businesses, there are clear task arrangements – one person cooks, one serves, one washes plates. This means that although these people are directly involved in the

street food sector and provide food for the people on the streets, they are not cooks. They do sell the foods and make money by doing so and therefore, I will consider them all as vendors.

### **Consumers versus eaters**

Fieldwork has shown that street foods are consumed by a cross-section of society, although street foods do not seem to have a good reputation among the higher classes. Especially civil servants and municipality workers try not to be seen eating street foods. Isaac says: "As a civil servant I cannot be caught eating street foods. It is considered to be 'not done', so I ask someone to go and get the food for me, so I can have it at home or at the office". On the other hand, the largest group of people who eat street foods, are those who are too poor to have a choice. Being a consumer, implies having a choice. Therefore, in this thesis, I will refer to those buying and eating street foods as street food eaters.

In order to further look into the street food sector in Kampala, I will use several theoretical ideas and concepts to frame and guide my research. Below, I will elaborate on the theoretical framework of this thesis.

### **Practices and assemblages**

Since the street food vendors seemed to be quite resilient against opposition from the local government, I became interested in how they manage to survive. Since I was interested in their strategies and means to survive on the streets I decided to look deeper into the practices of street food vendors. Insights in how the vendors fill their working days can provide information on how they keep up their business.

Agency appears to be a very important aspect of the functioning of the street food sector, as we will see. However, only putting emphasis on agency, will not be fully adequate to explain what is truly going on in the field. Considering only the actions and practices of the individual vendors underemphasizes the social relations and interactions within the sector. Since collaboration appeared to be a fundamental contributor to the survival of street food vendors, it seemed important to have a broader theory that is able to also explain the internal dynamics and robustness of the street food sector instead of providing an analysis of individual vendors. As we will see, when street food vendors work together, they create an extra dynamic which contributes to the strength of the sector.

Another important aspect that is underemphasized when there is only emphasis on the vendors' practices, is the role of material and cultural aspects. The street foods themselves, are more than just cheap calories – they are a cultural expression, in a state of constant change. In the streets, you see traditional foods, as well as new foods which emerge from different cultural backgrounds and creativity from the street food vendors. These dynamics in turn influence the practices and performances of the street food vendors and the street food sector as a whole.

What we see here, in short, is a street food sector that is not only a multitude of independently operating actors – it is a cohesive system that is robust, but at the same time able of continuous change and adaptation. The parts of the system, both social and material, interact with each other and create a whole which is more than just the sum of its parts. In order to look more deeply into these dynamics that cause this robustness and, simultaneously, flexibility, I chose to consider DeLanda's notion of assemblage theory.

Assemblage theory is an ontological attempt to describe and explain the social. It does not simply look at a micro- or macro- level, instead it considers the dynamics on different scales, which ultimately interact and influence each other. This thesis will focus on the notion of assemblages as proposed by DeLanda (2006), who derived his ideas from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. The goal of his assemblage theory is to create a social ontology which can explain the complex social reality.

In his book 'A New Philosophy of Society' (2006), DeLanda starts off with the organismic metaphor, which compares the social to a body – where all the organs are co-dependent and have their own specific task in making the body function. This means that the different parts of society cannot exist without each other and work together for social harmony. In other words, elements of a society (or a body) only exist in relation to one another and therefore have no independent characteristics. DeLanda moves away from this metaphor, as he states that this analogy fails to help explain emergence. He elaborates:

“Allowing the possibility of complex interactions between component parts is crucial to define mechanisms of emergence, but this possibility disappears if the parts are fused together into a seamless web. Thus, what needs to be challenged is the very idea of relations of interiority. We can distinguish, for example, the properties defining a given entity from its capacities to interact with other entities. While its properties are given and may be denumerable as a closed list, its capacities are not given – they may go unexercised if no entity suitable for interaction is around – and form a potentially open list, since there is no way to tell in advance in what way a given entity may affect or be affected by innumerable other entities.” (DeLanda, 2006; p.10) In other words, the capacities of an entity within an assemblage become visible in interaction with other entities.

*Relations of interiority* refer to the notion of parts being incapable of existence when detached from the whole. Considering an entity as only a seamless whole, makes it impossible to consider the characteristics of the parts. Therefore, DeLanda introduces the theoretical alternative of assemblages, which are wholes characterized by *relations of exteriority*. This implies that a component of an assemblage may be detached and implemented in another assemblage with different interactions, which consequently suggests a certain autonomy of this component. The properties of a component are given, but the capacities are only visible when they emerge during interactions with other components in the assemblage. An analysis of only the component parts of an assemblage can therefore never explain the structure and dynamics of the assemblage. DeLanda emphasizes that assemblages are always composed of *heterogeneous* components. In the case of street foods, this would mean that the assemblage does not simply consist out of vendors, but also of eaters, foods, et cetera.

In contrast to relations of interiority, which are characterized by *logical necessity*, relations of exteriority are *contingently obligatory* (p. 12). This means that relations in an assemblage are 'local and contingent'; components develop themselves in a distinct way, in symbiosis with the components they interact with. Hereby, several typical properties arise, but in a different situation, the components may develop themselves very differently. Therefore, DeLanda stresses the importance of history in an assemblage analysis.

This notions of relations of exteriority, capacities, and properties help to overcome the structure-agency problem. As the components have their own distinct properties, they seem to have agency; the ability to change and influence. The functioning of the assemblage as a whole is then determined by the specific interactions of different components and the expression of their capacities. The properties of the components seem to determine the function and structure of the assemblage, which in turn again

influences the interactions and relations between the components. This means that the assemblage is in constant flux – shaping and being shaped by its components.

In order to look further into the interactions of the components in the assemblage, as well as the forces of the assemblage which can either increase or decrease the internal cohesion, DeLanda introduces several concepts. He sketches two dynamics: 1) between matter and expression; and 2) between territorialization and deterritorialization. I will elaborate on both of these dynamics.

### **Matter and Expression**

The first dimension that DeLanda discusses, contains the material and expressive components of an assemblage. Here, DeLanda's theory distinguishes itself from many modern social theories, which tend to focus on the expressive (language and meaning) and underemphasize the material. In order to exist, an assemblage requires material elements. DeLanda writes:

"The components of social assemblages playing a material role vary widely, but at the very least involve a set of human bodies properly oriented (physically or psychologically) towards each other. The classic example of these assemblages of bodies is face-to-face conversations, but the interpersonal networks that structure communities, as well as the hierarchical organizations that govern cities or nation-states can also serve as illustrations. Community networks and institutional organizations are assemblages of bodies, but they also possess a variety of other material components, from food and physical labor, to simple tools and complex machines, to the buildings and neighborhoods serving as their physical locales." (DeLanda, 2006: p.12).

In the work of many sociologists, such as Žižek (2000) or Habermas (1985), the focus is completely on the expressive dimension of the social – on meaning, content, et cetera. This implies that the material does not contribute anything to the social. The point is that the expressive is only one of many aspects that make up the assemblage as it is, since matter also plays a role in interactions. This idea also is also a part of Latour's Actor Network Theory (2005). I will further elaborate on this, below.

### **Territorialization and Deterritorialization**

Territorialization and deterritorialization are the processes that cause an assemblage to be more or less stable, respectively. These concepts have to be taken literally, says DeLanda, since face-to-face conversations always take place in a particular place like a church, a street corner or a café. Over time, recurring conversations acquire spatial boundaries. The same goes for interpersonal networks, such as communities within a certain space, such as a neighborhoods, small towns or organizations.

DeLanda emphasizes the importance of the *real connections* and *physical locale* in the assemblage. When we speak of a 'market', we tend to speak of a ghostlike entity – it seems to be everywhere and nowhere at once. In order to provide a description and gain full understanding of the assemblage, we need to look at its physical components and their connections. For example, when we want to analyse a market, we want to know more specific information, like the trading locations, the supply lines, the way the people in the market communicate, and so on. In other words, we want to know the *territorializing process* of the particular market.

Territorialization refers to the stabilizing processes within the assemblage, or in other words, the processes that reinforce the identity of the assemblage and its components. DeLanda states that when interactions are frequent, the interactions between different components become standardized and components learn which response to expect in certain situations. A standardized relationship or multitude of relationships is

by no means static – there can be many types of new interactions within this relational framework. DeLanda considers territorialization as a first articulation of the components and *coding* as a second. Coding means that the standardized interactions are consolidated in words and rules, which further stabilize the assemblage.

It has to be noted, that the people within the assemblage are only a few of the many components that together form the assemblage. When referring to solely the human interactions within the assemblage, he refers to an (interpersonal) network. DeLanda stresses the importance of repetition in the formation of interpersonal networks and thus territorialization:

“When conversations (and other social encounters) are repeated with the same participants, or with overlapping sets of participants, longer lasting social entities tend to emerge: interpersonal networks. From the assemblage point of view, interpersonal networks are perhaps the social entities that are the easiest to handle, given that in network theory the emphasis is always on relations of exteriority. That is, in *the pattern of recurring links*, as well as the properties of those links, which forms the object of study, not the attributes of the persons occupying positions in a network. These attributes (such as gender or race) are clearly very important in the study of human interactions, but some of the emergent properties of networks tend to remain the same despite changes in those attributes. This implies that the properties of the links cannot be inferred from the properties of the persons linked.” (DeLanda, 2006: p.56).

Some of the most important properties of links are the *strength*, that is, the frequency of interactions, as well as the emotional content; their *presence or absence*, since absences indicate the border of a network; and their *reciprocity* – the symmetry or asymmetry of obligations within the link.

On the other hand, deterritorialization refers to the destabilization of an assemblage, which can lead to adjustments or radical change (into a completely new assemblage). This happens through the intervention of components, which can be either new or already participating in the assemblage. New interactions have the power to open new territories for components, which can destabilize the existing assemblage. It can cause new assemblages to emerge, codes to change or interactions to disrupt.

It is important to note the role of the material components within the (de-)territorializing processes. For making connections, for instance, we may need electricity and a cell phone. The same goes for interactions in a certain material surrounding, which is the case in the street food assemblage. After all, there would be no street foods without either the street or the food. They directly determine the character of the assemblage, as the street is a hub of interactions between components and the foods are direct expressions of interactions and culture.

### Properties of a network

Furthermore, a network has properties of its own, among which *density*, which signifies the intensity of connectivity among indirect links. For instance, if everybody knows everybody's friends, the network has a high density. The same goes for a tiny village in which everyone knows everyone. In a network of higher density, information about violations of local norms spreads very quickly. This implies that there is also a higher degree of social control and therefore *stability*. A network is considered stable when there is no psychological tension among the members. So, if your friends' friends are your enemies, we can state that the network is instable. Another indicator for stability is the likelihood that people will adopt similar attitudes towards third parties when they are connected with fewer intermediary links in the network.

A third property of networks is *solidarity*, which is caused by a higher density and stability. It means that people are helping one another – some are motivated by feelings of togetherness, others by altruism or reciprocity.

Components playing a material role are – next to the physical bodies of the network members – time and energy. These are two resources that are needed to establish and maintain relationships. Components playing an expressive role include many non-linguistic aspects such as trust and solidarity.

### Performativity

"[The] nature of society is negotiable, a practical and revisable matter (performative) and not something that can be determined once and for all by the sociologist who attempts to stand outside it (...). The sociologist should accordingly seek to analyse the way in which people are associated together and should in particular pay attention to the material and extrasomatic resources" (Latour, 1984, p. 1).

Bruno Latour is the founder of the Actor Network Theory, a constructivist approach to networks of which also material objects are a part. The point here is that the components of an assemblage do not have a fixed identity. They play a role, which is developed in the course of recurring interactions. Both objects, people and other entities can play a role in these interactions. The outcome of these interactions is the establishment of roles and identities within the assemblage (Latour, 2005; Butler, 1988).

So, in order to create a larger understanding of the roles of both material and social components of the street food sector on a more micro level, it is important to consider the daily recurring interactions.

### Understanding foods from an assemblage perspective

In order to justify my choice for assemblage theory, and provide a basis for the analysis in the coming chapters, I will consider the case study of the hot dog. I will provide a historical explanation of its development and then analyse it from an assemblage perspective. The primary reason for choosing the hot dog as a case study, is the fact that it has a long, global history in which different cultures come together. The hot dog is basically a re-assemblage of mainly the American and German food culture.

### Case study: the hot dog

Sausages are known as one of the oldest forms of processed foods and are even mentioned in Homer's Odyssey and ancient Roman manuscripts. The popular sausages as we know them today, have their roots in Germany and Austria. In American English sausages are often referred to as 'wieners' – Wien is the German name for Vienna, the capital city of Austria. It is said that the frankfurter was invented in 1487, and the city of Frankfurt celebrated its 500-year birthday in 1987 (Kraig, 2009).



A hot dog is a Frankfurter sausage, in a bun, and is known to be a typical American food. There is some ambivalence about the origin of the hot dog. Some say that the Germans always ate the sausages with bread, but there is also another legend about a German immigrant in St. Louis. He sold sausages on the streets, but people would burn their hands. His wife suggested to serve the sausages in a split bun. An acquainted baker improvised long soft buns that would fit the sausage. There is no certainty that this story is true, but it is plausible that the hot dogs are served in buns for easy take-away eating. This way, the hot dog was born. The sausages and soft white bread are now consumed on a huge scale. After World War II, many foods became mass-produced due to improved technology which caused the hot dogs to be cheaper and easier to produce (Kraig, 2009).

Still today, the hot dog is a part of popular American culture. Since it is so cheap and easy to produce and practical to eat, it is one of the most well-known fast foods. The name hot dog refers to urban myths of the 20th century that stated that hot dogs contained dog meat, instead of beef. Since the 1950s, the hot dog became – together with the hamburger – a symbol for the American dream of prosperity and well-being and the association with German immigrants has faded. So, the material object – the hot dog – has gained a meaning, *an expression*.

In this case, we can clearly see how a certain culture of eating is re-assembled in a new cultural context. The German sausage combined with the American soft white bread is both a part and a cause for change in the American (food) culture. The merger of two different food cultures has caused change on two levels; material and social. The first change occurred simply through combining two types of foods together. It also made way for other new creative inventions in the American food culture – the emergence of easily prepared cheap foods such as hot dogs and hamburgers were the catalysts for the development of a range of fast food products and specialized restaurant chains in the United States and later on, in the rest of the world.

In the social sphere, the hot dog has also had an immense influence. As it became one of the most important symbols for popular American culture since the 1950s, it changed the way people consumed and thought of food in the U.S. Nowadays, the American food culture is a synonym for fast and cheap food, overproduction and mass consumption. The daily eating pattern of people has changed immensely in the past century – accessibility, convenience and low costs are the main drivers for many consumers nowadays and having a hot dog 'on the go' after a long day of work is a common habit.

As the hot dog grew in popularity, it also affected the economic structure. At first, this happened locally, as there occurred a relationship between the baker, the butcher and the street food vendor. Nowadays, we do not see these small-scale linkages anymore, since the ingredients for hot dogs are now produced on a large scale in factories. However, back in the time when this was not the case, the hot dog managed to increase local economies, especially in cities, where the hot dog was most popular among the factory workers. We can say that at first, the hot dog managed to create a tighter network of eaters and producers, a local economy and thus a more cohesive –territorialized – assemblage.

### **Assemblages and foods**

We can see in this case study how the street food sector, the local economy and on a larger scale, the food culture in the United States were affected by the introduction of the hot dog. Using the assemblage perspective when explaining the development of the hot dog helps us in several ways. First of all, it makes us look at a complex issue from a perspective that is comprehensive, yet schematic. Secondly, it helps us to transcend the issue of the distinction between micro and macro, as micro developments apparently have

the power to change things on a macro scale and vice versa. Third of all, a historical view on the developments of (street) foods can provide a more coherent understanding of what a hot dog exactly is, what it means and the effects that it has had on the (street) food assemblage in the United States.

In this example, we can state that we see different types of assemblages intertwined. We see the local 'nested' market of butchers, bakers and street food vendors. We see, later on in history, the development of a larger assemblage in which the ingredients are mass produced. And finally, we see the hot dog itself as an assemblage.

The issue with using assemblage theory, however, is its complexity. For instance, when trying to unravel the material and expressive meaning of an object, we can stumble upon difficulties since these two are so deeply intertwined. The same goes for social and material, as matter can have such an enormous effect on the social aspects of an assemblage, it so happens that they are difficult to untie, without losing nuance.

## Problem statement and research questions

There is very little information of the functioning of the street food sector in Kampala, nor do we know which socio-material processes enable the sector to be simultaneously robust and dynamic. In order to describe the street food sector in a way that transcends the dualisms between space-time and matter-expression, I will use assemblage theory as discussed above. Using this theory, I want to discover how practices of (re-)assemblage define and sustain the street food sector in Kampala area, Uganda. From this objective, we can logically derive the general research question:

How do practices of (re-)assemblage define and sustain the street food sector in Kampala area, Uganda?

In order to answer this general research question, we divide it into three sub-questions, which together lead us to the final conclusion of the research.

Sub question 1: How can street foods be understood from an assemblage perspective?

Sub question 2: How do street food vendors perform in (re-)assembling the street food sector?

Sub question 3: How do institutions (re-)assemble the street food sector?

I structured the thesis into two parts that focus on three levels. Under the first sub question, I will focus on the street foods themselves. Under the second, I will look at the human actors that individually cause innovations within the street food sector in Kampala area. The third sub question considers the institutions and how they (re-)assemble the street food sector.

The main reason I chose for this division, is that according to DeLanda's theory, assemblages are a part of bigger assemblages. These mutually influence each other and thus reinforce changes. Instead of developments being top down or bottom up, they are mutual. A benefit of this approach is that the dichotomy between micro and macro fades away and there is room for a more dynamic view on street food assemblage in the Kampala area. Furthermore, the first sub question seemingly focuses on material assemblages and the other two focus on more social forms of assemblage. DeLanda makes a clear distinction between social and material processes. As these material and social processes intertwine and create new assemblages, on different scales and finally influence other assemblages, it is important to consider both forms. By taking these different processes apart, we can analyse the dynamics separately and thus provide a clearer understanding of the street foods assemblage.

## Methodology

Although the writing of the theoretical framework has been an iterative process, and the theoretical framework has been developed in retrospect, there is plenty of data on which to base the analysis. I have been focusing on street foods and the practices of vendors in the field, but as the fieldwork progressed, I have observed interesting dynamics and documented them. I will elaborate on how I will analyse and interpret them. The data I gathered consist out of participative observation, pictures and unstructured interviews. The reason the interviews were unstructured, was that there was little to no accurate background information on which I could base an interview topic list. Later on, as I learned more about the vendors and the street food sector, I developed my research questions. With the goals of finding the answers to these questions in my mind, I went on doing semi-structured interviews.

### **Understanding street foods from an assemblage perspective**

In order to shed a different light on the street foods as matter, which is continuously being shaped and reshaping the street foods assemblage, I will consider several case studies of different foods. The two case studies I will use are; 1) innovative foods, i.e. the Rolex and pizza; and 2) traditional foods from the North of Uganda which are still prepared and consumed in the traditional way. I will describe and analyse them, using the theory on assemblages. In order to do this, I will first describe the cases and then consider the different dimensions that play a role in their development, which are the socio-material and time-space dimension.

In the field, I have made notes, which are typed out and I took photos. I will use coding software (Atlas.ti), to code the written and visual data in order to structure it. I will use a mixed coding strategy, starting off with the coding scheme based on the theoretical framework. New and interesting codes were added during the process of coding, any time something remarkable was found in the data. In order to make sure I will not miss out on any important information, I use the new coding scheme for second coding. Then, I will use the structured data to write a description of the case and use the theory to interpret it.

### **Street food vendors, performativity and (re-)assembling the street food sector**

The second sub-question will focus on the social aspects of the street food sector. First of all, I code the data, using the same strategy as for sub-question 1 in order to create structure in the data. I then describe some of the different life stories of the street food vendors, to create an understanding of who these street food vendors are. I will discuss several case studies of street food vendors that have either managed to creatively re-invent street food vending in a new and innovative manner and those that are traditional yet very successful. I will then consider their practices and performances through analyzing them according to the assemblage theory in order to shed a light on how they assemble and re-assemble the street food sector in Kampala.

### **Institutions, street foods and re-assemblage**

In the third sub-question, I will shed a light on recurring interactions, collaborations and institutions within the street food sector that I have seen during field work in Kampala. I will describe and analyse this, again using assemblage theory. I will use several case studies I have come across during fieldwork, in which social relations and expressions play a determining role; cases of self-governance and government intervention. Then, I will try to explain, using assemblage theory, what exactly constitutes the robustness of the street food vendors and which internal challenges they face.

### Time and place of the research



During 3.5 months, from the start of September 2015 to half December 2015, I have performed the research in the area of Kampala, Uganda. On this map, you will find the places marked that I have visited for research.

*Figure 1: Map of Kampala City*

## Chapter 3 – Understanding street foods from an assemblage perspective

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the material aspects of the street food sector and will provide an answer to the first sub-question of this thesis: How can street foods be understood from an assemblage perspective? This chapter aims to show how material aspects of assemblages are in fact assemblages themselves and to learn how their changing or constant character influences the larger assemblage of which they are a part. This implies that matter accordingly has agency. I will elaborate on this in the course of this chapter: first, I will elaborate theoretically on the objectives; next, I will use the theoretical framework to analyse some case studies from the field.

In order to understand street foods from an assemblage perspective, it is important to undertake some steps. First of all, we need to acknowledge that street foods are not only part of an assemblage of both social and material components, they are also assemblages themselves. Street foods can be considered an assemblage from different perspectives. Primarily, foods are often an assemblage of different ingredients and practices. For instance, Kampala roast chicken is not just chicken; the spices and the process of roasting make the roast chicken taste the way people know it in Kampala. Also, street foods can also be an assemblage of different cultures. A distinct example of this is kikomando, a dish made of indigenous brown Ugandan beans and chopped Indian chapatti.

Secondly, it is important to realize that the street foods change and adapt over time, through all kinds of (de-)territorializing influences within larger assemblages of which they are a part; in this case, this larger assemblage is the street food sector in the Kampala area. Through their dynamic character, street foods also manage to alter the socio-material and spatio-temporal dynamics of the street food sector. We will see how this works in the course of this chapter. Unfortunately, there is very little information about the development of street foods in Uganda (and the rest of Africa), but I will illustrate these statements with the case study of the hot dog, on which I elaborated in the theoretical and conceptual framework.

When an assemblage is affected by an external influence, two things may happen. Either the assemblage as it is remains the same, or it is re-assembled into a new, different assemblage. Re-assemblage is basically the rearrangement of an assemblage, in both expressive and material ways. An assemblage may not only obtain a new form through re-assemblage, it may also gain a new – expressive – meaning and thus ultimately assert influence on the bigger assemblages of which it is a part.

### Street foods in Kampala area

In this section, I will elaborate on and analyse typical street foods in the Kampala area.

#### Case study: the Rolex

One of the most well-known Ugandan street foods is the Rolex, which is mainly eaten in the Kampala area. It is an omelet with vegetables, rolled in a chapatti; hence the name Rolex. On most street corners you can find a “Rolex guy”, who prepares the Rolex for the customer. Usually, Rolexes aren’t sold on the streets before 4 or 5 o’clock in the afternoon, although there are a few Rolex vendors who work during the day. The Rolex is considered to be a typical ‘fast food’ in the Kampala area food culture, as most people eat it as a quick snack on the go, or after a night out in the city.



## Historical development

There is very little information on the historical development of the Rolex, like most other street foods in Uganda. There are however, parallels with the development of the foods in the case study discussed above. In both cases, different cultural influences are evident in the foods. The hot dog is a German-Austrian sausage that was re-assembled into a typical American food. In the case of the Rolex, we see the Indian influences in the form of the chapatti. There used to be a large Indian diaspora in South-East African countries, such as Kenya and Uganda. Although the diaspora has declined since the 1970s, Indian foods are still abundant and especially chapatti is a widespread food. Eggs are also a popular food in Uganda, as it is a cheap source of protein. An omelet, however, is not quite easy to eat on the go. Frying and rolling it into a chapatti solves this problem. Over the past couple of years, the number of Rolex vendors has rapidly increased. Fancy, more expensive versions of Rolexes, for example with fish or chicken, are now sold in restaurants.

## Novel foods

### Ethnography 1: Amza & Farouk



*Picture 1: Amza & Farouk's Rolex stand*

Makerere Kagugube is a neighborhood close to Makerere University. It is a place where especially many students and young families live. There are many brick buildings, where students rent rooms. The streets are sandy and very muddy after a long rain shower. During the day there are several street food vendors around, but especially after around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the vendors start to come out on the streets with their equipment and start cooking, so the foods are finished when people are finished with classes and work. They cook until very late at night, many of the vendors are still on the streets after midnight.

Among the many vendors on the street, there are those that sell Rolexes, maize (mainly roasted) and other small foods such as samosas and mandazis. Noticeably, most foods that are sold on the streets in this neighborhoods, are typically snacks that are easy for take-away. All vendors have a simple stand or just some pots and pans in front of them, there is no space for eaters to sit down for their meal. Many

Rolex vendors have a stand like we see it in the picture. It is a table, with two small glass cabinets in which prepared foods, such as pre-made chapattis, are stored to prevent contamination and guarantee hygiene. They are always situated on the roadside, easily accessible for the people passing by.

The two men in the picture, are Amza and Farouk. They are brothers and both in their twenties. They have been Rolex vendors since 2005 and had been saving money together to start their business. They bought the equipment for 100 000 Ugandan Shillings (UGX). Every day, they bring and take away the equipment to a storage place, where it is safe. "The reason why we started our business, is that it is an easy way to make money. You do not need a lot of money to get started."

Most of their clients are people in the neighborhood and the regular customers usually take some time to make a chat and have a laugh with Amza and Farouk. Most of them only get their Rolex here. One of the eaters tells me "this is the best place to get it, the Rolex is good and Amza and Farouk are great cooks – hygienic and conscientious". One of the customers who comes by, regularly buys on credit, but Amza tells him he still has to pay. Farouk enters the discussion and there is a little quarreling. Eventually, the customer pays the money that he still owed and takes a new Rolex with him. He says he will pay for it next time, Amza and Farouk accept it.

Amza and Farouk live together, in a neighborhood nearby. They decided to set up their business in Kagugube since there was no place to rent in their own neighborhood. On a good day, they manage to make around 35 000 UGX, on a bad day they make about 10 to 15 000 UGX.

### **Spatial dimension**

The Rolex is especially popular among students in the city and vendors are most found in the lower-middle class neighborhoods, where there is a large demand for cheap, but filling foods. Vendors mainly sit by the roadside or at other strategic and accessible places where a lot of people pass, such as the entrance of a student complex or next to cafés.

Usually, Rolex vendors are relatively close to those who sell the ingredients. Two of the respondents, Amza and Farouk, own a Rolex stand in Kagugube. Across the road, there is a lady selling fruits and vegetables. For Amza and Farouk, she shreds the cabbage and puts it in plastic bags. Whenever they are out of cabbage, one of them simply crosses the road to get some more cabbage, or tomatoes, onions or peppers. Here, we see that the spatial arrangement of vendors is directly related to social conventions, because Amza and Farouk know the lady well and always get their groceries from her. Also, this is another sign that social and material aspects of street food vending are not easy to consider separately.

### **Rolex and food culture**

According to several people on the street, the Rolex is a relatively new invention, dating from around the beginning of the 21st century. There are quite a few parallels with American fast foods such as hot dogs and hamburgers, which stand for a culture of quick and cheap consumption. Unlike the street food vendors who sell traditional Ugandan (street) foods, the Rolex vendors do not offer a place to sit down, eat and interact with other people. Rolex is more like a fast food in this sense. It is mainly consumed in the late afternoon until late at night – people tend to 'grab a Rolex' on their way home from class or work, as it is one of the cheapest but most filling foods. We can assume that the Rolex is a Ugandan translation of American popular food culture, as it combines the American way of eating with typical Ugandan foods. As

with the case study of the hot dog, we see how globalization has influenced Ugandan food culture. A striking change in the Ugandan food culture, is that eating while walking or standing up is generally not accepted, but seems to change as 'fast' street foods become more common.

In Amza and Farouk's example, we see that especially students and young, low-income families consume the Rolex. It is also quite a popular food to eat after a beer or two. This might also imply that different social classes eat different foods and have a different culture of eating.

### **Social conventions**

The Rolexes on the streets in Kampala have a fixed price of 1500 Ugandan Shillings, the prices in the restaurants can be up to 10 times as high. The fixed price of the Rolex is an agreement among the street food vendors, to ensure a fair competition.

There are more social conventions on the streets, although not all of them are as formal as the price agreement. For example, people tend to buy their ingredients from the same person, who is usually a family member, a friend or an acquaintance. If the Rolex vendors do not have any money, they can simply take their ingredients and pay the next time; the suppliers can also come and take a Rolex and pay later. In other words: there is a trust-based relationship. This is also the case with Amza and Farouk, who can buy on credit. Also, they let people buy their foods on credit, but only if they know the customer well.

### **Ethnography 2: Life Chapatti**



*Picture 2: Freddie's Life Chapatti Rolex Stand*

In this picture, we see Freddie's Rolex stand, in Makerere Kikoni. Kikoni is situated next to Kagugube and is a similar neighborhood. Also here, you find many vendors who sell snack-like foods such as mandazi's, Rolexes and samosas.

Freddie is a young man, in his early twenties. His stand is different to that of most street food vendors, which are often like Amza and Farouk's – a simple wooden stand that is cleared away at the end of the working day. Life Chapatti is a fixed structure, it has 3 small concrete walls behind which the cooking takes place. There is also a small roof, which enables the men to continue cooking, even when it rains.

His stand sells kikomando (Ugandan beans with chopped chapatti) and Rolexes, but his specialty is the Pizza. This is not really a pizza, as it is not a bottom of dough with tomato sauce and toppings, the way the pizza is commonly known. Instead, it is an omelet with tomatoes, cabbage, pepper and onion, and chopped pieces of chapatti. So instead of rolling the omelet into the chapatti, the chapatti is processed into the 'pizza' itself. Freddie saw other people selling the pizza and noticed it was quite popular. Since you do not need any different ingredients or equipment to prepare the pizza, there are no extra costs involved. So, Freddie decided to start preparing the pizza next to the Rolex, as well.

### Re-assembling the Rolex

The street food sector in Kampala is dynamic and ever changing. This can also be seen in the type of variations we find of the Rolex. As mentioned before, more expensive versions of Rolexes can be found in



Picture 3: A 'pizza' made by Freddie

restaurants, but also on the streets we see interesting alterations of the Rolex. The most striking example is the so-called 'pizza'.

The pizza is a very new phenomenon and is steadily becoming a popular food, especially among the students in Kampala. Again, here we see global influences in a locally invented dish. Freddie's example shows us how a new recipe spreads across town: other vendors see someone do something new that works and simply copy the idea. Especially in the case of the pizza, adopting a new idea does not require any more investments so it is a rather accessible market.

There are also parallels with the hot dog example from the theoretical framework, the Rolex and with Freddie's case. The pizza is also an assemblage of different cultures, as are the other two foods. We may conclude that the establishment of a novel food through different food cultures

spreads by people watching and copying each other. Apparently, social conventions allow people to simply take ideas and use them themselves. In chapter 5, we will discuss other agreements, rules and regulations within the street food network.



## Traditional foods

The street food sector in Kampala is not just a place where new foods are invented – also traditional foods are still very popular on the streets. Especially Arua Park is well known for the traditional foods. Arua Park is situated in central Kampala and is well known for its bus park, from where buses leave to other towns and cities within Uganda, as well as to neighboring countries, such as South Sudan, Kenya and Congo DRC. Next to the bus station, there is a small square filled with people selling their cooked and fried foods. There are also tiny restaurants adjacent to the square, where people can buy cold beverages and sit inside. Generally, the foods that are sold are typically from the Arua region in Northern Uganda.

Arua Park is named after the large group of people from the Arua region that lives in the neighborhood. Many of them left the poorer Northern part of Uganda to find a job in Kampala. As a result, there emerged a large community and along with that, a demand for indigenous foods that were traditionally not eaten in Kampala. Many eaters in Arua Park say that they like to eat the food that they were eating back at home, their main reason for eating there is nostalgia. Social interactions are another reason to eat traditional Arua foods – people take the time to sit, eat, share their food and chat about the latest news in Kampala. Many of the eaters visit the same vendor every time, because often there is a relationship between them – they may be acquaintances, friends or family. Increasingly, Kampala natives come to Arua Park for a bite, since the food is known to be very tasty, nutritious and affordable.

### Ethnography 3: Arua Park



Picture 4: street food vendors and benches at Arua Park

street food vendors and benches at Arua Park Sharon cooks behind the green container in the picture, this is where her pots and pans are during the day. When the working day is finished, she locks away her equipment, together with that of the other vendors.

Picture 3: Vendors at Arua Park

All throughout Arua Park, you find such tables with benches. All of these are owned by women, who more often than not have several girls working for them. The foods are so popular, that most people manage to make a good business out of street food vending.

Sharon is one of the owners of a street food stand at Arua Park. She sells tea and Aruan foods. Typical Aruan foods are meat with peanut sauce, kalo (a sticky dough) and spinach-like greens.

Since 2003, Sharon is living in Kampala and two years later, she started her business, together with her sister Helen. They already had the skills to prepare Aruan foods, so the only issue was to find equipment and a spot where they could cook and sell foods. Their parents, who still live in Arua, brought them to Kampala so they could find a job and make some money to send to Arua. Before Sharon started her business, she worked for another cook, so she could save some money and learn how to best run a business. Sharon and Helen sell, amongst other foods, cassava, rice, posho, millet bread and chicken and fish. In the morning, they serve tea, the foods are sold later on the day.

The reason Sharon started her business at Arua Park, is that many people pass by during the day, and they want a quick but filling meal. Also, many people within Kampala go to Arua Park, especially to have the Aruan foods. Sauda is one of the many other women at Arua Park. She is an employee to her aunt, one of the other ladies who own a business at Arua Park. She lives in Kampala since 2008 and used to work as a hairdresser. However, because her aunt needed help, she started to work for her. Sauda is originally from Arua and therefore already knew how to prepare the foods. Their clients tell me they come to Sauda because she sells very good food.

### **Assemblages and traditional foods at Arua Park**

Apparently, the material and social characteristics of the Arua foods have not transformed, even though the spatial context is completely new. After all, Aruan foods are quite different from those that are traditionally eaten in Kampala. Nonetheless, the cultural context has only slightly changed, since the majority of the eaters of Arua foods are originally from that region. The fact that there is only so little change is remarkable, since a new social and spatial context might be a call for a re-assemblage.

Apparently, since the immigrant community has been a driving factor in the development of the Arua food market in Kampala, we might be able to state that in this case the strong feelings of nostalgia, community and cultural heritage are determining factors in maintaining the Arua foods. In chapter 5, I will further elaborate on the social aspects of street foods and its effects on the strength of the assemblage. Another explanation for the robustness of the Aruan food culture, are the cooking skills of the immigrant ladies. They learnt to cook in the Aruan region, and therefore know best how to cook this type of food. It is logical, that once they start cooking on the streets, that they will cook the way they did at home.

### **Discussing the case studies and ethnographies**

The two types of street foods that we have so far discussed are different in many ways. They also provide different insights in the workings of the street food sector as an assemblage. As we have seen, street foods have the ability to change the sector. In this section we will look more closely into these dynamics and interpret them within DeLanda's assemblage theory.

### **Innovation in the street food sector**

Novel street foods such as the Rolex and the pizza are a multitude of different cultures, re-assembled into a Ugandan version. Such interpretations of foreign foods broaden the scope of the street food sector, not only because they increase the range of available foods, but also because they change the socio-cultural and spatio-temporal characteristics of the sector as a whole.

But what does the development of novel foods say about the street food sector? First of all, it implies that the street food sector is a dynamic whole, in which new foods can be easily incorporated. The street food sector is also flexible, as it adjusts to the changes in food culture, eating and vending that are caused by the introduction of new foods. On the other hand, it says that the sector is a cohesive whole, as new influences are interpreted within the culture of the sector. We can so say that the novel foods and street food sector are continuously adjusting to each other – there is co-evolution, or as DeLanda would like to say: the different aspects of an assemblage are *contingently obligatory*. They can change, but keep on adjusting towards each other. This co-evolution safeguards the existence of both the foods and the street food sector as a whole.



Simultaneously, we have seen how robust and constant the street food sector can be – in the case of the Arua foods, the street food sector was barely affected by the different spatial and cultural context. In this case, the strong community of immigrants from Northern areas in Kampala, their need for traditional foods and the cooking skills that are brought to Kampala by the cooks, seem to be the major explanations for the invariability of the foods.

### **(De-) territorializing the street food sector**

When it comes to the changes that occurred in the street food sector, or the fact that there are only very little changes to be seen, we need to consider the underlying dynamics. In order to do this, we will discuss the observations in the light of the ideas from DeLanda's assemblage theory, as elaborated on in the conceptual framework.

Basically, according to assemblage theory, traditional foods and social cohesion have a territorializing effect on the assemblage and new foods have a deterritorializing effect. Territorialization and deterritorialization mean that there are dynamics that cause the assemblage to be more or less stable, respectively. Dynamics of deterritorialization implies that the assemblage either changes towards a new type of assemblage, or completely disintegrates. Dynamics of territorialisation cause an assemblage to have a stronger identity and a higher degree of internal cohesion.

It is important to acknowledge that territorialisation and deterritorialization are not purely concepts in a purely spatial sense. They do cover a certain spatial aspect of the assemblage, but more importantly, they stand for the dynamics that make an assemblage more or less cohesive, respectively.

The reason that new influences tend to be deterritorializing, is that they need to be re-interpreted within the existing assemblage. This means that, as we have discussed, a certain co-evolution takes place. On the one hand, the novel food has to be re-interpreted to fit within the assemblage. On the other hand, this does not leave the assemblage itself unchanged, since around new foods, new customs and cultures emerge.

In the case of the integration of novel foods, we can state that there is indeed a deterritorializing effect, as we can clearly see a change in the street food assemblage as a result of new foods such as the pizza and the Rolex. There are not only changes in food culture, but also in business arrangements on the streets. Different forms of collaboration arise, as a result of the introduction of these 'fast' street foods. In chapter 5, we will further discuss the social aspect of the street food assemblage, including collaborations and partnerships among different types of vendors. For now, it is simply important to realize that the deterritorialization of the street food sector is a result of novel foods and that this is manifested in several ways. These will be further discussed in chapter 5.

In the case of traditional foods, we see that the cultural aspect of the street food assemblage is apparently incredibly important. In the different spatial context of Kampala, where there are many new influences, also from other cultures, traditional foods can apparently be a constant and invariable factor. The only factor that has remained constant in the case of Arua Park, is the food culture. We can so conclude that a strong sense of cultural heritage, nostalgia, knowledge and food culture, contribute to the density and strength of the assemblage and therefore are territorializing processes.

Although an assemblage is a whole made up of social and material aspects, we can see clearly that processes of territorialisation and deterritorialization are manifested in the social, as we can see in the two cases. The processes can though be caused or stimulated by the material components from within or

outside of the assemblage. We thus need to also acknowledge the possible influential power of material aspects on the strength and character of the assemblage. Below, the aspects of matter and expression within the case studies will be discussed further.

### **Matter en expression in street foods**

According to what we have seen in the case studies, matter and expression are inseparable. This is because any food – not only street food – is an expression of culture, practice, place and many other influences. A food is more than just the object itself, it is full of hidden meanings and may have a great social and cultural importance.

For instance, in the case of the Rolex and pizza, there is a bigger meaning behind the foods. In this case, they are a symbol for popular fast food culture. They seem a Ugandan interpretation of American foods and along with that, there is a shift in the street food culture, mainly in terms of eating behavior. The same more or less goes for the Arua foods, they are connected to a certain identity, a meaning. The foods express a certain way of living. In the case of the Rolex, it is a fast and modern life, on the other hand, Arua foods stand for nostalgia and culture.

So can we really say there is a distinction between matter and expression as DeLanda (2006) and Latour (2005) state? Apparently, this distinction is difficult to unravel, as material objects seem to be inseparably connected to the meaning that is given to them. This leads us to an ontological issue: are material objects themselves asserting influence on the assemblage, or is it the expressive meaning that is ascribed to these objects? In the latter case, we would be thinking in terms of the expression thinking by sociologists such as Habermas (1985), who are criticized in DeLanda's and Latour's assemblage and actor network theories, respectively (DeLanda, 2006; Latour, 2005). This issue has been a hot topic of debate in science for several decades already. Many theorists argue that everything is shaped in the social, and that the material has no meaning of itself – it merely has the meaning that is ascribed to it. See also the work of Law and Mol (1995), or theories by for instance Habermas (1985) and Žižek 2000).

On the other hand, meanings are not actively ascribed to a food. Instead, they are developed over time, as a certain culture is developed around a food. There is a mutual development of the assemblage, as well as the meaning ascribed to the food. For instance, the Rolex is associated with popular culture, easy food and a young audience. We can thus state that material objects have both an ascribed meaning as well as a transformative power that is not necessarily attributed to them by the actors within the assemblage. This is where the notion of *relations of exteriority* becomes relevant (DeLanda, 2006). This concept refers to the notion of parts being co-dependent, but also able to survive in another assemblage. Following the reasoning of DeLanda, street foods are part of an assemblage and as thus are characterized by relations of exteriority. This means that these street foods have properties of their own, and can thrive in a completely different assemblage. For instance, this would mean that Rolexes could be sold in fast food restaurants. This implies that a street food is autonomous, in a certain way. It is not unreasonable to assume that the street food itself would be expressed differently, in a new environment, a new assemblage, where different properties are tapped into through different interactions.

It is very difficult to take a stance within this discussion, as there are good arguments in favor of the linguistic approach that assumes that meanings are social and shaped in language and interaction. After all, I did not come across any methodology or approach that enabled me to separate matter and expression. There are also arguments in favor of DeLanda's approach, as street foods have proved to have

an influence on the street food sector. For example the Rolex has had a huge transforming power on how people cook and eat on the streets.

## **Chapter 4 – (Re-) assembling street food vending**

Since many new forms of street food vending emerge on the streets of Kampala every day, the street food sector is constantly changing. This chapter focuses on how creativity of street food vendors helps them to create profitable businesses. I will elaborate on how street food vendors maintain their businesses and how new forms of business re-assemble the street food sector. Within the re-assemblage process, the street food sector is changed in two dimensions: socio-material and spatio-temporal.

This chapter will consist out of two parts; first, a methodological part that further explains how I will interpret information from the field; and secondly, a part that contains analyses from examples in the field. I will finalize this chapter with a more theoretical conclusion.

Since assemblage theory calls for an approach that disregards dichotomies, such as between micro and macro, we divided the street food assemblage into three different levels. The first was the level of the foods themselves and this chapter will focus on the street food vendors, who integrate influences from without the assemblage in the foods and thus are actively assembling and re-assembling the street food sector through their agency and practices. Through innovation, the socio-material and spatio-temporal dimensions of the assemblage are re-interpreted and changed.

Over the course of this chapter, I will elaborate on how this is done. In order to do this, I have done participative research in different neighborhoods in the Kampala area, with different types of street food vendors. Some of them were traditional, others integrated different influences within their business. In order to understand how the newer ways of street food vending change the two dimensions, I will compare how these are shaped in different circumstances, that is, with different types of vending.

In order to consider the two dimensions, I have observed the practices and cultures surrounding the different types of vendors. So, for instance, what times do they work, who are their customers, how is their relation with the customers, and so on. So as to obtain a full image of the character of the vendors, their practices and culture, I have come back to the vendors at different times and spent a longer time with them. This way, I managed to see more of who they are and what they do.

### **Case studies and Ethnographies**

There are innumerable vendors on the streets in the Kampala area. In this section, I will elaborate on the diversity of vendors that I have found on the streets, as well as on how their practices shape or reshape the street food sector.

Most of the vendors on the streets are women, although there is a typical distinction between men's and women's tasks on the streets. You will rarely find men doing anything else than preparing Rolexes and pizza's or roasting meat of any type. Typical women's tasks are preparing the more traditional meals, roasting and boiling maize, frying samosas, et cetera.

In the late afternoon and at night, it is mostly male vendors you see on the streets. The majority of the women has already gone home, to either take care of the housework, or to start preparing the foods for the next day.

### Stella, Helen & Sharon

In the previous chapter, I already discussed the case of Helen and Sharon. They work together at Arua Park, where they sell their traditional dishes from Arua, their hometown. There is also another lady, Stella, whom I interviewed and observed. Although there are some differences in the businesses of Sharon and Stella, they are quite similar with respect to the socio-material and time-space dynamics.

Stella is a single woman, she lives in a neighborhood close by Arua Park, with some of her employees. She has five young women working for her, all in the age of 18-25. Stella moved to Kampala after she left her abusive husband and son and managed to save some money to make the first investments to start cooking on the streets. Slowly, through hard work and perseverance and the help of newly made friends, her business grew. Here, at Arua Park, there are strong connections between the vendors, who lend each other equipment or money and help one another out.

Stella started out as a simple tea vendor. Nowadays, she sells tea in the morning and freshly cooked traditional foods in the afternoon. There is a clear task division between the employees. When the ingredients arrive, some of them start to cut and chop the vegetables and meat. Others start making the *kalo*, which is a type of millet bread, a soft and sticky dough that is very filling but cheap. The employees earn 5 thousand shillings per day, which is about €1.30. This is very little money, also for Ugandan standards, but Stella also offers them a place to stay, next to their wage. Stella and the girls work from around 7 o'clock in the morning, until all the food is sold. On a busy day, the food is gone at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, on other days it might take until 4 o'clock.

Sharon and Helen also have five employees, all of them are girls of the same age as Stella's employees. They do not get a place to stay, but also earn 5000 shillings per day. Although there are no concrete price agreements in Arua Park when it comes to wages, it seems as if the business owners adjust the wages to those of the other people in Arua Park. This is an interesting phenomenon, although I haven't given it much attention during fieldwork.

Also Sharon and Helen sell different foods at different times. Like most of the ladies in Arua Park, they start off in the morning by selling tea. During the tea-time, Stella and Helen serve tea, while the other girls cook the foods for this afternoon. They sell the same foods as Stella – typical traditional Aruan foods. They start working from 7 o'clock in the morning, until around 8 o'clock at night. On busy days, they can leave earlier, when all the food is sold. Sharon tells me they earn a total of 250 thousand shillings per day. Stella tells me she earns between 200 and 400 shillings per day, depending on whether it is busy. Both women complain about the high costs for ingredients, such as meat, flour, vegetables and oil.

Times get difficult in the rainy season, since when it rains, most people do not want to come and eat outside. Also, sometimes people order and eat their foods and walk away without paying. This often happens on the busiest days. Though, there are many customers who eat on credit. They come daily and when they can't pay for a day or two, they can eat and pay later. Both Stella and Helen have a large deal of income from their daily customers, whom they know very well by now. There are also a lot of people who stop by for a quick meal and a chat. Some of them get their foods from different vendors each day; others are from outside of Kampala but desire to eat the foods they are used having at home.

### **Brenda**

In Bugolobi, you find many people sitting next to the main road, preparing small dishes. Especially roast maize is very popular, as it is convenient and to start a business, you need only a small amount of money. Brenda is one of the women roasting maize. She always sits on the same spot, with three other women, who also live in the police camp, a bit further down the road. Together, they roast and sell maize from 4 o'clock in the afternoon until 8 o'clock at night. The rest of the day, they spend on doing housework, such



*Picture 5: Brenda roasting maize*

as taking care of the children, the food and the laundry. They earn about 20-25 thousand UGX per day, which is a rather low wage. Brenda and her friends' husbands are all policemen, so there are two incomes per household.

The majority of the vendors in Bugolobi are like Brenda. They all sell maize, for 500 UGX, which is the equivalent of 0.13 Euros. Many of them struggle to get by, since the profit margin is rather small.

It has to be mentioned though, that most of the girls who are sitting next to the road, have a family at home and a household to take care of. Because of this, they are not able to work long days on the streets and invest more time in building a profitable, bigger business. Also, most of them have husbands in the police station, so they have two incomes.

Brenda's customers are people from all walks of life. Most of the time, people who are coming back from work stop by to have a cob of corn as a snack. Since Bugolobi is a rather diverse neighborhood, with people from many different standards of living, so is Brenda's client base.

### **Amza & Farouk**

Next to maize, the Rolex is a popular street food that is produced in large quantities. In contrast to maize, preparing and selling Rolexes is a typical men's task. Amza and Farouk are two brothers who run a Rolex stand together in Makerere-Kagugube. They saved money to invest in the material by working for other Rolex vendors. This way, they also learnt how to run a business and prepare a good Rolex.

Like most Rolex vendors, they do not start working before the late afternoon. This is not just because the Rolex is only eaten in the afternoon, but mainly because the KCCA is active during the day. After working hours, the officials are not on the streets chasing people away, so it is safer to work in the late afternoon and at night. Within slums and low-income neighborhoods, you will find Rolex vendors working even in the morning, which is possible simply because there are less checks by the KCCA.

Every day, like most Rolex vendors, they take the equipment from the shelter and bring it back when they are done working. This way, the equipment does not get stolen by other vendors or taken away by the KCCA. There is also a fixed structure in terms of space; everybody has their own spot on the street, for

which they have to pay. Amza and Farouk rent a small amount of space from the land owner. They decided not to be in their own neighborhood, as there was no space for rent there, and this landowner asks a reasonable price.

### *Joseph*

Joseph also works in Makerere Kagugube and has an unusual street food vending structure. Instead of a small stand which is taken away every day, he occupies a small metal cabin, like a container, which can be locked at the end of the day. He sells chips and chicken, amongst other foods, which he fries in electric frying pans. The cabin is connected to the electricity network, which is rather uncommon for street food vendors to have. The reason I consider Joseph as a street food vendor, is because most of the preparation of the foods still is done on the street and because the container is in close proximity to the street (a couple of meters).

As a child, Joseph used to sell bananas on the street. Later on, when he saved enough money, he started to fry and sell sausages on the roadside, right in front of the cabin he now occupies. He did this for six years, while he saved money. He partnered up with someone else to buy the material for the cabin, both contributed 1 million Ugandan shillings. He rents the cabin from the land owner, for about 200 thousand Ugandan shillings. The daily income, which he shares with his partner, is between 310 and 340 thousand shillings.

Joseph works from around 11 o'clock in the morning until he is out of food. Usually, this happens later at night, between 10 o'clock and midnight. Most of the customers are students from the neighborhood, just like Amza and Farouk's. Since Joseph has a fixed structure, he has less problems with the KCCA than most street food vendors.

### *Frank*

Frank works in Makerere Kikoni, a neighborhood similar to Kagugube and close to Makerere University. Many students and other young people with a middle income live here. There are only dirt roads here, but the buildings are made of bricks, which do indicate a certain standard of living. After all poorer areas, there are no brick buildings to be found, since they are more expensive to build. Frank owns a small shop on the street, where he sells snacks such as mandazi's, half cakes, chips and Rolexes. It is a small building with a corrugated sheet roof and a glass hatch, through which one of Frank's employees, a young lady, sells the snacks. The cooking takes place next to the structure, on the street. This structure is perhaps a hybrid between a shop and a street food, as the tiny building is on the street, yet it is a closed construction. Since the cooking takes place on the street, and the foods are as cheap and as accessible as any other street food, I will give this structure the benefit of the doubt and consider it to be a street food. It is a new form of selling street foods, however, and also highly unusual to find in Kampala.

Frank is quite innovative, when it comes to finding ways to sell street foods. He also has two guys working for him, who drive around the nearby neighborhoods on their motors, from which they sell the snacks. On the back of the motor, Frank has made a cabinet with glass windows, through which the customers can see what is for sale. In this cabinet on the motor, there are only smaller snacks, such as chapatti, half cakes, mandazi and samosas. One of the motors stays within Kikoni and drives around the neighborhood, the other one travels further, to Bwaise, at the border of Kampala city. Frank thought of this idea, because he wanted a larger group of customers. He saved a long time to invest in the bikes, but unfortunately they appear to cost more than expected. Frank thinks that the income through the bikes will rise, when he establishes a group of fixed customers and a good reputation. Ideally, the motors drive past the factories



and schools right after closing time, when people are on their way home and feeling hungry after a long day of work. The KCCA is active until 7 o'clock, but since the closing times are earlier, he takes the chance. Between 5 and 6, the guys are on their motorbikes, off to sell the foods. They have had issues with the KCCA, but every time they managed to get away through bribing. This is the only way to stay out of prison and to be able to keep your equipment, Frank says, so you will have to bribe them.

Frank works long days, from 6.30 o'clock in the morning, until midnight. He is happy to have this job, despite the long working hours, because it provides his family with a place to live and good food.



*Picture 6: Frank's Snacks establishment, with one of the bikers in front.*

### **Roadside vendors**

Just outside of Kampala's borders, you find groups of vendors together, cooking and selling their foods next to the roadside. People who are on their way and want to have a quick meal in their car or taxi bus, can buy things here. When a car parks on the free space next to the road, the vendors run up to it and stick their foods through the window. Most of the time, they sell roast meat, but you also see some of them selling chapatti or drinks or fruits. There are always vendors present, day or night, since there are always people passing by to sell foods to.



*Picture 7: roadside vendors, just outside Kampala*

This research has not focused on these vendors in particular, but they are worth mentioning since they have their own characteristic socio-material and spatial-temporal dynamics. They do distinguish themselves quite clearly from the vendors within Kampala. First of all, there is the continuity of supply towards the people who are passing by, regardless the time of the day. Secondly, they sell mainly to people who are still sitting in their car, so we also see some similarities with the fast-food drive throughs in Western countries.

### *Old Taxi Park*



*Picture 8: Old taxi Park*

In the old taxi park in Kampala, there are many street food vendors to be found, although not with the pots and pans that they are used to carry in the rest of Kampala. The taxi park is a bustling place, full of small taxi buses that leave from and to places within and without Kampala city. Between the buses, vendors walk around with buckets filled with foods that are prepared at home. This way, they can easily move to places within the (rather large) park, where there are a lot of people.

The largest difference between these vendors and those that are found in other parts of Kampala, is that they do not have a fixed place to stay. This means that the social structure, which is so deeply embedded within spatial arrangements, is therefore organized differently. For instance, when certain vendors sit next to each other, every day, a social relation is formed. This is mainly because there is a case of repetition, not only in terms of the same two people meeting, but also in terms of time and place. This notion of time and place is different in a place such as old taxi park, where there is no such fixed spatial notion, since the vendors walk around. During the fieldwork, this area has not been the focus of research, but nonetheless it is important to mention this, as it tells us something about the importance of the time-space dimension in the street food vending assemblage.

### *Gayaza Road/Kitetika*



*Picture 9: roasting meat at Kitetika*

Gayaza road is a long road that runs from within Kampala to the small town of Gayaza. Just outside Kampala, we find Kitetika, a place next to the road which is immensely popular and well-known for its roast meat. People sell especially goat, but you also find offals and roast chicken. From the afternoon until deep in the night, you will find – mainly men – roasting the meat. Everyone has his own stove and fixed place where they prepare their foods. The eaters who come for meat mainly come by car or taxi bus. They either take away the food or eat it, at one of the tables or in the car. Next to the stoves,

there are tiny cafés where people can buy drinks. People can also sit on the terrace and eat their meat. The street food vendors do not offer any drinks.

One of the vendors is Yasin. Since 3 years, he is roasting goat meat at Kitetika. Before coming to Kitetika, he worked for someone else, cooking offals. He then worked 6 months at the spot at Gayaza road for another vendor, to learn how to roast the meat. He used his income to take care of his family and to save some money to invest in a place at Kitetika. He bought the grill on credit and paid it back over the course of a couple of years. Now it is his. In the morning, Yasin goes off to buy meat, which he pays for at the end of the day, when he has earned his money. Most of the money he earns goes back into the business, as investments.



Picture 10: Yasin

Yasin makes long working days, usually from 8 o'clock in the morning, until 1 o'clock in the morning. He starts off by getting his materials, setting up his stove and roasting the meat. When the meat is done, he only needs to heat it up on the stove when a customer orders something later. The reason he works until very late, is that most of the customers come at night. Many of them go out and want to eat something, others come back from their working day in the city.



Picture 11: Cafés at Kitetika

## Street food vendors and assemblage theory

Street food vendors do not only play an active role in the street food sector in the Kampala area, they also shape it through their practices and interactions. I will now elaborate on how different types of street food vendors influence and are influenced by the street food sector, based on the ethnographies above.

### *Socio-material dimension*

The socio-material dimension basically entails all interactions among social components of the assemblage, as well as interactions between social and material components. By the latter, I refer to how the vendor makes use of material components, such as the foods and their equipment. As I noted in chapter 3, matter also has the ability to influence people, too. In this section, I will look into that a little closer.

Since the notion of performativity describes how interactions in the field take place, we will use this concept in order to further gain an understanding about the socio-material dimension. We have come across the main issue with the socio-material dimension before, since matter and expression are difficult to disconnect and analyze separately. What makes the concept of performativity so useful, is that a performance is always set in a material environment. Taking note of the environment while describing and analyzing the interactions, provide a description of interactions but without neglecting the material aspects.

## Performativity

As discussed in the theoretical framework, vendors become vendors when they engage in the practice of vending. While doing so, an act is performed – between vendors, cooks and eaters. It is the repetition of the performance that establishes people as vendors. The performance of cooking and vending is not a purely social act, since the spatial environment and material props influence the interactions. This causes street food vending to be different from place to place. This can be seen in different settings in Kampala as well.

For instance, when the vendors in Old Taxi Park sell their goods to people who are walking between or sitting in the buses, the interaction is quite different from when Brenda sells her roast maize. In the case of vendors walking around, the goal is to have only short and goal-oriented interactions with customers, that is, to sell the food and quickly move to another group of potential customers. There are very few occasions of daily customers in the case of mobile vendors. In the case of Brenda, the maize vending lady, there are often longer interactions, often with customers she knows well. The topic of conversation with customers often relates to the weather, family or the news – the visit of the Pope was the talk of the town in October and November.

It is noticeable that in the cases where the foods have less of a 'fast food' character, longer interactions and deeper conversations are more common. The vendor takes the role of not only a vendor, but also that of an acquaintance or friend, as interactions are often very personal and cover many different topics. For instance, at Arua Park, Sauda – one of the vendors – discusses that she misses her previous job as a hairdresser and wishes to do something else than vending. She is now working for her aunt, who needed some extra help with cooking.

The difference in the way the act of vending is performed in different circumstances, does not only depend on the vendor, the physical environment also plays a role. Like props in a play, material objects can play a role in determining the character and 'script' of the interaction. For instance, only very few Rolex vendors have chairs or benches where customers can eat their foods. The eaters buy their food and are off to a place where they can eat it – most of the time, this is at home, as it is not common for Ugandans to eat while walking or standing up and there are few opportunities to sit and eat in public. In the case of Gayaza road and Arua Park, eaters can actually sit down while eating, which lowers the barrier for interactions among eaters and with the vendors. This might also be an explanation for the observation that such vendors (where people have longer interactions) tend to have a larger group of fixed clients.

## Re-assembling the practice of street food vending

As there are many new initiatives on the streets, we can say that the practice of street food vending is re-assembled, like street foods themselves can be re-assembled, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

Traditionally, some of the street food vendors leave their equipment for the night, others bring it from home or a shelter. But any vendor works from the same place. They are static, as they seldom move around. The only exception to this, are the street food vendors at Old Taxi Park, who walk in between the buses to sell their goods, but even they are operating in only a very small area. The way Frank sells his food, so from a motorcycle, is a completely new way which also changes the role of place within the street food assemblage. After all, a motorcycle is mobile, it can move around to new customers – schools and offices right after closing time. Since Frank and his employees are free to move easily from one place to another, they alter the role of place within street food vending, as they come to the customer instead of the other way around which is the traditional practice. As Frank is the first in the Kampala area I have seen



vending from a motorcycle, it would be interesting to keep track on how this form of vending develops and how it changes the street food assemblage over time.

Another new form of vending was Joseph's container. It was not a house or restaurant, neither a regular street food stand, as Joseph was cooking and selling from inside the structure, using electricity. His employees were however peeling potatoes outside, on the street. So he is not distinctly a street food vendor, but he is far from a restaurant owner, as people buy their foods and walk away, just like they do at a Rolex vendor.

When we consider the street food assemblage on the vendors' level, we see a certain continuity. Street food vending is not only a cheap way to start a business, it also creates employment. The street food vendors that start out with a business, usually learned the skills while being employed by another vendor. The street food sector is reproducing itself in this way; spreading knowledge and skills, but also enabling people to start cooking themselves.

Also, the practice of street food vending itself is continuous, but dynamic. We see this in the case of Joseph and Frank, as they find new ways to sell the foods to the eaters. For instance, the Rolex has changed the street food sector, how people eat and when they eat. This tells us new forms of vending also have a potential to re-assemble the street food sector.

## Chapter 5

In this final chapter, I will elaborate on the network level of the street food assemblage in the Kampala area. The aim of this chapter is to show how collaboration, cohesion and specific governance arrangements cause the street food sector to be robust and dynamic, simultaneously. In the previous chapters, we considered a micro and meso level of the assemblage. The different levels, as discussed, interact and mutually influence one another. Therefore, in this chapter, elements and the dynamics of the previous chapters will be mentioned again, but now in the form of influence on the networks and collaborations within the sector.

The strength and creativity within the networks that appear on the streets, were some of the most striking characteristics of the street food sector. People not only rely on one another, they also work together and find creative solutions to common issues related to street food vending in Kampala. The strength of the links of people on the streets, as well as their ability to govern and arrange themselves, cause the 'informal' street food sector to be stronger. Also, through new forms of cooperation and governance, the street food sector is repeatedly re-assembled.

The goal of this chapter is to show how social relations (re-)assemble the street food sector and greatly contribute to its strength and versatility. This is done through illustrating the social practices within the street food sector in Kampala, of which networks are an important aspect.

Several concepts together, will form the red thread of this chapter. First of all, the notions of (de-)territorialization are specifically important, as they signify the degree of cohesion and strength within a network. In order to make the degree of territorialization and deterritorialization more visible, I will consider the properties of a network (DeLanda, 2006) as indicators. These properties are density, stability and solidarity. The cohesion within a network, and the dynamics involved are important because they provide information on what constitutes the robustness of the street food sector. After all, the network hinges on social relations, although material components play an important part.

Secondly, performativity is important, like in the previous chapter. Analyzing performances of collaboration and interaction, provide insights on how the actors actively shape the character of the street food sector. By this I mean, that the character of the performances are signifiers for the culture that is related to the street food sector, or even to specific type of foods. This in turn teaches us about how different types of relations and interactions are involved within the street food sector.

In order to analyse the sector systematically, I will consider several case studies that illustrate the importance of social networks within the street food sector, and show as well how these networks function. First of all, I will discuss some of the interpersonal networks in Kampala area. Then, I will inform about individual challenges that vendors face are tackled through cooperation. Secondly, I will take it up one level and elaborate on how several groups of vendors govern themselves. Finally, I will discuss some case studies in which the functioning of networks within the street food sector in the Kampala area will be extensively discussed and analyzed.

One of the recurring themes in the different paragraphs, will be the spatial arrangement of the vendors. Fieldwork has shown that the social relations are embedded in spatial arrangements. Where people sit, tells a lot about who they are, with whom they interact and what their role is within the street food sector. So to say, the spatial arrangement of the location of different vendors is a physical representation of social structures.

## Interpersonal networks in Kampala area

As we have seen in the previous chapter, none of the street food vendors in this research seem to work in a vacuum. Some collaborate more than others, but all of them need suppliers and customers in order to exist. The character of a network is defined by its links – so how the components relate to one another. The total of links, is the network, which can have properties of its own, which we will discuss below.

DeLanda (2006) distinguishes three properties that links within a network can have; strength, presence and reciprocity. Strength signifies the frequency of interactions, presence or absence indicate the border of a network and reciprocity implies the equality of favors and obligations within a link.

These properties differ per case. For instance, in Arua Park, people interact a lot, they chat while cooking, lend each other equipment or money. The interactions are recurring between those who prepare the same foods and sit together, although different types of vendors talk together. So, we can say there are different interpersonal networks present at Arua Park. The level of interaction among Rolex vendors is a lot less frequent, as Rolex vendors tend to work independently and do not sit together. However, they generally have strong links with their suppliers, as vendors tend to buy from the same vendor, and sometimes buy on credit. So although they do not have strong links with their fellow Rolex vendors, there is a high level of reciprocity and loyalty between them and their suppliers.

Interpersonal networks thus differ per case. This is important to realize, since this tells us again, that not only the vendors are heterogeneous, but also the interpersonal networks they operate in. In order to create understanding about street food networks as an assemblage, it is therefore important to consider them separately, instead of generalizing them.

## Cooperation for survival

Many street food vendors face the same threats, such as fines, imprisonment and eviction from the street. They also tend to have a barrier for investing in new, but necessary equipment. In many of such cases, collaboration solves the problem, or at least helps minimizing risks.

On the streets all throughout Kampala, you see many street food vendors sitting close to each other. Vendors of the same kind seem to flock together: you see ladies roasting maize, women selling tea, guys roasting meat, all of them in separate groups. At first sight this might seem counterproductive; after all, when you are the only vendor around, there is less competition. However, working and sitting together has many benefits for all parties involved.

For instance, at Arua Park, there are many different people working as a street food vendor. You have those who roast meat, who sell tea, those who sell samosas, mandazi's and other snacks. Within Arua Park, though, there is a structure to be seen – each of these different foods are produced at a certain place within Arua Park. The tea ladies occupy a designated place, and so do the others.

One of the ladies at Arua Park is Lydia, who sells roasted peanuts. She sits together with other ladies who sell peanuts. First, the peanuts are cooked in the peel and then they are roasted in a pan. The pans are shared, and so is lunch - they get a plate with millet bread and beans from other street food vendors in Arua Park, and eat it together. Lydia makes a daily profit of about 8 thousand Ugandan shillings, which is only a marginal income. She is a single mother, which makes it even more difficult to get by – and more necessary to press as much costs as possible.

Also in Bugolobi, we find Brenda who is roasting maize together with some other ladies. They occasionally share equipment. Also, anyone who wants to sit with them has to pay a small amount of money every week, 3000 Ugandan shillings. In the case someone from the KCCA comes to send them away from the streets, they offer them their savings as a bribe. This way, they can face the threat of eviction, fining and imprisonment from the local government. Another reason to sit together, is simply to become known as 'that place where you can get roast maize'. Usually, people tend to go to the same lady for maize, but when she cannot be there, there are always other ladies who can sell the maize to this customer instead.

Furthermore, all throughout Kampala there are price agreements to which all street food vendors must comply – not because they will otherwise be punished, but mainly because it is not considered decent to either charge a lower or higher price for the foods. For a Rolex with two eggs, you will always pay 1500 Ugandan shillings, for a cob of roast or boiled maize, you will pay 500. Roast goat meat is 3000 Ugandan shillings a piece and for a thousand shillings, you get four samosas. These price agreements are made to 1) safeguard a fair competition between street food vendors and 2) to make sure that all vendors receive a fair price. When someone would lower their price, customers would go to this person only, which would then force other vendors to lower their prices, too. This might eventually push them into more poverty, as street food vending is not always that profitable, especially in the cases where relatively simple foods are sold, such as maize or mandazi's.

Spatial arrangements appeared to be a crucial part in some cases within the street food sector in Kampala. At Kitetika, the spot at Gayaza road where people roast meat, there are also cafés. Tamale, the head of the committee that governs the Kitetika street food vending spot, tells me that many people who order meat, sit and eat it at the cafés. The vendors and cafés have an agreement: customers can only sit down at the cafés terrace if they also order something to drink. Since goat meat is rather tough to eat without something to drink – it is quite dry – the cafés earn a lot of money by supplying drinks. The cafés benefit from being in close proximity to the vendors.

It is not just street food vendors who benefit from being near to each other. In many cases you see street food vendors who are operating from a short distance with their suppliers. At Arua Park, there is a man who sells coals to basically everyone there with a stove. Amza and Farouk buy their vegetables from the lady across the road, less than 5 meters away from their stand. Brenda buys her maize at the nearest market, which is a five minute walk. Next to the shores of Lake Victoria you find many vendors who sell fried fish, which they buy directly from the fishermen when they come back ashore. There are numerous examples to be found that underpin the importance of accessibility.

## **Governance within the street food sector in the Kampala area**

One of the most remarkable findings within the 'informal' street food sector, is that there are also forms of seemingly formal governance and arrangements. I will discuss two institutions within the street food sector in Kampala and try to understand how they influence and re-assemble the street food sector. The first case, Arua Park, has a committee that governs the place, not just the vendors, but also the shops and restaurants. The committee consists out of municipality employees and not street food vendors. This is not the case at Gayaza Road, where the street food vendors have formed a committee themselves to govern and control the place.

In the case of Arua Park, Muzamil is the chair of the committee. He tells me that the municipality officers in the committee do not have the task of evicting people from the streets, that part is covered by another department of the municipality. The task of the committee, is to make sure everyone – the shop and



restaurant owners, but also the street (food) vendors who are there illegally – pays a weekly amount of money. This money is then spent on maintenance of Arua Park, such as clearing away the garbage. Also in the case of disputes, the committee intervenes. Sometimes, shop or restaurant owners, or street (food) vendors in Arua Park get in disagreements, which are settled in the traditional way, by discussing and asking feedback from older people. Though, sometimes people end up in disagreements they cannot solve themselves. They then go to the committee to settle the dispute and make up new agreements.

The committee in Arua Park, is not only made up of municipality employees, it also has local representatives. It exists out of ten people; a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, a superintendent who makes sure everybody behaves properly and representatives for different social groups on Arua Park. The representatives are there for the youth, women and elderly. The group of elderly is rather small, since not many people here reach an age of over 50, Muzamil tells me. Their experience and wisdom, however, is highly valued and therefore they have an important say about the goings of Arua Park. This way, traditional conduct is incorporated within a more formal way of governance. The rules and regulations of the committee are plenty, but none of them are written down – the code of conduct is communicated by word of mouth and everybody is considered to know what they are allowed and not allowed to do. Most of these rules “speak for themselves”, as you are not allowed to steal or make fights, for example.

Although street food vending is illegal, it is not the committee’s task to evict or punish people who do it. Instead, the vendors are tolerated, but they have to carry the risks themselves. Muzamil tells me that anytime a new vendor comes, he tries to talk them out of it. He also regularly organizes meetings and stresses the risks of being a street food vendor; it is bad for your health, it doesn’t make too much money, there are high risks involved. Imprisonment sentences due to street vending can be up to 1.5 years. People nonetheless are stubborn, he says, and continue to do what they are doing anyway. It surprises him that people tend to come back again and again, after being fined or even imprisoned. He expects Arua Park to be attacked soon by the KCCA, which wants to clear the city of street vendors. This has happened before, but Arua Park is full of vendors again, as if nothing has happened (New Vision, 2013). He thinks this is the case that people do not see any other ways to make some money, that they are hopeless.

In Gayaza Road, at Kitetika to be more precise, there are many vendors roasting meat together. Just like in Arua Park, there is a committee that governs the place, but in contrast, it consists out of vendors and café owners – not municipality officers. All of them do this as a volunteer, next to their full time job at Kitetika. Tamale is the president of the committee. The committee exists out of 15 people; the president, vice-president, sanitation officer, secretary, mobiliser, treasurer, uncertainties manager, female representative, male representative, café representative. The sanitation officer makes sure everybody follows the code of conduct concerning the hygiene. Everybody has to wear a white coat, handle the food with care and wash their hands regularly. The mobiliser is the person responsible for arranging meetings and get togethers and is also responsible for the publicity. The local newspaper wrote about Kitetika quite negatively some time ago, Tamale tells me that the article was incorrect. In order to avoid it, you must contact the mobiliser first if you want to publish an article about Kitetika. The uncertainties manager is the person responsible for unforeseen events happen, such as a death or an accident. His task is to contact the right people and inform them.

There is also a subcommittee, which is responsible for the daily conduct at Kitetika. It consists out of four people. There is a superintendent, like at Arua Park that oversees if everybody behaves according to the

rule. The rules are similar to those at Arua Park, unwritten, but also rather straightforward. People are not allowed to swear or use vulgar language, they need to be polite and friendly – to both other people at Kitetika as well as customers. There is someone who checks if everybody is dressed according to the dress code; that is, a white coat and good personal hygiene. There is someone responsible for making sure everybody follows the law and more formal agreements, such as price agreements. There is also an assistant who helps the committee out in case they are busy. In the case the code is not followed, people are warned. In the case they still not improve after a warning, they are suspended for a week. After that, they may come back if they improve. If they don't, they may either be fined or sent away.

Last week, Doreen, one of the vendors (and the only female roasting vendor at Kitetika) got a warning for talking to me. I did not know I had to ask permission to the committee, next to just Doreen, to ask questions and to take notes. She was lucky, but next time, they told her, she will get either a fine of 40 thousand Ugandan shillings or become suspended for a week.

Everybody in the committees have a job at Kitetika, everybody has a different business – being a committee member is a volunteering job. Tamale sells roast goat, others sell chicken, chapatti's, drinks or are café owners. There is also one of the guys of the boda stage involved in the committee, as there is always a group of boda's available for customers. This way, synergies are created. For instance, a boda stage on a popular, but rather distant spot for street foods, benefits both the boda drivers as well as the street food vendors. The representatives in the committee make sure people can work together and next to each other without problems.

When there is a dispute, they are being settled by the representatives or person responsible within the committee. Usually, this is done through a good conversation. In case this does not work, they take it up to the chairman, Tamale. In case Tamale cannot solve the dispute either, he refers these people to the sub county chief. Examples of conflicts are; fights, bad customer service or food quality or any kind of customer complaint in general, hygiene issues, no decent clothing, breaking other people's property (on accident).

Similar to Arua Park, every vendor at Kitetika has to pay a weekly amount of money to have the garbage removed and to cover for costs that are made when maintaining the area. However, in contrast, street food vending is not disapproved of. Instead of discouraging people from starting to vend foods on the street, the committee at Kitetika mainly focuses on 'how to make them do it right'.

### **How committees re-assemble street food vending**

The main idea about street food vending in modernization theory is, as any 'informal' practice, that it is disorderly and backward; eventually as modernization will kick in, such 'informal' practices will cease to exist. The fact that committees exist, prove the exact opposite – forms of governance that are used in formal organizations, businesses and so on, are also applied within the informal street food sector. This has an effect on street food vending.

The distinction between formal and informal fades, as more rules structure the assemblage. The fact that this happens, also signifies the futility of these two concepts, as they do not do justice to the complexity of the street food assemblage within Kampala area. I have already expressed my critical stance toward the notion of informality on p. 3. Instead of considering a sector or market informal, it would be better to assess the degree of territorialization. I will elaborate on this below.

Following DeLanda, there are two articulations of the components that cause a network to be more cohesive. The first is territorialization – these are larger dynamics that cause people to be more close and relying on one another. An example of this is people creating synergies, like the street food vendors, café owners and boda drivers at Kitetika do by working together. The second is the degree of coding. Codes are rules and regulations within a network. The more codes there are, the tighter the network is and the greater the degree of social control. It would be oversimplifying to speak of informal versus informal, as formal implies that there is order, there are rules and regulation (next to paying taxes). As we see in the street food sector in Kampala, informal does not imply that there are no rules, so this black and white distinction between formal and informal is not applicable here. Instead, it would be better to consider the degree of regulation and order, than those concepts that suggest that 'informal' activities are always chaotic and unregulated. So basically, the street food sector is re-assembled through regulation, which blurs the boundaries of the notions of (in-) formality.

### **Performativity among vendors**

Also cooperation is a performance, as in order to reach a goal together, every vendor has to comply with certain behavior and rules. So rules are not only set together, they are also performed together. Acting out a set of rules means that people interact according to certain procedures. For instance, a vendor does not simply sell his foods to customers, he also asks them to choose which piece of meat they would like to have, he has some small talk about the weather, meanwhile he regularly washes his hands to ensure hygiene, et cetera. You see this happening with different vendors, all across the city. Apparently there are also rules that are more universal than the ones you see at Kitetika or Arua Park.

The procedures that the vendors go through when someone breaks a rule, are also a performance. Everybody has a different role within disputes on the street – those who are involved in a dispute act differently from those that settle it, for instance. During dispute settlement and negotiations in such a case, everybody has to comply with different roles. The chief leads the discussion and determines the consequences, and the others have a chance to tell their part of the story. There are unwritten, commonly known rules during dispute settlement – you may not use violence, you should listen to the chief, et cetera. As such, we can say that the roles of different people within a street food vending network are differently shaped and also signify that everybody knows how to behave.

The fact that performativity within a street food network is so important tells us different things. It signifies the cohesion within the network, as well as the degree of organization and regulation. It tells us about the culture and the different types of roles that are played within the street food vending 'theatre'. The fact that different people fulfill different roles, also signifies that there is heterogeneity and hierarchy within the street food sector – something that is not acknowledged by the traditional notion of informality.

### **Social networks and spatial arrangements**

In street food vending assemblages, we see structures, as discussed above and in the previous chapters. This structure is not only social, it is also spatial. In the examples of synergies and cooperation for survival that I have discussed, space is a very important aspect. People who collaborate tend to be in relative close proximity to one another. Also certain types of vendors often sit together. This has different reasons, next to convenience. For instance, at Kitetika mainly men work. Women generally do not roast next to the men, the few who do may expect harassment, as women are not supposed to roast meat.

I will now further explore the importance and role of space in street food vending in the Kampala area through a case study about Wandegeya market. Wandegeya is an area within Kampala and its market was

used to be very well known for its street foods. Street food vendors used to be all over the area and people would travel across town to get their food from them as it has a good reputation for taste and quality.

As the municipality considers street (food) vending unwanted, they set up a plan to remove the vendors from Wandegeya. The vendors were swept off the streets and on their previous spot, the municipality built a large concrete complex, where vendors could rent a spot for cooking and selling food. The market was opened in October, 2013, and has space for about 1200 vendors of all kinds – not just foods but also clothes, groceries and other commodities. The idea is that vendors hire such a stand from the KCCA, where they can cook and sell their foods, or simply sell other goods such as fresh produce or clothing. The KCCA makes sure the place is maintained well and provided with water and electricity. Two years later, a large quantity of the market stands are still unoccupied, although previously, there were so many street (food) vendors at Wandegeya (reportedly 800) (Ugandan radio network, 2013).



*Picture 12: Wandegeya market*



*Picture 13: Wandegeya market inside, during the opening (New Vision, 2013)*

(Note: unfortunately, I could not take pictures inside, there are more vendors present nowadays).

So, what difference does such a new, concrete market structure make – after all, the only difference is that the vendors are inside, sheltered away from the fumes and dirt from the road. But apparently, it is not so simple, or vendors would have been eager to rent a space inside. There are few important aspects to consider.

First of all, street food vendors agreed on a market price. In the case of higher rent, like here at Wandegeya market, this cannot be compensated by asking a higher price for the foods. So, the profits of the vendors drop. Also, street foods are often a convenience food, which are grabbed along the way. The fact that the vendors in Wandegeya market are further away from the street is an issue – the foods are less accessible.

Within Wandegeya market, there are not many customers to be found - unlike the open air markets in Kampala, they are not bustling places.

The fact that this new spatial structure does not work has partly a financial reason for the vendors. But the eaters are apparently not willing to walk a bit further, into the building, to get food that is produced in a more food safe context, where dust and fumes from the streets do not pollute the food. The prices, after all, are still the same. The initial idea of the KCCA was that more people would be attracted to Wandegeya market than to street foods, because it is more orderly and hygienic (New Vision, 2013). But among the consumers, Wandegeya market is not popular at all. This leads us to the conclusion that the fact that the spatial structure is altered does – at least partly – explain the unpopularity of Wandegeya market.

We can conclude from this that accessibility and convenience are two main aspects that cause street foods to be so popular, next to the low prices. Eating culture is not only embedded in the foods and eating habits, but are apparently also translated into the spatial arrangement of the city. (See also Carolyn Steel's book *The Hungry City*, 2013).

### **Spatial structures**

As we have seen in the example of Wandegeya market, space plays a determining role within the street food assemblage. Also in places such as Arua Park and on the roadsides in Bugolobi, we see that vendors of the same kind sit together. The suppliers of ingredients are often in close proximity to the vendors – on the shores of Lake Victoria there are many stands where you can buy and eat freshly fried tilapia fish. At Arua Park, but also in Kagugube and Kikoni there are people who sell charcoal for cooking, wherever there are many people cooking on the streets.

We have also seen this phenomenon does not simply occur because of convenience only; there are also social reasons for a certain spatial arrangement of vendors. Sitting together means working together, which ultimately leads to a higher chance of surviving on the market. Also, having different types of businesses together can create synergies, and thus more customers and higher profits. This tells us that social structures and dynamics are expressed in spatial arrangements.

## Conclusion and discussion

In order to provide insights in the general research question, I will briefly elaborate on the most important findings for every chapter. The general research question was: How do practices of (re-)assemblage define and sustain the street food sector in Kampala area, Uganda? In order to answer this general research question, I divided it into three sub-questions, which together lead us to the final conclusion of the research. In this chapter, I will not only elaborate on the most important findings, but also discuss the (ethical) issues and other weaknesses of this research.

*How can street foods be understood from an assemblage perspective?*

This question was covered in chapter 3. Most importantly, we need to acknowledge that the foods themselves are also assemblages; primarily of ingredients, but also of culture and creativity and agency, as street food vendors proved themselves creative and able of innovation. This leads us to a second important point – street foods are not static, they are subject to change. There is room for flexibility and interpretation when it comes to preparing street foods. Eventually, these interpretations, such as the pizza, become more integrated within the street food sector and thus more common to eat.

During the development of this chapter, I stumbled across a rather difficult ontological problem. Because, although DeLanda states the opposite, matter and expression are not that easy to separate from each other. This causes implications for understanding street foods in Kampala as an assemblage since what a street food is, in essence, is difficult to grasp. The discussion on the distinction between matter and expression has been an ongoing one for many years as it is a complicated issue. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find a well fitted solution in this thesis, although DeLanda seems to provide a brave attempt himself by introducing the notions of relations of exteriority and interiority (2006). It is perhaps an interesting starting point for a more theoretical thesis on social ontology.

Furthermore, although the street food sector in Kampala appears to be dynamic, strong social cohesion can keep it together and constant. We have seen this in the example of Arua Park, where a new social and spatial context appeared to have a marginal influence on the practices of cooking and vending Aruan foods. This is an interesting observation, as it shows the robustness of the street food sector.

One of the main conclusions we can take from this chapter, is that foods and the assemblage develop simultaneously, there is a certain co-evolution. When the foods are changed, the street food assemblage at large (its socio-material and spatio-temporal dynamics) adapts to it. The same vice versa seems to happen. We see this in the cases of the Rolex in particular, as they influence the way people eat. On the other hand, the changing food and eating culture on the streets of Kampala makes room for more innovations, such as the pizza. After all, the Rolex caused 'eating on the go' to be more socially acceptable, which causes other fast street foods to be more easily introduced within the street food sector in Kampala.

Also, we see that the street food sector is embedded into social practices. People vend foods, but there are rules such as price agreements and social arrangements like buying foods on credit. Apparently there is an array of rules, norms, agreements (whether or not black on white) and values that both eaters and vendors adhere to. In the next chapters, there is a more social approach to understanding the street food sector in Kampala as an assemblage.

*How do street food vendors play a role in (re-)assembling the street food sector?*

Street food vendors are abundant in Kampala, but there are very few identical street food vendors to be found. In every neighborhood, you find different manifestations of street food vending – some walk around with buckets pre-prepared foods, others prepare it on the streets and there are also vendors who provide a place to sit down and eat.

Along with this large diversity of vendors, comes a large diversity of performances that are carried out on the streets. These differ from place to place, as a certain cultural and spatial context demands for different interactions. Where people sit together, for example, there is logically more interaction among consumers, but also among the consumer and vendor. Where street foods are sold 'fast food style', there are less personal and shorter interactions to be observed.

New initiatives of street food vending alter eating habits, as well as the spatio-temporal dynamics of the street food sector. People eat while walking (which was culturally unacceptable before), people eat 'on the go'. It is interesting to see what will happen in the near future, if initiatives such as mobile vending off a motorcycle will continue to become more common. People might even become used to street foods coming to them, which makes it even more accessible and convenient than it was.

We can conclude that street food vendors have the agency and creativity to (re-)assemble the street food sector, which is done through innovating their ways of vending. Also, the heterogeneous and complex character of the street food sector became especially clear in this chapter. Furthermore, there is the continuity of street food vending as knowledge is shared and people easily enter the street food vending market. The dynamic character of the street food assemblage leaves room for street food vendors to innovate. The innovations that cause the street food sector to change, apparently do not cause the street food sector to cease to be as they create new forms of employment and demands for new foods. Therefore, the street food assemblage in Kampala can be considered a continuous hub of creativity and a manifestation of agency.

*How do social practices (re-)assemble the street food sector?*

This sub-question focused on a more macro scale of street food vending. Interpersonal networks appeared to be very different per neighborhood and type of vendors. At Arua Park, there are many interpersonal networks in one place, consisting mainly out of vendors of the same kind. These networks are very strong, as there are many collaborations. In Kagugube, for example, this is different, as the Rolex vendors do not work together as much. Their networks are more heterogeneous, as they are closer with their suppliers.

Forms of cooperation can be found all over Kampala, although in many different forms, varying from price agreements, but also forms of self-governance. Cooperation is a sign of strong links and social control. Self-governance is a more 'formal' form of cooperation, within the 'informal' sector and causes the dichotomy between the notions of formal and informal to fade. Cooperation is first and foremost a strategy for survival and it proved to be rather successful, as observations and interviews have proved. Working together creates synergies for different entrepreneurs, both street food vendors and other types of entrepreneurs benefit from it. An example of this is the goat roasting spot at Gayaza Road, Kitetika. It is

therefore important to acknowledge that the street food sector is not as unruly and chaotic as is assumed by many scholars and municipality officers.

Also, the spatial environment appears to be very important in street food vending. Social structures are expressed in a spatial arrangement, which again signifies how much expressive and spatial (matter) aspects of the street food sector in Kampala are intertwined. Strikingly, street food vendors in Kampala sit together. Those that roast meat sit together, those that roast maize. This might seem counterproductive, as this leads to a loss of competitive advantages for the vendors. However, the emphasis for street food vendors in Kampala is not on increased competition, instead they aim for cooperation which helps them to subsist their place on the streets. Finally, it is important to remark that apparently convenience and accessibility appear to be more important for the eaters than issues such as hygiene. This shows how important the spatial arrangements are, for those who vend and for those who eat.

## **A critical review on the research**

### **Theoretical implications**

The assemblage theory has proved to be a useful tool in understanding the dynamics of the street food sector in Kampala. It helped us understand the street food sector in such a way that transcends oversimplifying dualisms such as formal versus informal and micro versus macro. As such, we have been able to look at the street food sector in Kampala in a more nuanced way than has been done before, in as far as the workings of street foods have been considered from a sociological stance. However, there are some theoretical issues as well. The most prominent one has already been discussed into length, as the distinction between matter and expression caused some ontological issues in the course of this thesis.

There are also some other issues related to the assemblage theory. First of all, the assemblage theory does not necessarily consider power inequality within the assemblage. There are respondents who are being suppressed by their employers (mainly the girls who are employed at Arua Park). They get low wages and have very little possibilities to improve their living standards. Also, although the heterogeneous character of the street food sector has been elaborated on several times, the assemblage theory does not provide tools to understand why certain differences are there. Why maize ladies have less opportunities for growing their business than meat roasters, is not clear and will be difficult to discover, using the assemblage theory. The problem with assemblage theory here, is that it acknowledges heterogeneity, but does not necessarily explain it. For instance, assemblage theory does not mention that certain inequalities (such as gender) may cause issues.

There are also some issues with the research itself that caused some challenges that are still unsolved. The main one is that there is very little information available on the development of street foods in Uganda, let alone the rest of Africa. Most literature that is available, concerns health and safety issues. DeLanda stresses the importance of historical development in order to truly be able to understand the workings of a certain assemblage. The fact that such historical background is insufficient in this thesis, is something I cannot do much about, but still a pity.

### **Ethical considerations**

As a researcher in a different cultural and linguistic environment, I have encountered several issues in the field. First of all, most people did not speak English (very well). For this reason, I did my research with the help of a translator, who translated the answers out of Luganda for me. Luganda is the local language spoken in Kampala. This means that the answers that the respondents gave, were interpreted twice; first



by my translator and then by me. My translator usually gave me shorter answers than she received, which means that probably some information got lost during the process of translating. I could have hired a second translator and ask the same questions twice, but due to financial reasons and a lack of time this was unfortunately not possible.

Also, I was always seen as the *mzungu*, the white girl. I will always be an outsider to the street food vendors of Kampala, although some of them became good friends while I was there. I learned that not everybody was always completely honest with me (some people told me they did not have any income, or owned complete shops, which all was not true). This makes it difficult to truly rely on all the answers the vendors gave me, although most stories were plausible and congruent. In order to solve this problem, I only used the stories which were plausible in this thesis, although it is interesting to understand why some people lied to me (and what that says about the street food sector in Kampala). Luckily, this meant I only had to leave two stories out, but this also means I have no absolute guarantee all my other respondents were honest.

All in all, this was a challenging research to do, and I have truly enjoyed doing it. I hope my research is a valuable addition to the emerging discussion on how to feed growing cities and on street foods.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Respondents

I spoke to many people in the field, most of these conversations were one time only. Here is an overview of only the most important respondents, whose stories are covered in this thesis.

Name	Neighborhood	Foods they sell
Amza and Farouk	Kagugube	Rolexes, Kikomando and chapatti
Freddie 'Life Chapatti'	Kikoni	Rolex, Pizza, Kikomando, Chapatti
Sharon and Helen	Arua Park	Aruan Foods (greens, kalo, meat and fish), tea in the mornings
Stella	Arua Park	Aruan Foods (greens, kalo, meat and fish), tea in the mornings
Brenda	Bugolobi	Roast maize
Joseph	Kagugube	Chips, fried chicken
Frank 'Frank's snacks'	Kikoni	Mandazi, Samosa, Chapatti, Half-cakes
Roadside vendors	Just outside the Eastern borders of Kampala	Roast Meat, Chapatti
Old Taxi Park vendors	Old Taxi Park	Grasshoppers, Mandazi, Half-cakes, Samosas
Yasin	Gayaza Rd/Kitetika	Roast meat

### Appendix 2: Topic lists interviews

As this list is only used for semi-structured interviews, many topics have been discussed during fieldwork, which are not necessarily included in this list.

- Work – what does a regular working day look like
- Relations and interaction with others (family, friends, neighbors, customers)
- Income and profit
- Life history
- How did you become a street vendor?
- What do you struggle with during work?
- What do you think is good about your job?
- With whom do you work together?
- Do you share equipment or food?
- Who are your eaters? (How) do you know them?
- Who are your colleagues? How do you know them?
- Where do you buy your equipment?
- Where do you buy your ingredients?
- Where do you buy your own food?
- What do you do when you are facing issues?
- Do others come to you when they have issues?
- Why do you sit in this particular spot?
- Where do you live? With whom?
- Does your husband/wife have an income?
- Do you have any children?
- ...