Small-Small
Moral Economy and the Marketspace in Northern Ghana
Ulrik Jennische

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Friday 7 September 2018 at 10.00 in Ahlmannsalen, Geovetenskapens hus, Svante Arrhenius väg 12.

Abstract
Over the past decade, the Ghanaian government has tried to include and accommodate the many people working in the so-called informal economy. This formalization process is in line with a global market-driven development discourse. The small-scale traders selling their goods from marketplaces and along the streets in major cities have been of particular interest.

While the Ghanaian government defines these actors as working in an “informal sector” and thus beyond the formal political and economic system, it simultaneously targets them with welfare services and various policies with the purpose of including them in the creation of a modern welfare state and shaping them into moral and entrepreneurial citizens.

In Tamale in northern Ghana, years of political neglect, violence, and structural adjustment have led to small-scale traders taking over streets, sidewalks, and infrastructure, which has created a boundless and dynamic marketspace that far exceeds the delimited and politically defined marketplaces. For the state, therefore, much of the formalization process is about restoring the control and power of public space through evictions and relocations of traders. In conjunction with the inclusive welfare services, this demonstrates the contradictions entailed in the politics of informality.

The study is based on an ethnographic fieldwork among small-scale traders in northern Ghana with a specific interest in the events that occur at the intersection where state, market, and citizenship meet. By asking what it means to be a trader in this contradictory process of formalization, the dissertation aims to understand this transformative moment in Ghana’s political and economic history.

In this study the emic notion of small-small is used to frame the norms of gradual progress and letting others in that define the moral economy of small-scale trade. Norms, values, and obligations generate trust and solidarity within the marketspace. But more than that, small-small produces a form of politics against an obstructive and unreliable state and it guides traders into the future by shaping dreams, aspirations, and possibilities. Situated in traders’ daily lives, work, and relationships, and through the small-small lens, this thesis investigates the underlying moralities of formalization. It describes the politics of the Ghanaian state, which in its attempt to create an inclusive welfare society, struggles to both protect the moral dynamics of small-scale trade while adhering to the norms and standards of an open liberalized economy.

Keywords: Ghana, small-scale trade, moral economy, informality, space and place, citizenship.

Stockholm 2018
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:diva-157448

ISBN 978-91-7797-234-1
ISSN 0347-0830

Department of Social Anthropology
Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm
SMALL-SMALL
Ulrik Jennische
Small-Small
Moral Economy and the Marketspace in Northern Ghana

Ulrik Jennische
Till Karla och Kleo
Contents

List of Figures ........................................................................................................... iii
Abbreviations ............................................................................................................. iv
Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................... v

A Small-Small Introduction ....................................................................................... 1
  Tamale ......................................................................................................................... 9
  Studying the Tamale Marketspace .............................................................................. 12
  Overview of the Study ............................................................................................... 16

PART ONE

1| Understanding Small-Small .................................................................................. 19
  Politics of Informality ............................................................................................... 19
  Moral Economy .......................................................................................................... 24
  Place and Space in the Market .................................................................................. 30

2| Tamale Marketspace in the Making ...................................................................... 37
  Navigating the Tamale Marketspace ........................................................................ 39
  The Northern Territories and the Dakpema ............................................................... 45
  Abudus, Andanis, and Party-Politics in Tamale ......................................................... 47
  Democracy Increasing Polarization .......................................................................... 52
  Marketspace Expansion, Neoliberalism, and Formalization ..................................... 55
  Conclusions .............................................................................................................. 61

PART TWO

3| Claiming and Reclaiming in the Marketspace ..................................................... 65
  Buying, Renting, and Inheriting Shops in the Central Market ................................... 66
  Negotiations and Relations in the Streets ................................................................. 71
  The Assembly Reclaims Control ............................................................................. 75
  Congested Streets and Stations .............................................................................. 77
  Extensions, Congestion, and Fires in the Central Market ......................................... 83
  Conclusions .............................................................................................................. 91

4| Norms, Outlook, and Breakdown ........................................................................ 95
  Gradual Progress and Humbleness .......................................................................... 96
  Letting Others In .................................................................................................... 98
  Moral Breakdowns ................................................................................................. 101
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Solidarity in Space</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trading Across Divisions</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associations and Politics</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buying and Selling on Credit</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Susu and State Regulation</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Pressures of Moral Obligations</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling Free</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spatial Permanence</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART THREE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Small-Small Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Unreliable State</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Polarizing State</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Obstructive State</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Inclusive State</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small-Small Citizenship</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Situated Possibilities</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth and Employment</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trading Youth</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waiting in the Street</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education Mentality</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trading Parents</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside of Africa</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joining a Political Party</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion: Small-Small in Time and Space</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Morality and Practice of Small-Small</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formalization and Citizen-Making</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permanence and Change</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sammanfattning på svenska</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Ghana ................................................................. ........................................................................8
Figure 2. Map of Tamale ............................................................ ........................................................................38
Figure 3. Tamale Central Market and the butcher house .................. ................................................................43
Figure 4. Tamale Supermarket ................................................... .......................................................................43
Figure 5. A street trader opens a bale of trousers in High Street .......... ..................................................................58
Figure 6. Kuku Market ............................................................... ........................................................................79
Figure 7. Kalpohin Market ........................................................... .......................................................................79
Figure 8. TaMA decongesting the streets of Tamale ......................... ....................................................................84
Figure 9. The main road in the Central Market after the decongestion .... .................................................................84
Figure 10. “Sunday market” ..................................................................................................................124
Figure 11. Susu books ................................................................. ........................................................................128
Figure 12. Ballot box ..............................................................................................................................................152
Figure 13. Market tolls ..............................................................................................................................................162
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFD</td>
<td>Agence Française de Développement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>Build Operate Transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMTA</td>
<td>Central Market Traders Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Electoral Comission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>Economic Recovery Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSCA</td>
<td>Ghana Cooperative Susu Collectors Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIPC</td>
<td>Ghana Investment Promotion Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNFS</td>
<td>Ghana National Fire Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPRS</td>
<td>Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRA</td>
<td>Ghana Revenue Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSS</td>
<td>Ghana Statistical Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUMPP</td>
<td>Ghana Urban Management Pilot Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUTA</td>
<td>Ghana Union for Traders Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GYEEADA</td>
<td>Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSC</td>
<td>Land, Services and Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCD</td>
<td>Metropolitan Chief Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCE</td>
<td>Metropolitan Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMDA</td>
<td>Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMDCM</td>
<td>Metropolitan/Municipal/District Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLGRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDC</td>
<td>National Democratic Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHIS</td>
<td>National Health Insurance Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPP</td>
<td>New Patriotic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUP</td>
<td>National Urban Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYEP</td>
<td>National Youth Employment Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Relations Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Progressive Traders Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSNIT</td>
<td>Social Security and National Insurance Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TaMA</td>
<td>Tamale Metropolitan Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRA</td>
<td>Volta River Authority (the government agency for the generation and supply of electricity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEA</td>
<td>Youth Employment Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

My first visit to Ghana was as a nineteen-year-old volunteer who was to work as a teacher in a preparatory school in Berekum, close the Ivory Coast border. I was not a particularly good teacher, but I learned a lot. I lived in a family and the mother, Emilia, had a store in the Central Market. She sold large bags of rice to customers who sold the rice further in smaller quantities in other markets and villages. Every day after school, I came to her store to just sit. Emilia began trading as young girl. One day a week she skipped school to sell oranges, small-small, on the streets of her hometown. She was a very skillful trader. As I sat outside her store in a white plastic chair, it was not primarily her business that interested me, but the space in itself. For some reason, I really enjoyed sitting, watching, listening to, and smelling the marketplace and waiting for anything. Since then I have always tried to find ways to go back to Ghana and its markets and realized that ethnographic work is a good excuse to sit and talk.

In doing the fieldwork and in writing the thesis I have come across many people in Ghana and Sweden that in one way or another have contributed to this work. My supervisors have had the greatest impact on how this project evolved. Christina Garsten has served as my main supervisor. The amount of help, support, and advice I received from her has far exceeded what I expected. In times of anxiety and stress, she has shown the next step forward and worked as the handrail most doctoral students need when climbing the stairs of universities. My second supervisor, Johan Lindquist, has with critical eyes and constructive comments encouraged me to bring forward the main arguments of the text while suggesting new literature. During the course of this work, I have also had the fortune to have an external supervisor in Sten Hagberg at Uppsala University. With deep skills and knowledge in ethnographic work and West African conditions, he has inspired me to explore the local political conditions and demonstrated how these are important for a wider politically interested world. I am also very grateful to Beppe Karlsson who, with an in-depth and critical reading of an earlier draft, helped to significantly change and improve the thesis. Jesper Bjarnesen’s thorough reading and constructive advice also greatly improved the text.

The fieldwork in 2012-2013 was financed with the help from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, the Nordic Africa Institute, and the Lars Hierta Memorial Foundation. The Lars Hierta Memorial Foundation also funded my return visit in 2016 and Helge Ax:son Johnson’s Stiftelse enabled a few extra months of work. I am very grateful for their generous contributions.
Throughout this project, I have appreciated the humor, support, and knowledge that characterize the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University. I remember the pride and happiness when I got accepted as a PhD student years ago. Since then, my feelings for the work has oscillated but the support of the department has remained solid. I am very grateful to the amusing and inspiring group of PhD students I was a part of. I am especially thankful to Jannete Hentati, Simon Johansson and Hege Høyer Leivestad for sharing thoughts and experiences. I want to thank Ulf Hannerz and Helena Wulff who always have shown a special interest in my work, as well as Annika Rabo, Anette Nyqvist, Ilda Lindell, Lotta Björklund Larsen (Linköping University), Mats Utas (Uppsala University), and Steven Sampson (Lund University). Lina Lorentz, Peter Skoglund and Eva Eyton, thank you for being great at your work. I am sorry for all the questions I should have known the answers to. Thanks also to Barbara Beattie, whose proofreading greatly improved the text. As an affiliate to the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in Accra, I also received great help and advice from Albert K. Aweboba on the political tensions and conflicts in Tamale and Dagbon. I also want to thank Sebastian Soeters and Kajsa Hallberg-Adu for their valuable inputs. Indebted to these and many more, any remaining errors and misunderstandings are solely my own.

I should also express my gratitude to our landlord in Tamale, the late Stella Nitori and her daughter Selina Iddi Abdulai. Also, thank you “Aziz,” “John,” and “Rose.”

However, the greatest encouragement has come from those closest to me. The support from my mother and father, who both know how it is to write a PhD, and the rest of my big family and friends, has seemed endless.

To Ylva, for your love and patience, for your real—and sometimes pretended—interest, for your clever advices, for accompanying me to Ghana, for the laughs, for our life, and for our children, thank you. It’s over now. Karla and Kleo, my daughters, distractions, and lights in times of darkness, thank you too.

Finally, it is with joy, laughter, hope, and despair I remember the time in Tamale’s marketspace. The warmth, generosity, and hospitality I experienced there I have not met anywhere else. Although I communicate regularly with friends through social media I miss the closeness of sharing a wooden bench. Knowing that many of you struggle hard to make life go around, my own concerns have faded in comparison, but the responsibility to finish the thesis has increased. To all of you. Thank you. M’payiya. Medaase.

Sotter, Augusti 2018
Ulrik Jennische
A Small-Small Introduction

Don’t rush it. The money don’t like that. Follow them small-small. Those who rush it, steal.

- Mohammed, central Tamale (October 19, 2012)

Mohammed, a young shoe and slipper trader, had a small rickety shed above a gutter in central Tamale. To follow the money small-small was his business strategy. His father taught him to think like this, that one should progress small-small, slowly, step by step. In this instance, Mohammed was talking about how he was planning ahead. He had expanded his business gradually and without greed, constantly aware of the impression he gave off and of his relations to friends, customers, and fellow traders. Each time he traveled to Nigeria to buy shoes in bulk, he had been able to bring more money than the previous journey. In the beginning it was not much, but now his business was doing rather well. He had recently bought a store, a locally produced container made of corrugated steel walls and roof, which he had placed in another market in town. He was planning to shift his business into hardware. But the container was still empty. Stepwise he was moving toward his dream, waiting for enough money to buy some hardware products to sell. But he was not there yet. Mohammed was always helpful to the people around him. He and Seidu, who sold mobile phone credits from the same gutter, were like brothers. They helped, supported and assisted each other. Mohammed lent out money without interest to friends in need, even though it at times interfered with his business. More than a strategy, this was how Mohammed thought business in general ought to be performed. In his mind, small-small prescribed and defined good business. It should not be about searching for quick profits, risking friendships and loyalties.

There is no expression that better describes the small-scale urban trade in Ghana than small-small, biela-biela in Dagbanli or kakra-kakra in Twi. It is the most common answer from everyone to the question, “How is business?” The answer, “small-small” is often followed by, “We’re managing” or “by God’s grace.” For the more fortunate traders it is an appropriate, modest, and humble expression. For the less fortunate ones, it is an overstatement. While being a form of expression that normatively de-

---

1 All names in this thesis, except of public persons, are pseudonyms.
2 The containers are inspired by shipping containers and manufactured by Dagbamba blacksmiths (MacGaffey 2009).
scribes the practice of conducting trade, it also exists in relation to other moral obligations. It expresses humility, dignity and self-control, while protecting against commitments and responsibilities to support members of the extended family or distant friends. Moreover, small-small exists in relation to the development of society, to the state and global economy, by shaping traders’ understanding of the world, their ways of evaluating progress, and by guiding them into the future.

This thesis explores the relation between small-scale trade and the politics of the state in urban Ghana. The emic notion of small-small is used as a point of departure for investigating market practice and moral economy in the broader context of an expanding global economy. The moral economy is built on two sets of norms, in the way Mohammed suggests. It is about gradual progress rather than quick profits, and it is about the inclusive norms of sharing, giving credit and enabling further trade on the commodity. By constructing an analysis on small-small, I am not suggesting that every time someone expresses “small-small” it invokes a moral economy. Sometimes it is just a standard reply, sometimes it is a strategic answer to avoid jealousy. But, the morally infused temporality of the marketspace is well illustrated by small-small.

The market in Tamale is a space for gradual progress. It is easy to enter and easy to start a business through shared social or ethnic ties with existing traders or store owners. The first piece of ware can be borrowed from established traders and reimbursed when sold. Newcomers often begin their careers by roaming or hawking the streets, while carrying their goods or pushing them on wheelbarrows. Eventually the turnover grows, and the vendor starts buying the products directly in bulk from one of the larger stores in town. By selling the wares one by one, the vendor makes a small profit that can be reinvested. An ideal trajectory would be to gradually expand the business, eventually being able to buy the cartons in Kumasi or Accra at a lower price and reselling them to others in Tamale.

The moral economy is situated in social space. Business growth requires access to a fixed place to sell within the city. Roaming is strenuous and less profitable. Small-scale everyday trade fills the streets, gutters, pavements, traffic islands, open areas and planned marketplaces in all Ghanaian cities. In this process, traders have become important nodes, fulfilling essential functions in the maintenance of the city. They are everywhere where people move and where authorities are unable or unwilling to prevent their presence. In this respect their activities make up an indistinct and expanding marketspace. Drawing on Massey (2005), I see the marketspace as a simultaneity of interrelated stories and processes of people, things and politics engaged in small-scale trade.

Traders thus continuously claim places in the city through social and legal negotiations with other traders, store owners and authorities. Sometimes the process of claiming is more of a struggle, especially with the Ghanaian government which often has different intentions for those places. Traders’ gradual claiming of public urban space to make a living is fittingly described through what Bayat (2013) calls a “quiet encroachment of the ordinary”; a process he argues is more of redress than of re-
istance (cf. Holston 2008). Claiming is a key strategy to growing financially and socially. Traders claim their places for as long as possible, which makes them into inalienable possessions (Weiner 1992) that are passed on to the next generation. Small-small trade thus binds time and space together, inscribing small-small histories into the material and social city.

This encroachment has been made possible by several simultaneous political processes. A persistent, and at times violent, conflict between the two royal lineages within the traditional Dagbon state has caused a polarized situation in Tamale, complicating political governance. After the killing of the paramount chief in 2002, the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA), was dissolved and replaced by an interim committee. The major political parties have in turn politicized this division and thus contaminated the national government with the Dagbon political entanglements. The Ghanaian Constitution amplifies this bifurcation through its winner-takes-all system, that vests great power in the president. Besides allocating public sector jobs and contracts, the president is deeply involved in the formation of all local assemblies.

Moreover, decades of structural adjustments and state withdrawal from the market have also contributed to traders overtaking public space. In adjusting to a neoliberal mode of governance, Ghana has opened itself to a global economy. The withdrawal or rolling back (see Peck and Tickell 2002) of the state had led to an informalization of the economy, in which people increasingly had to rely on making a living along the streets and markets. In fact, ever since Hart’s (1973) influential study, in which he coined the term “informal sector,” on the multiple ways actors in Accra survived without formal employments, much of the literature on urban trade understands it as a set of informal activities that take place beyond the state’s sphere of regulation, and which have multiplied due to deregulation, urbanization and state withdrawal (Amoko-Tuffour and Sackey 2008. Schindler 2010, Asiedu-Agyei Mensah 2008, Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom 2011, Davis 2008).

Years of state neglect have thus allowed for this marketspace expansion. During the withdrawal of the state, traders in the Central Market took a greater responsibility for its upkeep. They have themselves built most of the stores, they have paved the alleys and for a while they even collected their own taxes. This in turn has led to a dispute of ownership.

While this expansion continues, Ghana has lately begun a reformalization, a citizen-making process in which actors are brought back under state control. Peck and Tickell (2002) understand this development as “roll-out” neoliberalism. For instance, the National Urban Policy (NUP) invokes a politics of inclusion, stating that urban planning should provide for the activities of the “informal economy,” strengthen its capacity, and change the “official attitude towards the informal enterprises from neglect to recognition and policy support” (Government of Ghana 2012 p 23-24). This politics of inclusion is in line with a trend in the global development ideology that emphasizes poor people’s inclusiveness, recognition and rights. Roy (2014 p 139), for instance, describes the Indian government’s utopian policy of “Slum-free Cities” that articulates a “market-oriented inclusive growth,” and that allows for poor people to
be reached more effectively by market forces and welfare services. To Roy, this is a paradigmatic turn in Indian urban policy making, which previously simply relied on demolitions and evictions and now prefers “governance of spaces and populations of urban poverty…” (p 141). In Ghana, this reawakened will for governance is complemented by forceful evictions of traders, referred to as “decongestions.” These evictions are part of the cities’ beautification policies and aim at removing and confiscating business structures that are not on a par with the city plans, as well as traders who violate rules and regulations. In this regard the state emerges as an ambiguous and unreliable actor in its relation to traders, exemplifying a mode of governance that relies on exceptions and contradictions (Ong 2006, Chalfin 2010).

Because of this process, whereby the informal economy became an object for political inventions and interventions, the analytical value of the term diminished. Instead, we see a politics of informality (see Lindell 2010a, McFarlane 2012) at play. Through the idea of the “informal” the government attempts to bring certain practices, like street and market trading, under its realm of influence, to implement its urban vision, and to promote economic development. To this politics of informality, we should add the government’s design and implementation of welfare schemes. For instance, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) builds on a distinction between people employed in the “formal” or “informal sector,” which defines how premiums are to be paid. Social Security and the National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) has developed an Informal Sector Fund that allows traders working in the “informal sector” to save for their own pensions.3 It is not only through the category of the informal that this politics is enabled, but through a spatial practice in which public officers working for the informal pension scheme, for instance, roam the streets and markets to collect savings from traders and others.

The aim of this study is to explore this changing relation between small-scale trade and the politics of the state in urban Ghana. I do this through the emic mundane expression of small-small that I allow to represent a moral economy of norms and values situated in the dynamics of the marketspace. Although produced within the entangled relations of the market, small-small exists in relation to broader political developments, an expanding global economy, and the state. It is how the moral economy takes shape in this intersection of state-politics and intra- and intermarket relations, where I find its greatest analytical potential. Through the moral economy we can approach this dynamic, multifaceted, socially and politically contingent economy without getting stuck in dichotomies that are difficult to apply. Small-small challenges the common perspective of understanding small-scale trade as an informal economy that is beyond the bureaucracy and state control. Instead I see the informal and formal as processes that by definition and through practice necessitate each other and are two

---

3 The NHIS and the SSNIT Informal are different from the new forms of welfare schemes emerging in southern Africa which in different ways are built on unconditional cash transfers and which involve a new way of thinking in relation to the poor (Ferguson (2015). The schemes in Ghana involve no transfer of cash in any way and are provided only to citizens paying the premiums.
sides of every economic transaction. As categories, the informal and formal are important for this study as part of a governmental technology. They are categories the state utilizes to control the development of the city and define reasons for exclusion and inclusion in political programs. As such, the politics of informal and formal requires analysis. By exploring the relation of the state to the market through small-small, we will therefore also engage in the tension of what is internal and external to the state. Given the informal economy’s position as marginal yet essential for the livelihood of a sizeable proportion of the Ghanaian population, as a key feature of the African city, and as a symbol for the paradigm of a market-driven development, this tension is in turn central for any discussion about development and citizenship.

Moreover, I want to place the relation of the state to small-scale trade in a context of a global economy and development ideologies. The Ghanaian state has ambitious plans for urban trade. They strive to regulate, control, tax and spatially arrange trading activities, and direct welfare programs specifically to those categorized as informal. This formalization should be understood in the context of a neoliberal economy in which Ghana attempts to claim sovereignty (also see Chalfin 2010). I follow Ong’s (2006) broad understanding of neoliberalism as a technology of government in which the market logic infiltrates politics. In this instance, I believe the formalization exemplifies what Peck and Tickell (2002) describe as the constructive roll-out part of neoliberalism that they argue followed the withdrawal of the state, as in the structural adjustment programs in the 1980s. This political direction also involves an emphasis on the individual’s responsibility for his or her own optimization, an “ethos of self-governance” (Ong 2006 p 9) that in turn engages with the small-small, leading to several, at times conflicting, moral regimes existing simultaneously.

There are three sets of questions that I will pursue in this thesis more or less simultaneously. First, I am interested in the making of the marketspace and what it means to be a trader. Understanding the marketspace as a simultaneity of multiple processes, people, and materialities that are interlinked and engaged in its construction, means that trading is to be part of its making. Trading as a practice is dependent on social relations, but on what norms and values are those relations formed? What is it like to trade in a context of, on the one hand, polarization and conflict, and on the other hand, formalization and inclusion? What other actors and political influences are involved in making the marketspace? Through the exploration of these questions the moral economy based on small-small values emerges, which prescribes how actors should trade, which binds them together through obligations, dependencies, trust and solidarity, and which exists in relation to the state and the global economy.

This leads to a second set of questions that investigate more closely how these relations are affected by the transformations of the economy and the politics of the state. How are solidarity, community, and competition reconfigured in the marketspace with the pressures of urbanization and unemployment? What effect do state interventions have on social and economic relations and trust within the market? Moreover, the politics of informality articulates the dynamics of citizen-making. What
forms of citizenship emerges when the government strives to take control and formalize the marketspace while simultaneously being open to a global economy?

The third set of questions is directed at the theoretical possibilities of moral economy. What can small-small as a moral economy of norms and values anchored in space and that contributes to building trust, organizing trade, forming opinions and political positions, contribute to our understanding on state – market relations? How can moral economy help us to encapsulate the tensions involved in the politics of informality, and as such, the process of citizen-making?

Drawing on Fassin’s (2009) understanding of moral economy, small-small refers to norms, values, and obligations that are produced, circulated, and used by actors in the marketspace. Hence it defines what is good and bad. It sets up standards, procedures and rules. It is a relational code of conduct, and a prescriptive, normative outlook on the world that guides behavior, forms politics, and legitimizes critique and resentment. “Outlook” is a useful metaphor in this regard. Defined as a “point of view,” and the “act of looking out,” it directs us to think about small-small as an opinion and an approach. But as it also means “prospect for the future,” it connects small-small to future possibilities and progression. Finally, “outlook” means a “view a from a particular place,” which points to a key argument of this thesis, that the small-small can only be understood by analyzing its spatial dimension.

The small-small norms on what is a correct behavior, along with traders’ obligations and dependencies to one another through the many layers of credit relations and the sharing of space, help to generate trust and solidarity that binds traders together in shared social and relational conditions despite their different economic possibilities. This community furthermore thrives on the disappointment against a corrupt state. In relation to this I see a small-small politics evolving. It is a form of local politics, injected with disappointment against a polarizing, obstructive and unreliable government. The moral economy thus necessitates and exists in a relation to the state. It is a beginning to understanding how small-scale trade, on a daily basis within the marketspace, interacts with the state and global economy. As this thesis develops, I will be able to argue that the formalization involves a moral engagement with the everyday life of traders.

Furthermore, the small-small, as an outlook on the world, thus also refers to a form of position traders take in relation to the developing state. Small-small often exists in relation to some undefined “big” thing: big politics, big cars, big-big stores, and big men. Through the conjunction of the big and small, this book is also about the central ideas that constitute state formation today. It is about the big ideas: the interplay of economics and politics, democracy, the state, citizen-making, development, and the

4 Fassin builds his understanding of moral economy on the seminal work of Thompson (1971) and Scott (1976).
market. It is about the transformation of a society, of how global capitalism and the free market may alter structures, traditions and values. Yet, it is also about the “small” things: the everyday discussions between individuals, the buying and selling of vegetables, towels, underwear, mobile phone credits. It is about future ambitions, and present-day worries and difficulties. It is about friendship and loyalty (if that can be described as small), and relational dynamics of urbanization. It is about individual change, about seizing opportunities and gradually improving the life of oneself and those close by. The morally entangled relations of the marketspace thus create this outlook on the outside that directs traders for better or worse into the future.

Small-small is set in the marketspace and is part of its making. To understand one of them, we need to understand the other. In Massey’s (2005) relational approach, space is a sphere of multiplicity, co-constitutively and in the moment made up by people, things, processes, their histories and their interrelations. It is always in the making and never finished. Space is thus not an opposite to time, but the simultaneity of stories. Place is a specific and unique set of those stories in a specific moment. For Massey, place is better understood as an event, as an integration of time and space. Claiming place is an event that goes on in an indistinct and dynamic marketspace. Claiming is here a form of placemaking that emphasizes the ongoing negotiations traders engage in to maintain and confirm their right to the street or market stall. By marketspace I am not referring to a specific area within the city. It is not the location that defines it. I rather see the marketspace as made up by those processes, practices, stories that simultaneously are in play in small-scale trade. To trade in the marketspace is thus not something performed on a surface, or within a bounded territory, it is to take part in its making, reconfiguring it.

Globalization processes such as the ones described above are lived experiences and part of traders’ everyday life. Transformations provide opportunities and put up constraints, but also produce particular subjects. Within this space, small-scale traders become entrepreneurs, “informals,” or citizens. The state is a dominant actor in this subjectification. Actors may one day be regarded as illegal and as part of a problem that needs to be solved, and another day regarded as a potential resource creating work for the unemployed, or a valid tax base generating economic growth. Here, actors are potential voters and campaign workers during election time. Similarly, Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom (2011) describe how the Ghanaian “informal economy” in the eyes of the state oscillates between a “nuisance,” an “employer,” and a “goldmine.” Meanwhile, traders themselves assert a moral right to trade and to make a living.

The economic literature on the Ghanaian economy rarely takes interest in small-scale trade,7 which is ironic given the symbolic value of the marketplace within the discipline of economics. There are exceptions, especially when the informal sector is

---

discussed (see for instance Amoako-Tuffour and Sackey 2008), but then the importance of the marketplace or street trade is ignored in favor of general arguments of access to credits, improving skills, and licenses, in the informal sector. Finding out how processes of globalization, trade liberalization, and urbanization, as well as formalization, have affected small-scale traders is thus difficult based on the economic literature. But given the vital role of street and market trading in the development of Ghana, in the way it shapes political ideas, is a source of livelihood, and is a mediator between the global and the local, I find such an endeavor important.

Figure 1. Map of Ghana
Tamale

Tamale is a crossroads. In a literal sense, the city is a crossroads as it spreads out from the important junction where the major roads of the north intersect. The busy north-south road that binds together Accra and the coast with the northern regions and Burkina Faso connects with the roads to Yendi in the east and Salaga in the southeast, to Daboya and Tolon in the west, and Kumbungu in the northwest. It was when the British needed a place for their new headquarters for their Northern Territories in the beginning of the 20th century and settled in what was a cluster of villages encircling a marketplace that Tamale gained political importance. But it was when the north-south road, “The Great North Road” (see Soeters 2012) was built in the 1920s which boosted the commercial sector, that the growth of the city really began. The Central Market (also known as the Old Market) is located just next to the junction in the center of town. It is encircled by the major banks, the taxi and bus stations, the supermarkets, the palaces of the most important chiefs, and the Central Mosque.

Tamale is also the capital of Ghana’s Northern Region. In the latest census, the metropolitan area had about 371,000 inhabitants (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2014), and the city is growing fast. A rumor that spreads in town and on the internet claims that Tamale is the fastest growing city of West Africa (see MacGaffey 2009). That is not the case; in fact, it is only second in Ghana itself after Kumasi (Fuseini and Kemp 2016 p 111), but it is part of the city’s self-image, probably because the city is striving to find an identity (though some leaders are putting effort into the slogan “The gateway to the Sahel.”)

The city has partly come to be through different villages gradually growing together around this viable marketplace, situated in the junction between the major roads crossing the forest savannah; and partly through its functions of being the capital of the previous Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Colony and now the Northern Region.

Urbanization transforms the city. The influx of people places new demands on the political leadership to improve the infrastructure, housing, and transportation system. Most people moving to Tamale come from within the region, but there are also many following a north-south direction. Within the marketspace of Tamale, the autochthonous Dagbamba (or Dagomba) people are thus finding new neighbors, associates and competitors. From the north come Ghanaians from Wa and Bolgatanga, and Burkinabe, Nigeriens, and Malians. Many come as traders or businessmen, others become beggars. Some come for education. The Ghanaian migrants from the south, the Akans and the Ewes, are in general better educated and financially stronger.

---

8 The metropolitan area is made up by the Tamale Metropolis and the Sagnerigu District. They were separated in 2012 but still share many political functions.
9 Dagbamba is their preferred spelling. In colonial times the name was anglicized into Dagomba, which is the more common spelling in official documents. I have chosen to follow MacGaffey’s (2013 p xi-xii) spelling on Dagbani words and names all through this thesis.
The expanding marketspace changes its gender dynamics. Marketplaces in Ghana are known as strong female domains.\textsuperscript{10} Studies in southern Ghana have often emphasized the marketplaces’ interlinkages with motherhood and household and the development of a specific female class affected by a global economy and male-dominated state bureaucracy (see for instance the seminal works of Clark 1994, 1999, 2010a, b; but also, Chamlee-Wright 1997, Robertson 1983, 1984). In fact, all over Ghana, one often meets men who refuse to even enter the marketplaces. However, recently an increasing amount of men have been drawn into buying and selling predominantly along the streets (Overå 2007, Stasik and Thiel 2014). Trading in the south is no longer only a female activity.

In the north however, markets were never as strongly dominated by women as in the south. Influenced by male trade networks of the Muslim countries in the north and east, men already shared the marketplaces. Also in Tamale, there are now many young men selling, waiting, and sitting along the streets.

Religion is omnipresent in Tamale. Although there is a geographic divide in which northerners predominantly adhere to various Islamic traditions, and southerners to Christianity in its many shapes, this is only rarely a cause of conflict. In Tamale, like in many other settings around Africa, Christians, Muslims and traditional practitioners are “entangled” (Larkin 2016). They live side by side, interact and share social space. The relation between Christians and Muslims is not one of bifurcation or opposition. Janson and Meyer (2016 p 616) argue that we should approach religion through a “broader notion of a ‘religious field’ in which several religious groups coexist in ever-shifting dynamics of similarity and difference.” Also, religiosity is important for individuals to appear responsible, dignified, and trustworthy. This goes for most Ghanaians in all parts of society and is not specific for the marketspace. What is specific about the small-small moral economy is that it goes beyond a religious morality, and expresses a normative form of marketing, that is situated in practice and the sharing of space.

Language patterns are changing with the influx of people. The dominant language Dagbani (spoken by the Dagbamba), is no longer the only spoken language in the town, if it ever was. The many Asante traders speak Twi. English is of course also important as a shared language resource, if Dagbani or Twi are not shared. Ewe, Hausa, Gonja, and Zabarma are also commonly heard in the marketspace. Actors learn to become multilingual to be able to trade with many.

Brenner (2009) argues that urbanization is no longer only a process in which cities are growing and mega-cities are emerging as a result of capitalist expansion and industrialization. It also entails a constant socio-spatial transformation of other less

\textsuperscript{10} The great majority of the literature on street trade and marketplaces concerns the south of Ghana and predominantly the major marketplaces in the largest cities, Accra and Kumasi (see for examples, Clark 1994, Schwimmer 1979, Robertson 1984, Overå 2007). While this thesis draws on that literature, the north is in many regards culturally, historically, and economically different.
densely populated settlements, like Tamale, that are becoming parts of a large-scale infrastructural network linking them together with cities and metropolises all over the world. It is a process in which the “urban fabric” is stretched unevenly across the planet, to include different types of investment patterns, usage of space, and infrastructural networks. With reference to Lefebvre he thus argues that we “are witnessing, in short, nothing less than the intensification and extension of the urbanization process at all spatial scales and across the entire surface of planetary space” (p 205).

In stretching the urban fabric, Tamale becomes a crossroads in a more metaphorical sense, by bringing forward the “interconnectedness” (Hannerz 1996) of global flows, of people, of capital, and of ideas. Here the intersection of global political processes and ideologies and local events becomes particularly pertinent, when ideas of democracy, neoliberalism and development are realized in the narrow market alleys and congested streets.

In Tamale, the idea of democracy interacts with vernacular traditions and divisions. Ghana has gone through a fundamental democratization process in which the country went from being an authoritarian and extremely poor country run by military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s to become a liberal democracy with a burgeoning welfare system. It is often uncritically described as “a model of democratic peace in Africa” (Afolayan 2010 p 117). The democratization has of course brought many possible developments to the Ghanaian population. But in Tamale, it has also formed a deeply politicized environment which has added to the already critical and at times violent conflict within the traditional chieftaincy politics. In Dagbon, the traditional Dagomba state, there are two royal branches (called gates): the Abudus and the An danis. Both aspire to the paramount chieftaincy title, Ya Na, which has led to divisions and violence. In Tamale and in many other places around Ghana, the political parties thrive on this divide and rely on what Comaroff and Comaroff (2016) describe as ID-ology (Identity-ology as opposed to idea-ology), which challenges the idea of a representative democracy in the Western liberal sense.

For many traders, wealth is characterized by its unreachable presence. It is always around and noticeable yet difficult to obtain. It is often heard in town that “Tamale is the capital of NGOs.” This is where the many development agencies working in the north of the country place their offices. Their large Toyota or Nissan pickups make up a part of the cityscape showing many of the small-scale traders where the big money is to be made. In the crossroads of Tamale, development ideologies through NGOs and Micro-Finance Institutes are put into practice. A community of western development workers, expats, volunteers, businesspeople, and researchers together with the many backpackers is visible in town. Their “wealth” and way of life, together with images of international footballers, hip-hop artists, and action movie stars brought to the streets of Tamale through popular media, contribute to nurture a notion of an “outside of Africa,” that grants a life of freedom and abundance. Also, leaders of the political parties, top government officers and other big men have cars appropriate for their social and political status, which adds to a sense of money being ever-
present, yet unreachable and absent. Small-small trade hence exists in a relation to
capital, which reformulates the meaning of proximity and distance.

Studying the Tamale Marketspace

In pursuing the purpose of exploring the relation of the state and market in Tamale
through small-small, I have placed myself in the processes where this intersection
becomes acute, in the everyday working life of street and market traders. In the center
of this contradictory politics of informality, they are of interest to the government for
many reasons, as tax-payers, tax-evaders, entrepreneurs, potential employers, illegal
occupants of urban space and simultaneously as voters.

So far, I have emphasized how the state co-produces the marketspace through dif-
ferent forms of intervention with different political aims. Similarly, Gupta and Fergu-
son (1997) assert that anthropological knowledge is also based on an intervention with
its own political goals. This situated ethnographic intervention is not a positivistic
search for truth, but part of a political project that interacts with other forms of
knowledge from other fields. The field as such becomes less a place for collection of
data and more a site for “strategic intervention” (p 39) in pursuing that goal. I believe
that anthropological work, aligned with other forms of knowledge production, thus
has the possibility of changing structures of inequality and dispossession. But, as en-
gaged and reflexive anthropologists, we need to place ourselves in that project, and
understand how our interventions shape the space we study.

The fieldwork was conducted in three parts. A short one-month fieldwork took
place in November 2011. At that time, I established myself and began planning the
longer fieldwork. I made some initial connections with scholars at the University of
Development Studies in Tamale, with some public officers at the assembly, and most
importantly with traders in and outside the Central Market. During that time, I also
got to meet Aziz who was working in the hotel where I was staying. Aziz grew up in
Tamale with his grandmother. His parents, who were Burkinabe, had died when he
was young. Aziz spoke several of the languages spoken in the streets of Tamale and
was well accustomed to the Dagbon culture. But, as a non-Dagbamba, he was neutral
and not associated with any of the Abudu or Andani fractions. He was thus both an
insider and outsider. When I began my longer fieldwork, which covered the period
September 2012 to June 2013, Aziz had stopped working at the hotel and was looking
for a new job. I hired him as an assistant and interpreter and we worked together for
a couple of months.

For the longer visit, I brought my family, my partner Ylva and our daughter Karla
who was five months old when we arrived. This opened up opportunities I had not
foreseen. Small white babies were uncommon in Tamale, and especially so in the
market. Many traders were very interested in us and our purpose for visiting them.
With many of the mothers and grandmothers in the Central Market it was easy to start talking about our shared and non-shared experiences of being a parent.

Gender has probably affected the data in more ways than I can see. It is always difficult to determine the value of the information that is not shared. I can see when reading my field notes however, that young male informants seemed more at ease about opening up on a more emotional level. They talked to me like a brother or friend, while established and older Central Market women often took a more reserved position. My family situation often helped in this regard. They enjoyed giving me advice about parenting.

My strategy was to find suitable places in town and in the Central Market where I could get close to traders. In a sense, what I did was to claim a place for myself through inserting myself socially and physically in the marketspace. In the Central Market, Aziz helped me in the beginning by introducing me to a few of the people he knew working there. I developed a couple of “stations” in the Central Market, made up of several shopkeepers sharing an aisle. Traders form undefined communities within the different aisles. While there was one trader in each station that played the role of a host to me, the traders around also became important informants.

I formed similar stations along the streets. This could be street corners, part of a pavement, or the area outside of a supermarket where a couple of traders had claimed a place. Since traders had added wooden benches, plastic chairs, and sun umbrellas to make the place comfortable, I could easily sit and take notes while still be a part of the group. Waiting and sitting are key aspects of trading in urban Ghana. I spent hours every day sharing those benches with the traders, waiting for the next customer or just something. This strategy of claiming my own places in the city also means this study mostly relies on traders with access to a place, rather than the many hawkers. However, several of the established traders had begun selling in Tamale by roaming the streets.

I was just as interesting to the traders as they were to me, and it was therefore fairly easy to get access to the field. Some of them first believed I was a customer and wanted to sell me things. But something important happened when they realized I had different intentions. In this shift, where I was no longer a presumptive customer, their approach quickly changed, and they quite gladly began to explain their business strategies to me. Some I visited every day, some only every week. But most of them saw me as a guest and a friend. As I was their guest, many felt they had to reciprocate, and wanted to visit me in the house, or buy me drinks. In that respect I also realized that I was also bound to them and their services. As will be discussed throughout this book, loyalty and trust is important in the market. So, becoming close to them, also meant I could not buy things for personal use from their competitors, and their competitors would also not allow me to if they knew who I was. I had to let my informants guide me through town. If I wanted to talk to someone, another trader, civil servant, or if I wanted to buy something or pursue a certain phenomenon, I let them instruct me on how to go about it.
Most traders are very proud of what they sell, and I found it productive to let their commodities work as mediators between us. By asking questions about the things in themselves, being impressed by them and interested in how they obtained them, it seemed to boost their confidence. To let the commodity structure our relation in this way distinguished our relationship from the relation they had with customers who for bargaining purposes often devalued the goods.

I also conducted interviews with representatives from multiple parts of the state. These have broadened my perspectives and have helped me understand this moment in Ghanaian history in which the state’s approach to urban trade shifts from neglect to recognition and inclusion. I interviewed politicians, tax collectors, public officers representing the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD), the Planning Department of TaMA, the SSNIT Informal Sector Fund, Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), the Engineering Department; the regional police commander, the public relations officer (PRO), the security coordinator at the Regional Security Council, and assemblymen. I have also interviewed two chiefs, the Dakpema and the Zobogu Naa, and numerous representatives of different trader associations.

As Massey (2005) argues, moving between places also involves inserting oneself in them. My presence and what I represented inevitably reconfigured the marketspace. I often found myself in a position where I as a white foreigner was seen as someone with connections, capital and influence. People I met for the first time or never met, eagerly connected with me on Facebook and LinkedIn. For traders, I also became a resource in several ways. I was, for instance, told that my presence generated an interest by potential consumers, and hence I boosted their business by just sitting on a bench. Others wanted to me to speak to the politicians in charge, so they would not be affected by the evictions. For some public officers, I was a connection, or reference, who they believed could help them with a career change. One of them wanted me to read his CV for advice and to pass it on to potential employers. For politicians, I involuntarily became a campaign promoter. At one point, when visiting a political gathering of the opposition party, New Patriotic Party (NPP), in Aboabo together with Ylva and my father who had come for a short visit, we were asked to stand up at the podium together with the MP candidate, who I had never met, and who was not the reason why we were there. He gladly introduced us as representatives from the Netherlands who had come to endorse his campaign. During the major NPP rally in town, I was invited up on the press box, so I could take nice photos of the sea of people around and of the prominent guests, I was told. However, it was clear that also I became a target for many photographs.

Still, it makes me frustrated that, being from a country with free education, I have been able to capitalize (in the sense of writing a PhD) on small-scale traders’ labor to a greater extent than they have. I seem to be among the few in the marketspace able to progress in life beyond the speed of small-small. It is from that position that this book is written, a position of frustration and meaningful purpose. I believe it to be important to understand how it is to work within the temporal and spatial constraints of the small-small. But it is simultaneously frustrating not to know where to direct
that knowledge because of a real fear that any political change jeopardizes the livelihood of the small-scale traders. I felt this fear particularly when interviewing government actors, who often wanted to know from whom or from where I had gained my knowledge of the street traders and market vendors. I could therefore risk traders’ livelihood by pursuing my questions too far. In this respect, I presented an additional risk to the street and market traders, one similar to that of the Ghanaian government itself that, often with benign intentions, threatened their livelihoods with any minor change. In Chapter Six and the Conclusions, I discuss how this is one reason that change is so difficult to achieve in the marketspace.

Some saw me as a threat. Some public officers did not want to interact with me or answer my questions until I showed my Ghanaian university card, or until I had spoken to either the Metropolitan Chief Executive (MCE, the mayor) or the Metropolitan Chief Director (MCD). Higher up in the assembly hierarchy, like for instance the MCD, this was never a problem. There, I was seen as visitor with all the rights to have answers to my questions. Some more distant traders believed I was sent there from the assembly or from the Progressive Traders Association (PTA), and thought I was one of the reasons why the decongestion had been brought upon them. But when I or my closer friends explained my purpose, I always felt very welcome. In general people gladly told me their story and listened to mine. They invited me home, to funerals, to celebrate Sallah—the Muslim holidays—and other gatherings.

I hired John, a Dagbani teacher who came to my house every week. I knew some Twi (the major language of southern Ghana) from before, and I thought that would help me in this endeavor. Yet I found Dagbani a truly challenging language. I got to know some of the basics and by the end of the fieldwork I could understand what conversations were about, but I did not master the language myself. Most traders also spoke English and for the most part I conducted my interviews in English. In the beginning, I had Aziz interpret for me when necessary. At the latter part of the longer fieldwork I hired Rose, the daughter of one of the shopkeepers in the Central Market, to assist me in a few interviews. John, who also was a teacher in Dagbani culture and drumming, assisted me in some interviews. In my interview with the Dakpema and Zobugu Na, he helped me with the meeting procedures and initial interpretations.

My interview with the traditional Chief of Tamale, the Dakpema, illustrates how learning those procedures were crucial for getting access. Yet it also shows how these cultural practices can be adjusted to an international context. Joseph and I had visited the palace sometime before to ask for permission to meet with the Dakpema. We spoke with his elders who sat outside the palace and they told us to come back another day. The second time, we brought kola nuts and money as gifts to the chief and we were asked to enter. The Dakpema sat on a chair placed on cow skins on top of a small scene. Around his feet sat his elders. I had been told I was not allowed to speak with the Dakpema directly but through the elders, often called linguists. Nor was I allowed to look directly at him. I asked my questions concerning his role in the Central Market, John translated them into Dagbani and the linguists forwarded them to the Dakpema who responded in Dagbani, and through the linguists and John his answer reached me.
Eventually, the Dakpema took over and began answering my questions directly in English. He was educated in Britain and his English was flawless. When the form of the conversation changed, I also had to look at him directly. When I looked down on the floor or in my notes, he went quiet to wait for my attention. What began as a ritually regulated cultural practice, felt in the end like any other interview. After the interview, the Dakpema invited me and John to come inside the palace, where members of his household were preparing food and washing clothes.

In September–October 2016, I revisited Tamale, while I had continuously kept contact with many traders through social media. I was able to follow up certain threads and ask new questions. I had begun realizing how important it was for traders to remain in their place in town. Although renovations and reconstructions of the marketplaces had begun, most traders I knew were still selling the same thing from the same place they did four years before.

**Overview of the Study**

Part I outlines the theoretical perspectives of this study. In Chapter One I critically discuss the conceptual and political problems of the informal economy, as a way of analyzing small-scale trade in urban Ghana, while emphasizing the need to examine the politics of informality. I construct an analytical framework that builds on the notion of moral economy and a relational understanding of space and place. In Chapter Two I examine some of the more important political processes involved in the making of this indistinct marketspace in Tamale which constitutes the field of this study. Part I thus aims to contextualize, theoretically and historically, small-small and the marketspace and begins to investigate the first set of questions that concerns the making of the marketspace and what it means to be a trader.

In Part II, I ethnographically develop my arguments on placemaking and moral economy. In Chapter Three I argue that traders claim places which accumulatively produce a marketspace, while the government simultaneously attempts to reclaim those places through decongestions and rehabilitations. In Chapter Four I describe how the small-small moral economy, involving the normative aspects of gradual progress and letting others in, is reproduced. Certain actors engaged in immoral activities with different economic ideals challenge and trigger the moral economy and become the immoral others that help define the community. Chapter Five brings the preceding chapters together and argues that moral economy and claiming place are central in understanding how trust and credits are maintained among traders. These relations create solidarity and build a moral community that interacts with political and ethnic divisions. Furthermore, they insert a form of trust in urban space, a spatial permanence to the city. While Part II continues to explore the first set of questions, answers to the second set of questions that concerns how market relations are affected by political interventions and transformations emerge and are further developed in the next part.
Part III builds on the preceding chapters but lifts the analytical level, arguing that this ethnography contributes to our understanding of citizen-making, development and the future prospects regarding small-scale trade. Chapter Six begins by contrasting the trust between traders to the unreliable and ambiguous spatial practices of the state. It centers directly on the relation traders have to the state in general and to the local and the national governments. I frame traders’ engagement as a small-small politics that builds on disappointment and distrust. This politics asserts an inclusive small-small citizenship that legitimates the moral right to trade. Chapter Seven takes on a different direction, inserting the future, transformation, and development into the discussion. It analyzes young traders’ aspirations for the future, and their situated possibilities as constrained in both time and space. While young women often take over the store of their mother and take responsibility toward their present and future family, young men’s way of taking responsibility and making themselves marriageable is to become economically successful which requires them to find ways outside of the small-small, through education or aspirations toward the “outside of Africa.”

In the Conclusion I bring the chapters together and argue that the notion of moral economy illuminates how much of the politics involved in making the marketspace draws on a moral understanding of what trade is supposed to be like, that is, small-small. I argue that the formalization of the marketspace is a citizen-making project set in social space and is morally engaged with the everyday life of traders. Furthermore, I see the marketspace as a relatively stable and persistent part of the city. Although governments, in line with a generalized development discourse, attempt to redefine and transform the marketspace, the risks that such changes would imply for traders and the political turmoil that they would cause, means that such political aims are hard to enforce in practice. In this way, I argue that there is a tension between the temporality of small-small and the large-scale development plans and schemes undertaken by the state. The inertia created by the moral obligations between traders in the marketspace and the ambitions for change and progress forms a slow and limping movement into the future.
PART ONE
1| Understanding Small-Small

Small-scale trade in Africa is often seen as constituting an informal economy. As I will argue in this chapter, the analytical value of the informal economy is limited. However, in political terms, meaning the multiple ways the government (and others) use informality as a category for politics and means of governing, it continues to deserve analysis. I develop a theoretical framework that first builds on the notion of a moral economy that centers around the normative role of the small-small and its relation to the government. I combine this with a relational approach to space and place, in which claiming place within the marketspace is a central activity for all actors. Marketspace and the moral economy go beyond the analytical problems of informal economy and allow us to instead study the politics of informality. The moral economy helps us understand small-small as a practice and a moral outlook but also uncovers the moral premises of this politics. Together with the marketspace, which emphasizes the relations between people and processes that in the moment make up the space, it allows us to examine mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion, and their underlying moralities. Thus, by placing this study within the socio-spatial dynamics of the market, and through small-small as a moral economy and outlook, we are able to approach vital questions about the relation between the state and small-scale trade.

Politics of Informality

The events described in this thesis unfolded at a time when the Ghanaian government increasingly attempted to regulate and control small-scale trade. This politics was based on the idea of an informal economy that needed to be formalized. I will elaborate on this politics of informality throughout the text, but a few examples are worth highlighting now. I have mentioned the welfare schemes that build on a distinction between formal and informal workers, and the National Urban Policy (NUP) that formulates policies specifically directed to informal businesses with the purpose of inclusion. These will be further examined in Chapter Six. In Chapter Five I describe the government’s role in regulating the informal rotating and collective saving schemes and in Chapter Four I will outline the Ghana Investment Promotion Center (GIPC) that attempts to protect the informal “petty trade” from certain foreign investors. In Chapter Three we will see the state attempting to relocate street traders into the formally planned marketplaces.
In order to understand this politics of informality, we must consider the conceptual history of term “informal economy.” In this history, informal economy transformed from being an analytical tool that shed light on a group of activities that was previously hidden, to being viewed as the idealized unregulated market, and later to being used as a tool of governance. This history also describes the entanglements of Ghanaian politics in a wider context of globally diffused ideas and international organizations. The history of informal economy started in Ghana.

The first to coin the term “informal sector” was Keith Hart (1973) who, in a study on the employment situation in Nima in central Accra, separated the formal from the informal as between wage-earning and self-employed. He argued that the key variable was the level of “rationalisation of work” (p 69), of whether or not labor was recruited on a regular basis and to what degree the enterprise was part of the “modern sector” of the urban economy,” available for enumeration and surveys, and displayed some form of bureaucracy. Most people in his study of Nima, a slum neighborhood, participated in both sectors. As sectors, they influenced each other through money being transferred between them as imports and exports (p 85). Since then, the term informal economy has been widely used by scholars across the social sciences to describe the heterogenous activities that characterize cities in predominantly Africa, South America, and Asia.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) quickly picked up Hart’s formulation and developed the idea into an analytical category, that enabled it to be statistically measured and intercontextually compared. ILO slightly reformed the concept to describe activities of “petty traders, street hawkers, shoeshine boys and other groups ‘underemployed’ on the streets of the big towns” and included “a range of wage-earners and self-employed persons, male as well as female” often excluded in the employment statistics (ILO 1972 p 5). ILO characterized the informal sector by: “a) ease of entry; b) reliance on indigenous resources; c) family ownership of enterprises; d) small scale of operation; e) labour-intensive and adapted technology; f) skills acquired outside the formal school system; and g) unregulated and competitive markets” (p 6, also see AlSayyad 2004).

Important for ILO’s vast research on the informal sector today is how the sector can be quantified and measured (See Hussmans 2003, 2005). Their definition today centers on forms of employment, “broadly characterized as consisting of units engaged in the production of goods or services with the primary objective of generating employment and income to the persons concerned” (ILO 1993). If the informal sector is a viable category, as they argue, it is of course important to try measure the size

---

11 Hart first presented his paper on the Ghanaian informal sector at a conference on “Urban Employment in Africa” in 1971. The organizers of the conference, who featured in the ILO report, adopted the term. Although Hart is widely acknowledged to have coined the term, ILO’s report was published before his article.

12 Furthermore, a low level of organization and small-scale production characterize the units. The production unit is often household-based and is not a separated entity from its owner, meaning that the owners are personally liable and act at their own risk (ILO 1993).
of that sector, and its impact on the economy, especially considering ILO’s purpose of drawing attention to workers’ situations and rights around the world. It is thus through the work of ILO that it is possible to measure and compare the size of an informal economy.

What Hart termed as informal in the 1970s was not a new phenomenon. These types of employments had been common in cities all around the world, especially in the former colonies, where they also became more crucial due to the sheer number of people concerned. According to Potts (2008) the urbanization in the less-developed countries was not accompanied by industrialization and wage labor. The “informal sector,” the unregisterd and the unrecorded part of the economy where these migrants found livelihood, became associated with criminality and political instability. When the ILO began producing reports on the informal sector, its connotations gradually shifted, and the sector became the solution to urban unemployment and poverty, and its workers were considered “hardworking, entrepreneurial and even politically quite conservative” (Potts 2008 p 155). Furthermore, the dualism of informal–formal, Potts argues, in many ways mirrored the pre-capitalist traditional economy and the “modern” economy of the colony (Potts 2008, also see Matlon 2015). Approaching the economy through different sectors thus reinforces and reproduces the economic dualism of colonialism and the “bifurcated state” (Mamdani 1996).

Still, it is predominantly from the work of ILO that the size of Tamale’s informal economy can be estimated. It is very large. Accordingly, more than 80 percent of the economically active and working population in Tamale is working in the informal sector (GSS 2014). Although such numbers are illustrative of Tamale’s urban economy, and would have been impossible without clearly defined categories, many have argued how such categorization is difficult (Potts 2008, Hart 2006, Guha-Khasnobis et al 2006, Lindell 2010a, Jennische 2012, Goldstein 2016).

For instance, Castells and Portes (1989) argue that it is difficult to provide a strict definition of the informal economy. They describe it instead as a “common-sense notion,” referring to the process of “income generation characterized by one central feature: it is unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated” (p 11, p 12, emphasis in original, also see Lindell 2010a). As such it is not the same as poverty, which has often been used synonymously, but “a specific form of relationships of production” (Castells and Portes 1989 p 12) that may refer to status of labor, conditions of work or the management system of some firms.

Lindell (2010b) argues that the informal economy rather entails a “multiplicity of class relations,” as the economic variations between groups are large. In this way “the informal economy can be seen as a heterogeneous ‘class landscape,’ ‘a class-differentiated’ economic realm” (p 210- 211, emphasis in original). What is thus referred to as a formal–informal divide is much more complex.

In this way, we cannot know what it means that 80 percent of the economically active population is working in the informal sector. Guha-Khasnobis’s (2006) solution to the analytical challenges of the concept is to let the informal and formal be used “to
characterize a continuum of the reach of official intervention in different economic activities” (p 1). In this way, the formal–informal continuum becomes a way to measure distance to the state and the bureaucracy.

From a small-small outlook this is important, because it opens a discussion about being included or excluded in the project of nation building, and its future. It becomes a matter of citizenship. But, from another perspective, as McFarlane (2012 p 92) argues, this implies that the state only governs through bureaucratic rules. As this thesis will show, the state also governs beside and without bureaucracy through exceptions and arbitrary socially dependent means.

The adoption and reformulation of the informal economy by global institutions such as ILO and the World Bank, and by nation states, meant that the term was not merely a way to describe and understand structural relations of production. As a category amenable to enumeration and comparison, it became an object for policies, state interventions and ideological constructions. Elyachar (2003) describes the structures of power between the state, NGOs and International Organizations (IOs) in Cairo, with respect to the informal economy. She argues that the informal economy emerged as something unplanned beyond the limits and control of the state. But with the ideological shift of the Bretton Woods organizations and the structural adjustments, the informal economy developed into a potential source for economic growth representing flexible micro-entrepreneurs. It became part of research programs, on the development agenda, and even plannable. However, that planning and “mapping” was now made by IOs such as the World Bank rather than by the state. In this shift, the informal was no longer beyond the state, but intertwined with it.

Beyond the analytical challenges in approaching the African cities through the concept of the informal economy, we should also discuss the unintentional political implications, meaning in what way the categories of the formal and informal sector also reinforce the kind of dualism it attempts to bridge. As a concept-metaphor (Moore 2004), informal economy not only describes and defines a theoretical abstraction; it is constituted as a set of concrete processes and experiences. We must therefore understand not only how it is to live and work informally, as it is, but how the concept itself produces that economy. In later texts, Hart (2006) revisits the notion of the informal economy, and critically examines its implications. He acknowledges how his framing of the economy as existing in “sectors” has given the impression they were located in different places or halves, which was not his intent. He argues that it is a “massive cultural effort of both separation and integration” (p 33) to try to divide the economy into separate though interdependent halves. The informal and formal come together, and cannot be separated, as they are each other’s definitions.

But how then can we think of them together, without falling into a dualistic approach? Hart argues that form is rule and for “any rule to be translated into human action something else must be brought into play, such as personal judgment. So, informality is built into the bureaucratic forms as unspecified content. This is no trivial matter. Workable solutions to problems of administration invariably contain processes
that are invisible to the formal order” (p 30). Informality in this sense means the necessary human actions that make rules work.

Hence, we must not ignore the informal dimensions of the formal sector. For instance, Roy (2004) describes how in the fringes of Calcutta, the unregulated land development process and urbanization of rural land offer possibilities for the state. The state’s strategy is through “unmapping” (p 155) the territories, so that it becomes almost impossible to declare ownership. This forms a context of ambivalence and extra-legal activities that enables a “territorialized flexibility” (p 165) for the state to construct new urban neighborhoods and remove squatters, and for the government party to form alliances. For Roy, informality in this instance becomes something more than a “sphere of unregulated activities”; it becomes a “realm of regulation” (p 159).

In Ghana, as argued, the state actively constructs politics directed toward unregulated activities in order to formalize what is described as informal. The informal–formal distinctions have become a mode of governance. They are categories used to classify people, as illustrated by the statistical figures above. In this line of thought, I have described the way formalization in Ghana partly occurs through providing NHIS services to those categorized as “non-formal,” and this provision simultaneously depends on informal networks (Jennische 2012). Like Hart (2006) argued in his later text, the formal and informal are in these ways intertwined to such a degree that they become discernible merely as processes that simultaneously presuppose each other. The formalization of space intensifies by the formalization of the economy, while the formalization depends on informal networks such as those provided in the marketspace. The figure of 80 percent, powerful as it is to describe the economic life (and social life for that matter, given the emphasis on social relations, household and kinship) in Tamale, is heavily flawed by these conceptual problems, but point to another fundamental question: Can we think of any formal economy that does not at the same time rely on some form of informality? Probably not. The fully formal market is an idealized, sociological and theoretical construction. The informal, as the term in itself is constructed (that which is not formal), cannot be understood without a simultaneous understanding of the formal.

The years of political neglect of the Tamale marketspace may thus be seen from a different angle. Informalization of the urban space should perhaps not be a marker of a weak and inefficient government but of a state that depends on extra-legal means and fears change. Illustratively, the local government’s solution to an informalized and overcrowded city was to “decongest” and evict traders from the streets and relocate them into newly constructed or less attractive marketplaces around the city. The marketplace constitutes a vital part of the envisioned future city. Remaining in the category of informal, they would simultaneously be under bureaucratic control (also see Hunt 2009). Evictions are meant to reflect a powerful and efficient government. But as political strategies to change the situation of congestion they are completely useless. Shortly after the interventions traders reclaimed their places in the city. The state also needs those forms of work, as riots and unrest otherwise would take over the city. Goldstein (2016) similarly describes how the state in Cochabamba, Bolivia,
tries to clean up the city from the “chaos” of the so-called *ambulantes* (street vendors) but never completes it as that could lead to political radicalization. Instead, *ambulantes* are kept in a liminal position of ambiguity and insecurity, which he (with reference to Yiftachel 2009) describe as a “gray space of permanent informality” (p 79).

It is thus problematic to analytically attempt to divide society into formal and informal parts. As dialectical processes defined by their relation to the bureaucracy, they not only by definition but also by practice require each other. Instead of discussing the formal and the informal economy as separated domains we should see economy as something construed by both formal and informal processes. Since they presuppose each other, an ethnographic study of one of them will automatically also be a study of the other.

Yet, distinctions between the informal and formal are central aspects of governing in the global south. Especially so in urban Ghana, where it causes divisions that break the moral economy. In this line of thought, Lindell (2010a p 5f) argues that the analytical value of the term informality is rather limited, but as a category of practice, meaning the way it is asserted to pursue certain goals or agendas by different actors (the state, civil society organization or international organizations for instance), it remains important (also see Potts 2008). For how it structures society, the politics of informality and formality remains particularly interesting, and deserves a critical analysis. It produces a constantly changing and dynamic point of tension between the inside and outside, the formal and the informal. This tension, in turn, not only characterizes the marketspace in which traders exist and work but triggers a moral economy of norms and values to which we will now turn our attention.

**Moral Economy**

The moral economy of small-scale trade in central Tamale, that I associate with the small-small, centers around the norms and values of gradual progress and letting others in. The history of the concept “moral economy” goes back to the eighteenth century, although it was at that time mostly a religious concept. In the nineteenth century, its meaning shifted into characterizing the workings of the emerging civil society (Götz 2015). However, it is first through the work of the cultural historian E. P. Thompson (1971) and political scientist James C. Scott (1976) that it entered anthropological debates. As outlined by them, it reveals the standards, norms and values within an economy, but also describe how these in turn legitimize struggles, resentments and resistance against a more powerful other. For Thompson the moral economy is “continuously regenerating itself as anti-capitalist critique, as a resistance movement” (Thompson 1993 p 341). While he focused on the moral economy of poor consumers in the food market, Scott (1976) centered his analysis on producers. I am here taking a different approach by looking at those in between: the traders, who occupy the symbolic epicenter of capitalism, the market itself. Illuminating the moral
The economy of the market undermines attempts to describe capitalism as an amoral and technocratic project. Instead it enables us to understand how community and competition can interact in a time of deregulation and market adjustments. However, this shift requires a wider understanding of moral economy, hence I predominantly build my arguments on Fassin (2009) who describes moral economy as the production, distribution and use of values, norms, and obligations in social space. In this way, Fassin draws on Thompson and Scott, but detaches the concept from the market and generalizes it, thus making it applicable to many different settings and not just as a subversive form of anti-capitalist struggle.

In 1957, Ghana was the first country south of the Sahara to liberate itself from the colonial power. The leader of the independence struggle and the first president, Kwame Nkrumah, took a prominent role in the creation of pan-Africanism. Since then it has been common to place Ghana at the forefront of African developments. In the context of the Cold War, Nkrumah led a socialist regime emphasizing the emancipation and independence from the colonial powers. This can be contrasted to the neoliberal governments in recent decades, which have increased the dependence on the global economy, on former colonial powers as trading partners, and on world politics in general. This shift has triggered a moral engagement with the economy, in which traders frame a way by which trade ought to be conducted and condemn practices and instances that depart from that.

There is a long history of studying the linkages between morality and economics. Browne (2009) argues that moral discussions concerning capitalism can be traced back to the 18th century and to Adam Smith, who argued that when governments leave the market alone, letting individuals act in their own self-interest, society will ultimately benefit. This is the “invisible hand” of the market, which fosters competition, keeps prices low and thwarts monopolies. The neoclassical economists in the late 19th century and onwards, on the other hand, saw rational humans striving to maximize the utility of their knowledge and actions. In that way, they removed morality from the discussion of the market that was instead framed within a supply and demand model. Still, they emphasized the significance of the invisible hand together with minimal government interference and free market. Today, Browne argues, promoters of liberal economy see capitalism as the only system that has been able to protect the freedom of the individual with regard to oppressive regimes, tyrannies and socialism. The choices given to the individual are themselves a moral good (p 10f).

If the invisible hand through competition and freedom of choice can be claimed to make up a capitalist morality, it is often framed as being amoral, rational and scientific. The structural adjustment programs, for instance, were designed and implemented in Africa during the 1980s as depoliticized projects, simply technocratic and economic. In most African contexts however, they were understood to be part of a “flexible repertoire” (Ferguson 2006 p 72) of moral terms. Ferguson connects this back to Evans-Pritchards and magic among the Azande, making a contrasting analogy to the termite-eaten granary, which happened to fall on a man, killing him. For the Azande, the termites in themselves represented no explanation to the accident; rather,
they led to new questions, such as, “Who sent them?” Ferguson argues that while capitalism amoralizes the economy by making it merely dependent on rational rules, the Azande humanize the economy. We should learn from the Azande, and ask questions directed toward human agency to understand disparities of wealth and power.

According to Ferguson, there is a de-moralized “scientific capitalism” that prescribes and commends African states to act economically correctly, and that has spread into the domains of politics, with the introduction of “good governance.” The challenge then is to dismantle this pragmatic and technocratic approach to economics and politics, making their moral premises explicit. “Notions of the inviolate rights of individuals, the sanctity of private property, the nobility of capitalist accumulation, and the intrinsic value of ‘freedom’ (understood as the freedom to engage in economic transactions) lie just below the surface of much of the discourse of scientific capitalism,” (p 80) he states.

Thompson (1971) studied the riots of the English crowd against the price increase of grain and flour in the eighteenth century. At that time, the traditional paternalistic framework for production and provision of farm produce was challenged by a modernized agriculture and a gradual liberalization of the economy. The old system existed in a body of statute and common laws and by custom. In that system, marketing was controlled and was supposed to be as direct as possible from the farmer to the consumer in the local pitching markets. The poor were supposed to have the first opportunity to buy small parcels of grain, flour, or meal, before the licensed dealers could buy. Gradually this model was contested; farmers and dealers had begun buying and selling in the farms, using middlemen, and in other ways circumventing the model, leading to increased prices for the poor consumers. However, as “the old model remained in men’s minds as a source of resentment (p 85),” the poor reacted against the deregulation. In times of dearth this led to riots, seizures of bread and flour, attacks on mills, etc., by the poor. These actions were legitimized from the paternalistic model, which “was grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community” (p 79). This in turn is what Thompson describes as a moral economy (also see Edelman 2012). The outrage causing direct action, he argues, was grounded on this morality, just as much as on the deprivation itself (Thompson 1971 p 79).

Fassin (2009) argues that Thompson’s moral economy works on two different levels. The first is as an embedded system of exchange that characterized the society before the introduction of markets. Thus, the conflict Thompson describes is a specific process in economic history from which he is unwilling to detach the concept of moral economy (also see Götz 2015). The second level of Thompson’s moral economy is a system of norms and obligations that guides and motivates judgments and actions. In this respect, Thompson’s version is quite applicable to small-scale trade in Ghana, yet
the processes I am trying to describe in this thesis are not the same as the great transformation. As stated, small-small does not always emerge as an anti-capitalist critique, but also as a critique against actors who obstruct the market. What Thompson does is reinvigorate the concept of moral economy by giving it meaning and substance, while he simultaneously fails to see its analytical potential if generalized and detached from the particular context of eighteenth century food riots.

Though studying completely different settings, Scott (1976) shares several key arguments with Thompson on what constitutes a moral economy. For instance, they both see moral economy as central in class conflicts, in which the moral is a source for legitimizing resentment. But while Thompson studied confrontations, Scott rather studied resentment within patron-client relations (also see Thompson 1993). Scott describes a general “subsistence ethics” of peasant societies that is grounded in being risk-averse rather than wanting to maximize potential profits.

Within the village context, a wide array of social arrangements typically operated to assure a minimum income to inhabitants. The existence of communal land that was periodically redistributed, in part on the basis of need, or the commons in European villages functioned in this way. In addition, social pressures within the precapitalist village had a certain redistributive effect: rich peasants were expected to be charitable, to sponsor more lavish celebrations, to help out temporarily indigent kin and neighbors, to give generously to local shrines and temples (Scott 1976 p 5).

This ethic, “as a moral principle, as a right to subsistence,” then forms a “standard against which claims to the surplus by landlords and the state are evaluated” (p 6f). Still, the struggle is essential. In the specific case of Burma and Vietnam that Scott studies, and the development of the colonial economy which generated subsistence crises, the ethic, which in that context involved notions of fair prices, access to land, fishing, and gleaning rights, and different mechanisms of redistribution and reciprocity, became the grounds for legitimizing rebellions and resistance against the colonial state.

Drawing on Thompson and Scott, Fassin (2009) formulates a definition of moral economy that raises the level of abstraction from Thompson and allows the concept to accommodate other settings than that of peasants and workers, like for instance the domain of science and the ideals of objectivity, quantification and empiricism that Daston (1995) studies. Fassin considers “moral economy to be the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space” (subsection 37).

This approach allows us to see moral economies in different settings also beyond the monetized material economy. Hann (2016 p 15) even criticizes Fassin for this

---

13 Both Fassin (2009) and Hann (2016) interpret Thompson as describing “the great transformation” of Polanyi, and express surprise that he makes no mention of Polanyi.

14 Thompson’s first book in which he mentions moral economy but does not elaborate on it was *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).

15 The English version of his text is unpaginated but numbers subsections.
reason, claiming that moral economy framed in his way neglects the real material economy, leaving “us in a world of free-floating moralizing discourses.” However, instead of changing the definition of moral economy, Hann suggests we should instead refer to the “moral dimension” of economy. This dimension, he argues, emphasizes the shared long-term values and practices that make up a context in which the economy is embedded. Although his point is valid that it is in relation to the “real” economy where moral economy may have its greatest potential, that critique should be directed to the researcher’s purpose and questions, not to the concept as such. In the specific research it is reasonable to question what moral economy helps to uncover. But a “moral dimension,” as the “ethical context” of “deeply-rooted values” (p 13) is not enough to account for the moral struggles and contestations that both Thompson and Scott describe. Also, as a dimension, Hann seems to argue that the moral is either external to the economy as a force that influences economic activities, or a context in which economic activity unfolds. As this thesis develops, this view becomes increasingly problematic. It will become clear that the values and norms of gradual progress and letting others in are not external to small-scale trade in Ghana, but a constitutive part of it. It simultaneously shapes economic relations and is a result of such prolonged economic interactions.

Recently, Carrier (2018) proposed that those long-term economic relations are the roots to a moral economy. For him a moral economy is not defined by its norms or values but through the obligations that economic interactions over the course of time generate. He argues that “moral economic activity occurs in and helps to reproduce relationships in which the transactors have become obligated to each other because of their past transactions. This means that such activity is motivated to a significant degree by the relationship in which it occurs” (p 30). These obligations are not only in relation to individuals but to the community at large. This perspective entails a distinction between activities that take place in a moral economy, which generate obligations and trust and are similar to gift relationships, to those in a neoclassical economy in which any obligations are already met with the completion of the transactions and motivated by the desire and resources of those who take part. In a sense, this resonates with the long-term and short-term transactional orders that Bloch and Parry (1989) identified. The long term refers to the cycle of transactions and distributions that help reproduce the community or social orders, while short-term transactions are those that are motivated by individual gains, profit and progression. It is, according to Bloch and Parry, when the short-term transactions are perceived to dominate over the long-term cycle that actors act on moral grounds.

I find Carrier’s emphasis on obligations and dependencies important, but at the same time covered by Fassin’s definition. Since obligations and dependencies generated from prolonged interactions do not require the use of money, Carrier’s contribution helps us understand some of the mechanisms in moral economies beyond the monetized economy, even though that is not his intention.

In this thesis I draw on Fassin’s definition of moral economy, while recognizing the critique of Hann and Carrier. Fassin’s definition is productive for my purpose in
several ways. It brings the values, the norms, and the obligations in small-scale trade forward, and lets them play a key role in the formation of economic relations and political mobilization. It detaches the concept from a specific period in economic history to become applicable in all sorts of social spaces, and in those spaces to explain the intertwining of economy, morality and politics, by pointing to the production and use of norms, values and obligations.

What emerges from this approach when applied to small-scale trade in Ghana is a spatially situated moral economy that I frame as small-small. It centers on two sets of norms and values. First is the idea that becoming rich and wealthy must be a gradual progression. Traders defy greed and emphasize that business should be done small-small. Second, becoming successful involves norms of solidarity. Especially important is to let others in to do business. By providing a place to sell and allowing credits on the purchase of goods, others are able to start a business and make a living. It thus suggests an inclusive competition for other small-small actors. Situated in space, it connects the self with the community in a normative economic temporality. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the norm of letting others in produces obligations that generate trust, loyalties, and solidarity. However, while simultaneously serving as a code of conduct and a moral prescriptive, these norms often conflict with how one actually becomes successful, which often requires big loans, and a withdrawal from reciprocal credit relations. Thus, morality never describes how people act, but how one ought to act.

Gradual progress and letting others in are not only prescriptive rules and principles that regulate behavior, they are also evaluative. They define what is right and what is wrong, better or worse. As such they are values. The distinctions between norm and value is important in moral philosophy and theory. However, in empirical ethnographic work, the distinction is difficult to maintain. As Fassin (2009 subsection 37) argues “values arise at least in part from norms, and norms depend partially on values.” More important than that distinction is what activities and engagements small-small enables and allows.

As a spatially anchored norm and value, small-small becomes an outlook on the world that guides traders in making their future and allows them to make judgments. This, in turn, capacitates actors with the ability to criticize, resent and make politics in relation to the formalization. Thus, the moral economy engages with the point of tension produced by the politics of informality by providing reasons for exclusion and inclusion. It enables a moral stance against a different form of economy that in the Ghanaian context involves quick profits, greed, and corruption. From this outlook, actors can direct critique not only against certain elements of capitalism, but express disappointment with the government for how it shapes and regulates the market. For instance, as will be clear in Chapter Four, traders criticize the idea of an open deregulated economy in which foreign capitalists outcompete small-scale traders through more efficient import channels, and bypassing middlemen. At the same time, as we will see in Chapter Six, traders direct critique against the government for not being capitalist enough. They complain at its inability to let money flow and move in the
“system,” but also at the corrupt and greedy behavior of politicians. Thus, it is through the moral economy of the small-small that we are able to connect the specifics of the marketspace to a general discussion about the challenges and possibilities that small-scale traders face in urban Ghana, and the making of a neoliberal welfare state.

Fassin’s definition also allows us to see how values are taken up by other actors than those directly involved in the economy. For instance, Chapter Seven shows how the values of small-small are adopted by the Ghanaian government and used in policies to mold young Ghanaians into productive and moral citizens.

Moreover, Fassin sets moral economy in social space, though he does not take that further. In this thesis, I attempt to show how that may occur. In Chapter Three I examine how the traders’ claiming of places in Tamale is made possible by the norms of small-small. I will argue that moral economy is not only in social space, but interacts with, depends on, and produces that space. However, that requires a deeper understanding of space and place.

**Place and Space in the Market**

Salifu had been selling petrol from a street corner for the last 25 years. In the beginning, he only had a barrel of petrol, which he had bought in the outskirts of town. Small-small, the business grew, and he added goods like oil and spare parts to motorcycle engines. The town developed around him. When the pavement was remade, he put cement to level it up to where he had positioned his wooden benches. Later he placed a container and added cement, so its foundation grew together with the pavement. When a petrol station was built just behind him, its parking area was constructed so that it surrounded Salifu’s spot rather than taking it over. His place became a social meeting place for the whole neighborhood. In the evenings, many people gathered around him and his family, sitting on his wooden benches, talking and waiting for the night to fall.

In the Central Market, dress and cloth trader Hajia Mariam, just like her market neighbors, had taken over the road in front of her, transforming it into a narrow alley. After a devastating fire in 1982, the market was rebuilt and for each year it has become more congested and dense. The road that was built to let transport vehicles enter the market disappeared in this process following the expansions of traders like Hajia Mariam. It began with traders placing tables and goods in the road. Some allowed another trader to sell in front of the store. Later, some traders began to extend their place in a more concrete way by extending the roof, building walls, and installing new doors. It took some time, but eventually all stores along the major road doubled in size, transforming the road into a narrow alley where no vehicles could pass. Hajia Mariam installed a fan in the ceiling of the extension. She hired a welder to construct a steel
door. The national electric company, VRA, further added to the congestion by building their electrical poles in the middle of the alley, so even if the extensions were removed, vehicles would not be able to pass anyway.

Individuals like Salifu and Hajia Mariam have gradually taken over public spaces, streets, gutters, and market alleys. They claim it and make it their own. Claiming place in the center of Ghanaian cities is a challenging and ongoing process. It requires negotiations with other traders, property owners, tax collectors, those upholding the law, and sometimes chiefs. It takes social skills and an ability to balance what is allowed with what might not be; or how to get away with doing what is not allowed. Market vendors often pay the previous shop holder, although buying and leasing stores from others is against TaMA’s regulation. Claiming a piece of a pavement or street is not allowed at all.

Accumulatively, traders’ claiming of place could be described through what Bayat (1997, 2004, 2013) calls a “quiet encroachment of the ordinary.” Quiet encroachment refers to the “social non-movement” in which individuals and families in a “quiet and unassuming illegal fashion” (2013 p 35) through direct and persistent actions acquire the necessities to make a living, from the propertied, powerful or public. It describes the silent, prolonged activities of ordinary people to survive in many cities of the Global South, like occupying land for shelter, street trading, or tapping in on the public infrastructure. For Bayat (2012), these activities are typical of the neoliberal city, the “city inside-out,” where dispossessed people strive to get by, by making a living on the street.

The quiet encroachment interplays with the small-small as it emphasizes the mundane, small-scale, gradual, and unassuming character of traders’ practices, and simultaneously emphasizes its potential to transform society when the practices are common and the actors many. In this process we begin to see how the moral economy produces the marketspace, binding individuals together in norms, values and practices, that reshape the material and social city. It also illustratively describes how actors transform urban places into assets or resources.

However, I believe the small-small approach takes this further. This is so, since although “encroachment” describes the process of traders’ increased use of public space, it also assumes the perspective of the state. It is the state’s property that is being encroached. As I will argue in this thesis, the moral economy justifies actors’ right to survive and to make a living on public space. There are thus rights involved that require us to go beyond the strict legal framework into a more socially and morally constituted one. The small-small outlook is a more productive perspective in this regard, situated in the spatial and social dynamics of small-scale trade.

I follow Massey’s (2005) relational understanding of space and place. As stated in the Introduction, space is constructed through embedded interrelations and interactions of various things, subjectivities, processes, or materialities. It is a sphere of multiplicity; a plurality of trajectories or stories of the phenomena, existing simultaneously in co-constitutive relations. The phenomena here can be living things, dead things, attitudes, social conventions, or geological formations, but also practices and
processes. Space is in this way always changing, open-ended, of “loose ends and missing links” (p 12). Since the elements of the multiplicity are ingrained with temporality through their stories, Massey makes us think of space and time together, rather than as separated dimensions in which time would be that which brings life to space. They are distinctly different, yet “co-implicated.” (p 55).

The distinction between space and place is important for this study. If space is the simultaneity of stories, in Massey’s reasoning, place refers to a particular set or collection of those stories. Place is a unique product of relations and histories, of time and space, better understood as a form of event. Moving between places is to move between different collections of trajectories, while inserting oneself into them. Places are thus also constantly in the making. They are “woven together out of ongoing stories, as a moment within power-geometries, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space, and as in process, as unfinished business.” In this way, places are not points, areas or specific locations on a map, but “integrations of time and space; as spatio-temporal events” (Massey 2005 p 130, 131, emphasis in original).

Traders’ ongoing claiming of place in urban Ghana is such a constantly unfolding event. Through ongoing negotiations and conversations with other actors, traders claim a piece of the city. They establish themselves through placing tables, umbrellas, goods and their own bodies. Some physically change the infrastructure by building drainage or foundations in cement on which they can place their container. It is often a gradual process. With small mundane changes, they—like Salifu—become nodes of the city. Massey (2005) emphasizes how seeing place as a collection of processes demands negotiations (though she refers to negotiations also in a wider sense) and getting along with one another. Those negotiations are necessary for the place to become assets for the trader. For that reason, claiming in my way of reasoning also refers to negotiations with other actors, such as fellow traders, public officials, property owner, chiefs and others.

By claiming I want to emphasize the negotiating aspect of place-making. But claiming is also used in slightly different ways. In an edited volume about the racialization of Canadian cities (Teelucksingh 2006), “claiming space,” emerges as a key concept to understand minorities’ claims to city spaces. Claiming in this regard refers to the process by which racialized people “created new identities and alternative representations as well as their resistance to the limits of the ideology of Canadian multiculturalism and the ongoing power relations associated with racialization” (p 13). As such, claiming concerns both a process of subjectivity and resistance. Langevang (2008) studies the production of young men’s street places in Accra, framing it as a claiming of place. Groups of young men gather in “bases” all over the city and claiming seems to be (it is not in her purpose to elaborate on it) about the way these are given meaning and form identities. They become sites from which young marginalized men can challenge their marginalization. For Langevang, this form of place-making occurs through sitting, discussing, and networking. Stasik and Thiel (2014), studying the way the gendered spaces of the marketplace and station in Accra are gradually being reconfigured, also see how newcomers into these areas lay claim to a space
in those domains. Though they also rely on Massey, they do not distinguish between space and place in this regard. To sit, wait, talk, and socialize are practices covered by the claiming of place, as I refer to it. Market stalls or street corners are continuously inscribed with meaning and part of an actor’s identity.

Claiming place is thus a spatial investment, and part of the small-small progress- sion. But the growth of Tamale has made it increasingly more difficult for traders to claim a selling spot in town, fueling a market of places in a very literal sense. It is expensive to get hold of a store inside the Central Market and it requires connections. Selling along the street is cheaper but also difficult as the pathways and street corners are already filled with traders. Yet, as will be described in Chapter Three, the place is the key resource for becoming a successful trader. It is what roaming traders strive to obtain. Credit is more easily given to someone claiming a place, thus it also generates trust within market networks.

Although places are constantly claimed in negotiations with others, they become inalienable possessions for Ghanaian traders. They enable other forms of exchange and are passed on to subsequent generations, bringing permanence in times of change. Induced with a symbolic value that goes beyond the value on the unregulated market for stores, unprofitable or unused stores are rarely given up. They are given to children or other family members. Traders prefer to sublet them instead of selling them. Nor are claimed street corners and sidewalks suddenly abandoned. They can also be transferred to other members of kin or friends. Being able to claim a place is a crucial part of practicing trade, but also for creating identity and forming social relations. Weiner (1992 p 6) describes inalienable possessions as those things that are kept while other things are given. For her, they hold a specific symbolic position within the society. They are “possessions that are imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners which are not easy to give away. Ideally these inalienable possessions are kept by their owners from one generation to the next within the closed context of family, descent group or dynasty.” Inalienable possessions thus bind generations together and form history.

Following Weiner, Peebles (2014) argues that the things that are kept both motivate exchange and establish hierarchies. In Weiner’s words, “The right to control inalienable possessions can be used as the means to effect control over others” (Weiner 1992 p 39, also in Peebles 2014 p 601). Peebles uses the idea of inalienable possessions to differentiate between hoards and savings. Hoards in the form of capital withdrawn from the market for future needs, such as currency reserves, are inalienable and highly valued. Savings, like money in a bank account, on the other hand is different. Someone’s savings is another one’s credit. Hoards then are “the dead capital that allows living capital to circulate as savings-cum-credit” (p 607).

As a hoard, the place is a resource that enables the exchange of other goods. Its value, as Peebles argues, derives from it being so liquid, and therefore it must always be claimed, maintained and continuously protected. It attributes its keeper with power and authority. Long-established traders are often quite influential. They are approached with respect even by government authorities. Moreover, control over hoards
enables planning for the future. Claiming thus gives traders the ability to think ahead, send children to school and perceive potential futures. The history and the future are thus built into the present through the event of claiming.

For Bayat (2013 p 26), these individual “encroaching” activities are matters of citizenship. They are not necessarily acts of resistance against the state, but when actors are confronted or threatened they may in defense act collectively and become a powerful political force. For traders, the street becomes a site of struggle between, on the one hand, staying autonomous and unaffected by state interventions and, on the other hand, maintaining its security and protection. According to Bayat (2013 p 51), these struggles are typical in states of the Global South for at least two reasons. First, those states often lack the surveillance capacity, as opposed to many industrialized countries, to control such activities. Second, since those practices are essentially the means by which people get by and help themselves, it becomes politically difficult to act upon them. In this case, the claiming of place in the public space is not so much an act of resistance, as it is to insist on a right to make a living and become recognizable in the city. But, to take the state’s perspective, when the “encroachment” cumulatively transgresses what is seen as tolerable, it will act forcefully. However, the state’s crackdown often appears too late, when the activities are too visible and too common, and thus fails in its attempt.

In Tamale and Ghana, such state interventions toward street and market traders are common, framed as “decongestions.” By spring 2013, something needed to be done, according to the local and national governments. A wave of fires was striking at marketplaces all over Ghana, and TaMA was afraid it would also hit Tamale. TaMA and other assemblies around Ghana decided to decongest the cities from traders and sales structures. Salifu’s container and goods were confiscated. Armed police assisted so that the community would not interfere. Under the threat of demolition, Hajia Mariam decided to withdraw her extension from the market road. The intervention affected many traders severely, but after a couple of months almost all informants had re-claimed their places with just some minor alterations.

I have now described what I mean by claiming place. To summarize, it is a form of place-making that stresses the ongoing negotiations traders have with other actors. The bringing together of time and space in this way allows us to think of claiming as a form of event. The place becomes a specific set of stories, processes, people, things and their interrelations, in the moment. Thus, it is always in the making, from moment to moment. Salifu and Hajia Mariam form their places in relation to other traders, the petrol station owner, the community, the VRA, and in relation to politics, infrastructure, and the goods they sell. Claiming place generates and goes on in an indistinct and dynamic marketspace, which now needs to be clarified.

The marketspace follows the act of trading. It is the simultaneity of those multiple trajectories, histories, processes and practices involved in buying and selling small-scale. It is not delimited to a territory or demarcated area. Instead it follows small-scale trade wherever it may be. It is open-ended, unfinished and continuously becoming. The marketspace expands and withdraws (mostly it expands following the growth
of population) in relation to the development of the city. While place is a specific set of relations, the marketspace is multiple, unspecific, and indistinct. Both are dynamic and always in the making. The distinction boils down to the process of claiming. Within the marketspace, places are claimed as streets, pavements and gutters are re-shaped through social, moral, and legal negotiations into inalienable resources.

Although the marketspace follows the act of trading, it comes to be through processes that sometimes span wider geographies. For instance, the neoliberal transformations beginning with structural adjustment lead to a great number of people finding ways to survive along the streets by primarily buying and selling. The political attempt to formalize the economy relies on developmental ideologies that are not confined to the Ghanaian state borders. Many goods sold by street and market vendors are often produced in countries far away, by multinational corporations spanning the whole world. These processes shape the marketspace along with the moral economy and the relational and spatial practice of the traders themselves.

In contrast to the marketspace, the marketplace is defined by its location. It is the area defined by the state as where trade is allowed and supposed to take place. They are designed and demarcated by the local government and market associations. The processes of defining marketplaces and relocating traders to them are political technologies that, in line with the formalization, have become increasingly imperative in governing small-scale trade. Sometimes the marketspace and the marketplace overlap, like in the Central Market. Sometimes they do not, like the Kukuo and Kalpohin markets, which are defined as marketplaces by the local government but hold no commerce (see figures 6 and 7 in Chapter Three). Although marketplaces in a sense are claimed, the place here is different from the place that traders claim.

While the marketplace is a political construct, a way for the state to govern the city, the marketspace and the claiming of place is my analytical approach to understand a wider politics involved that are not confined to city plans, political decisions and programs. Massey (2005) sees a politics that emerges through the “throwntogetherness” of all these matters into space. This politics centers on issues of inclusion and exclusion, of what and who is to be allowed to take part in its making. The marketspace allows for a way of understanding the politics that goes beyond the regulation and control of territories, that brings forward the politics entailed in the relations between processes and actors. It involves struggles over places; struggles between traders, and between traders, government actors and chiefs, and between different place-making ideologies. The marketspace approach emphasizes in this way the everyday practices and relations of traders, government actors, but also policies, ideologies, and infrastructure.

Not only goods and capital are exchanged in the marketspace, but information, values, and ideas are as well. The marketspace is not confined to the urban, though it certainly is more prevalent in the cities than in the villages. As any market, it is a space where close relationships are negotiated, where loyalties to the family and friends are maintained or broken. At the same time, it is a space where more distant relations are formed, such as networks of businessmen near and far away, or the loan contracts set
up by traders and of global banks. It is where the dynamics of friendship and family get involved in big politics and global capital. It is where shoes previously worn by a Korean is sold to be worn by a Ghanaian, where goods from all over the world are blended in the black plastic bags of the consumer. It is a space whose development partly hinges on the ideological directions and political decisions formulated and taken in corridors and plenums far away in Geneva or Washington D.C. The marketspace is also highly politicized as various actors in different ways try to intervene, control, influence and regulate. It is a site of contestation, between the authorities and the populace, what Bayat (1997) frames as “street politics.” The government taxes, sets up rules, policies, and defines places; parties mobilize, campaign and make promises; religious leaders gospel, preach and pray; unions and associations gather actors, pressing several conflicting voices into one; chiefs compete with the government in taxing and solving disputes; and then there are all those powerful traders who may lack title, but still influence others into specific actions. In the next chapter we will navigate through this politically complex and multilayered marketspace and delve into its historical making.
2| Tamale Marketspace in the Making

The Tamale marketspace is the simultaneity of those histories, political processes and things that are engaged in the act of trading. It is indistinct and dynamic. As I have explained, the marketspace is different from the marketplace. The marketplace is a political demarcation, a defined area that allows for small-scale trade. The state thus distinguishes trade in the marketplaces from street trade. Although this separation is not completely parallel to how it applies the categories of formal and informal, it resonates with this governmental way of reasoning. Seen from that angle, street trade is the epitome of an informal economy, while the marketplace symbolizes the organized urban planning. As such, it constitutes the more formal version of small-scale trade, where it is allowed and supposed to take place. Meanwhile, in practice, there is no real difference between trading inside or outside of the market walls. The idea behind studying small-scale trade along the streets and in the marketplace is to approach a discussion of exclusion and inclusion that the politics of informality and formality allows.

Goldstein (2016) does something similar in his study on traders in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The *ambulantes*, the informal street traders, are separated from the *fijos*, the legally acknowledged vendors of the permitted market stalls. Often, the relation between them is one of conflict and allegations—a relation that I do not perceive within the Tamale marketspace. Just like in Cochabamba, most market vendors in Tamale are better off than most street traders, but it is not an easy distinction. I have met very successful and established street traders, who are able to grow, buy a plot to build a house and send kids all through the educational system. Conversely, I have met market vendors who are really struggling with a limited amount of goods despite their shop. It is thus a heterogeneous space of inequality, dispossession and entrepreneurship. Though some traders are very successful, most are constantly struggling to make ends meet, always looking for other options and opportunities, though rarely finding them. Their one critical possession is their selling place. But since the authorities often regard that claim as illegitimate, it puts them at further risk.

The marketspace allows us to see other forms of politics as well, like that grounded on the moral economy of the small-small. It is a politics that is based on the right to make a living, on the norms of solidarity and inclusion, and on the aversion against greed and disunity.

To navigate through the marketspace is to cut through various histories in the present, while inserting oneself into it. It is not a navigation through ready-made maps
but a making of the map as we go along. In this chapter I will first describe the appearance of the marketspace as we experienced it in the moment. From that experience, certain processes emerge as specifically important in shaping the marketspace and ask for a historical rendering. I will describe the role of the market in the colonial and postcolonial history of Tamale, and how that history is marked by political conflict and violence. From there I will describe the ongoing neoliberal transformation of the Ghanaian economy and politics.

Figure 2. Map of Tamale
Navigating the Tamale Marketspace

In 2012 we arrived in Tamale from the airport in the north on a straight asphalted road that, as it enclosed the city, became a two-lane boulevard with a few planted trees between the lanes. High Street was wide with room for bicycles and pedestrians on both sides. It was obviously well built with a sturdy foundation and proper drainage. The World Bank had funded the construction of the road in mid-1990s (MacGaffey 2009). Several stores and houses had been removed or demolished. The tall shadowing trees had been cut down, which completely changed the character of High Street. Most of the replanted trees in the middle of the street never grew, were stolen, or eaten by goats, leaving only a round hole of sand in the concrete. Along the whole road new stores and workshops where popping up, along with provision stores, pharmacists, chop stalls, fruit sellers, internet cafes, along with carpenters, tailors, glaziers, plumbers, and electricians.

After passing the large unfinished Anbariya Mosque and the beautiful white Ahmadiyya Mosque, the traffic intensified. There were many cars, the motorcycles even more numerous. The main bus station to the right was filled with people; travelers and drivers but mostly traders. Hawkers carried their wares between the buses selling watches, chewing gum, drinks, and food to the passengers waiting in the yet-to-be filled buses. Selling in stations like this was common for newcomers who try to start a trading career. Next was the STC station (The Intercity State Transport Company). It was almost empty. The expensive air-conditioned buses left on schedule and in the quiet periods between arrival and departure times, only a few customers frequented the station’s restaurants. The Goil petrol station and some of the larger banks were found across the street from the station. Along the street and covering the facades of the modernist building of Ghana Commercial Bank and the less modernist Agricultural Development Bank, traders had built wooden shops and sheds. They were built on top of the gutter and covered the small piece of grass outside the banks and parts of the bicycle lane. The wooden structures were painted in bright colors and busy with customers and commuters waiting for their transports. The stretch of shops brought life and shade to an otherwise dull, hot, and harsh architecture. The scent of grilled chicken was mixed with the acrid stench of the gutter.

The traffic got stuck at the traffic light. Paperboys and young men selling pens or cleaning cloths rushed between the cars. Few people bought any.

Continuing south, after the traffic light, the larger department stores and supermarkets were lined on our left side. Here imported electrical goods from China and India were sold along with western-inspired furniture and West African textiles. The supermarkets’ range of commodities did not impress us as the ones in Accra and Kumasi. Yet, they were the places to buy German milk with long durability and Dutch cheese, attractive to parts of the elite and western expatriates. Outside the larger stores and

---

16 The Ahmadiyya movement first arrived in Ghana from Pakistan in the 1930s (MacGaffey 2006b)
sometimes blocking their entrances, traders were selling mobile phone credits, water, fruits, shoes, belts, and underwear. Some even sold things they had bought inside the very supermarket they sat outside of.

The next traffic light was situated at the crossroads from where the city spreads out. There, a choice had to be made. One option was to follow High Street as it continued as a boulevard to the southeast, passing the Gulkpe Na palace and the construction site of the new Metropolitan Assembly Hall and later the Northern Regional House of Chiefs. After some time, it would pass the large and brand-new Tamale Teaching Hospital. The construction of the hospital was finished just a few months before the elections of 2012. The two major parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) both claimed they were to thank for the construction, since its implementation had extended over both their time in power (NDC from 2009-2016, NPP from 2001-2008). Gradually the numbers of traders along the streets would diminish. If we continued for another few hours we would reach Yendi, the capital of the traditional state of Dagbon, of which Tamale was a part.

Another option was to turn right and southwest by the traffic light. We would then pass the palaces of the Dakpema (market elder) who claimed to be the Chief of Tamale, and that of Bugulana, a tindana (earth-priest or according to Mahama [2004 p 47], “owner of the land”). The street would eventually turn into the main road to Kumasi and Accra, the Great North Road (Soeters 2012) which linked the south of Ghana together with the north, and connect Malian and Burkinabe exporters to the important Tema harbor by the coast.

Our final option was to stay in the area around the major crossroads. It was the real city center. On our right was the main taxi rank (or station) that made up the city’s public transport. The taxis had fixed destinations and routes and passengers could drop and enter as they chose along the way. It was a busy place in the mornings and late afternoons, but during the hotter hours in the middle of the day, the station was so calm and the taxis so many that a long line around the block was formed. The drivers left their vehicles, while they went for a drink or something to eat before it started moving again.

Sheds from where traders sold shoes, slippers, newspapers, beads and more, surrounded the taxis. There were also some butchers. They chopped big pieces of cow meat into smaller ones, while waving the hordes of flies away with fans braided by dried banana leaves.

Beside the taxi rank and behind the new and bright white Zenith Bank was the Central Market. From our side, it was hidden behind the traders that occupied the small area between its walls and the street. The original architecture of the Tamale Central Market had been radically changed through decades of state neglect and enterprising market vendors. Even the entrance was difficult to see at first glance. It was narrow and congested by traders and customers. Tables and sheds with tomatoes and onions were often placed in the entrances and stores there were believed to be the most lucrative.
Just before we entered the market, we noticed the line of beggars sitting on the curb. Many of them came from countries further north, such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Elderly men and women sat with a bowl in front of them and prayer beads in their hands. Some of them tried to sell a few vegetables or kola nuts. Once inside, the speed slowed down. The alleys were narrow. To pass each other was often difficult, especially when transporters delivering goods to shopkeepers in their wooden wheelbarrows were on the move. We jumped between the stones in the ground to avoid the mud from yesterday’s rain.

The marketplace had been designed and outlined by TaMA in the 1980s with a wide street going around in a U-shape inside the market. It started by the taxi station and ended in the southwest corner. Larger stores of around five or six square-meters had been built in concrete on the outer side of this road with entrances facing the street. Smaller stalls had been built in lines inside the road. They had been openly designed with no walls or doors but with a corrugated roof.

Only little of this design of the Central Market could still be discerned as we walked through it. In some places, traders had built new stores where there were not supposed to be any. Everywhere a table or chair could be placed, someone had claimed it as a selling spot. Most of the stalls had over the years and against regulation been given walls and doors. Storekeepers had built extensions and verandas that occupied major parts of the road making it into a mere walking lane. The extensions had been given roofs that followed the slope of the original store. We minded our heads to avoid getting hurt by the roofs’ outstretched ends. In general, the Central Market gave no room for any larger movement.

Most of the traders inside the marketplace were women, especially those selling foodstuff like tomatoes, onions, and smoked fish. Many of the men trading in the market came from further north, fabric sellers from Niger and smock weavers from Burkina Faso. Along the streets however, young men were selling clothes, shoes, meat and more, while women sold vegetables.

To the west of the marketplace and next to the butcher house, the Nigerian motorcycle traders had their stores (see figure 3). Cow heads were put on display in a line on a tray by the street next to the line of some semi-wrapped new Chinese-made motorcycles. We listened to the banging and chopping from the butcher house and noticed the distinct smell of rotten meat, while we thought of the violence occurring in this junction a few years ago. In the northwest corner of the Central Market, between the NDC activist Azorka’s place and the NPP neighborhood Aboabo, a young man had been killed after a collision by factions of supporters from both NDC and NPP. The accident or murder of the young NDC supporter had not yet been resolved, though the four young NPP supporters had been arrested without trial for more than three years.

On the other side of the street from the butcher house was the “black market.” The black markets in Ghanaian cities often refer specifically to the currency exchange. Middle-aged and elderly men sat outside the large mattress and hardware stores waiting for potential customers. Long before we noticed them, they called on us to ask if
we needed dollars. The black market might have been illegal, but it was far from hid-

Moving south toward the large yellow-painted market mosque, we saw the pink
Central Mosque and its minarets with the green roof in the skyline. The regular call
for prayers broke the constant sound from the recorded calls of a private bus company.
The bus call was set on repeat and amplified with speakers: “Accra, Kumasi, VIP-bus,
air-conditioned, one-by-one-seat, Accra, Accra.” The streets around here were con-
gested. Too many traders and motorcycles made it difficult to pass and pushed us out
on the street along hawkers to cross between the cars.

In the southwest corner of the Central Market next to the HFC Bank and the Bank
of Africa there was supposed to be a car park. The curb was beveled to let cars enter.
Yet, there was no room for any vehicle to park. Vegetable traders had turned this
whole area into a market with wooden rickety structures. Few people beside the plan-
ners knew this was supposed to be a car park. But the GPS in my phone knew. Tom-
atoes, onions, garlic, ginger, cabbage, potatoes, green peppers, beans, watermelons,
and bananas were parked where the cars had been planned to be.

From here, another wide multilane boulevard stretched west away from the city
center. It reached the football stadium built for the Africa Cup of Nations in 2008, and
then turned into the road leading to Tolon. Before reaching the stadium, however, the
boulevard went through Aboabo. Aboabo, being the main Abudu area in town and an
NPP stronghold, was also the place of the larger Aboabo market. The market started
by the lorry park. This was where the trucks dropped their loads to transporters with
wheelbarrows who in turn sent them further to recipients all over town. But it had
become increasingly difficult for the lorry drivers to enter the station. The large as-
phalted area had been taken over by vegetable traders selling larger quantities of to-
matoes, onions, cereals, and garlic (see cover photo). Conflicts occasionally erupted
between truck drivers and traders. Every planned marketplace had expanded over the
neighboring streets, stations or open areas.

Adjacent to the lorry park was the Aboabo market. Its character and design was
different from the Central Market. It was divided into different sections, such as cere-
als, yam, maize, and clothes. The lanes were muddy but wide and accessible by
transport vehicles. Aboabo market was primarily a wholesale market, where traders
sold large bags of each commodity. Many of the Central Market traders bought their
goods in Aboabo. They bought bundles of plantain, or large bags of rice and onions,
and sold it in smaller portions or one by one in the Central Market. Sheep and goats
were tied to a tree next to guinea fowls in cages. In the Central Market these were
found only as meat.

We moved further within the Aboabo market to the yam market. Yams were, like
maize, a staple crop in the north, eaten boiled or fried. The yam market consisted of
three parallel alleys with stores on each side. Yam was sold from all of them. The
wooden structures built to contain the yams were dark but airy and had gaps between
the slats. If covered from the sun, yams could hold for months above the ground.
Figure 3. Tamale Central Market and the butcher house from the north-west. Food traders outside the Vodafone office in the foreground

Figure 4. Tamale Supermarket
The Aboabo market ended in the west with the unfinished supermarket (see figure 4). A few stores were open on the ground floor. Some older men were selling bags of rice. But otherwise it was a bare ruin. It was a peculiar place. Compared to the Central Market it was empty and quiet, cool and dark like a basement, surprisingly comfortable. Its history exemplified the state’s unreliable spatial politics. The project to build the supermarket was initiated during the Acheampong regime in the 1970s as a modern multistore building. Yet the political turmoil of the military coup of 1978, which ended his regime, also put the supermarket project on hold. Supposedly, big bags of rice, maize, yam, and beans were to be sold from the ground floor. The first floor, where traders now were letting their bright red pepper fruits dry in the sun, was to contain provisions, milk, soap and makeup. The top floor was never finished but its founding pillars stretched up in the sky. There, consumers were intended to browse among clothes and fabric. During President Kufuor’s time in office (2001-2008), the building was partly reopened. The homeless people and the marijuana smokers had to leave and make space for maize traders, bags of beans, and grazing goats, while the darkness and the lizards remained. Members of the maize and rice unions had together built wooden walls and stores on the ground floor. Most of the stores served as warehouses for traders and farmers who kept their harvest there. In the city plan of central Tamale there was now a “new supermarket” in the location of the old one.

***

We have now passed through the most intensive part of the Tamale marketspace. It is not delimited by the physical boundaries but spread out following the practices of trading across marketplaces, streets, stations, and open areas. Its intensity gradually decreases along the major roads leaving the city.

From our short excursion in the marketspace, it becomes clear that to understand the making of the marketspace in the present we also need to historicize some of the more dominating political processes involved. I will first describe how the colonial and postcolonial history of Tamale as a city is also a history of a growing marketspace. The chief of Tamale, the Dakpema, who draws his power from the Central Market, figures as an important broker in this history. Thereafter, I will take the butcher incident, as briefly portrayed above, as a starting point to describe how the marketspace exists in a politically polarized environment, in which the political parties feed on the Abudu – Andani divide. The inclusiveness of the small-small interacts with these tensions. The marketspace expansion intensified in the late 1980s and 1990s following the neoliberal political directions of structural adjustments. Recently however, the Ghanaian government have sought to regain control and reformalize the marketspace through constructing governable spaces and biopolitical strategies of welfare programs. The overall purpose of this chapter is to historicize and contextualize the making of Tamale marketspace, and by that also the small-small.
The Northern Territories and the Dakpema

Small-scale trade characterizes central Tamale. Market trade—along with Tamale’s administrative functions of being the regional capital and previously the colonial headquarters of the British Northern Territories—are the core factors for the growth of the city. Tamale is the capital of the Northern Region, but it is also the economic center of the Dagbon chieftaincy, which has its traditional capital in Yendi, 100 km east of Tamale. The Dagbon chieftaincy system is very complex and dynamic, consisting of hundreds of chiefs with different roles and with authority over different geographic areas. Most of them are hierarchically ordered under the Paramount chief, called Ya Na, seated in Yendi. Wyatt MacGaffey (2013) presents a fine historical overview of Dagbon traditional authority, describing how it constantly changes and adapts itself to the political circumstances. The founding myth of Dagbon which is frequently heard among Dagbamba and found in the literature, is one of invaders and autochthons and goes back to the 15th century. It was Na Nyagse, the son of Sitobu, who raided the area with the intent of killing all the autochthonous tindanas, the earth-priests. But the tindanas were not all killed; they still exist and fulfil important roles as shrine keepers and chiefs in Dagbon. Though MacGaffey argues that chiefs and tindanas share origin and rather complement each other, the myth of being invading horse-riding warriors are important for the Dagbamba identity.

The history of Tamale is a history that reconstructs Dagbon traditions in a context of colonialism; it is a “by-product of the colonial purpose” (Soeters 2012 p 4). Tamale was formed by the British in the beginning of the 20th century, and its growth and economic importance is much due to non-Dagbamba traders and ex-servicemen. As Staniland argues “[i]ndeed, Tamale is more an administrative and commercial centre within Dagomba than a Dagomba town” (Staniland 1975 p 1, also see Soeters 2012 ch 2). In the late 19th century, the British, French and the Germans had conquered and divided the Savanna Region of West Africa. To their Gold Coast colony, the British annexed an area between the Black Volta to the west and Oti River to the east, calling it the Protectorate of the Northern Territories. According to Staniland (1975) the area was conquered to stop the French and Germans from taking it, rather than for its resources. When the Protectorate’s borders were defined in 1902, Dagbon was divided between the British and the Germans. Yendi, located in the east, became part of the German Togoland. The partition of Dagbon is important because it was during the time Yendi was under German control and the British needed a place to locate their new headquarters, that they settled in Tamale. Dagbon was reunified in 1914 when the British took Yendi in the beginning of the First World War.

Trade, however, has a history in Tamale that precedes the colonial expansion into the territory. Its significance has always gone beyond the economic to the political domain. A key figure in the founding of Tamale in 1907 (which is well described in Soeters 2012, and MacGaffey 2013 ch 5) was the Dakpema, (da kpema, literally “market elder”), who the British came to refer to as the King of Tamale. He convinced the
British to place their headquarters near the market he was taking care of for the tin-
dana Bugulana. The town itself did not really exist at that time; it was made up by a
cluster of villages with a total population of 1,435. The Tamale market, however, was
an already established marketplace and a destination for cattle trails from Kumbungu,
Savelugu and Daboya (MacGaffey 2006a p 122). With the founding of Tamale, the
Dakpema was confirmed as the “Chief of Tamale” against the protests of the other
supposedly more powerful chiefs.

The Dakpema still today sees himself as the Chief of Tamale, a title not accepted
by the Dagbon state. Ya Na in Yendi has ever since the reunification of Dagbon de-
manded that the Dakpema should be replaced by the Gulkpe Na, who also has a palace
in the center of town. After the reunification and through its policy of indirect rule,
the British shifted allegiance and vested their power in Gulkpe Na instead. While the
Gulkpe Na had support from the British and Yendi, the Dakpema had during the dec-
ades established a strong local support which caused confusion over authority and
legitimacy (Soeters 2012 p 19-20). The Dakpema is thus contested as Chief of Tamale
both from the Bugulana and from Gulkpe Na and Yendi. Yet within the market, his
legitimacy is rarely challenged. The fact that most of the Dagbamba traders see him
as the Chief of Tamale derives from him initially being the market elder and illustrates
the importance of the marketplace in the construction and growth of the city.

The interest of the British in the Northern Territories was different from that of the
resource-rich south. During the colonial period, the north came to work as a labor
supply for the developing south. Soeters (2012 p 9) even argues there was a “purpose-
ful underdevelopment” of the north during the colonial period. This division is still
reflected today. While Ghana’s development is often considered a success-story,17 the
three northern regions remain behind in almost all areas. In recent years, the level of
extreme poverty has diminished substantially in the north, especially in the urban ar-
eas (NDPC & UNDP 2015). Still, the literacy level of the Tamale metropolitan area
is below the national rate.18

Tamale’s economic importance during the colonial period partly depended on the
presence of the government, a military base, and its location as a gateway to the north.
This attracted foreign, especially Yoruba, businessmen (MacGaffey 2006a p 122;
Eades 1993). The Great North Road that links Kumasi with Tamale was finished in

---

17 In 2010, Ghana was classified as a lower middle-income country. As a result, the develop-
ment aid diminished, leading to increased public debts. Four out of eight Millennium Develop-
ment Goals (MDGs) have been largely achieved: 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2.
Achieve universal primary education; 4. Reduce child mortality; and 8. Develop a global part-
nership for development have been largely achieved. Two MDGs, 3. Promote gender equality
and empower women, and 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, have not been
achieved but have seen significant progress. The two MDGs, 5. Improve maternal health, and
7. Ensure environmental sustainability, have not been achieved (NDPC&UNDP 2015).
18 The literacy level in Tamale metropolitan area is 61 percent, compared to the national rate of
74 percent, and Accra and Kumasi (90 and 83 percent respectively) (Fuseini and Kemp 2016 p
111, also see Krauss 2013).
1920 and it was the first motorable road into the Northern Territories. This boosted the trading business in Tamale and during the next couple of decades the town saw a demographic growth unmatched by any settlement in the Gold Coast Colony and its protectorates (Soeters 2012 p 58-65, 75-77). A majority of the foreign businessmen left after the Ghanaian government in 1969 declared the Alien’s Compliance Order, which gave all foreigners without proper documents two weeks to leave the country (Eades 1993).

After independence in 1957, Tamale remained as capital for the Northern Region and its major urban center. Its population grew quickly from about 40,000 in the 1960s to almost 400,000 in 2010. In 2004, Tamale was elevated to the status of a Metropolis, the only one in the three northern regions. The metropolis was in 2012 divided into the Tamale Metropolis (223 000) and Sagnerigu Municipality (148 000, GSS 2014 p 23) starting just north of the city center. The two districts are still strongly connected and share many economic and administrative functions (Fuseini and Kemp 2016 p 110f).

Abudus, Andanis, and Party-Politics in Tamale

The political history of Tamale is also one of conflict and polarization. Within Dagbon there are two branches of the royal family, called gates, who struggle over power and holding the paramount chieftaincy title of Ya NA. The struggle within the royal family spreads out all over Dagbon, reaches all the way to the president, and deeply affects the social life of the city. The forthcoming chapters on solidarity, trust and community always reconnect to this historical context of conflict, divisions, and violence. In those I aim to show how the small-small moral economy interacts with this politics of belonging, and how small-scale trade has helped to restore social life after instances of violence. This is possible through the ongoing interactions involved in everyday trade and through sharing places and positions. To make that argument, however, it is necessary to understand how the conflict plays out.

In the northwest corner of the Central Market is the butcher house. On the other side of the street to the west is the Aboabo neighborhood. The street that goes from Aboabo north of the Central Market passes the butcher house before it reaches the Azorka lane.

Mr. Sorfo Awodu Azorka was the Northern Regional Chairman of the National Democratic Congress (NDC, the government party, and the biggest party in Tamale),

---

19 In 1960 the Region was divided into the Northern and Upper Regions and in 1983, the Upper Region was further divided into what is today the Upper West and Upper East Regions.
20 Although the urbanization was countrywide, Tamale was growing faster than most other parts of the country in 1960s. In 1984 it measured 136,000 and in 2000, 294,000. Since then, the population has continuously grown to 371,000 in 2010 (Fuseini and Kemp 2016 p 110-114, GSS 2013).
and the front figure of the notorious Azorka boys. The lane refers to the traders selling along High Street. Azorka himself has claimed this street corner in the center of town and established an “office” and seating area for NDC activists.

This corner existed in a political tension with Aboabo that was strongly dominated by supporters of the opposition, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). In 2009, just after the results of the elections were announced that gave NDC the victory, a young butcher was killed outside the butcher house between Azorka and Aboabo. The butcher was an NDC activist and four young men partly residing in Aboabo were accused and caught with the “help” of some NDC youth groups who by force took one of them to the police on their motorcycle.

There are different versions of the story. But the butcher incident was interpreted by all in the light of the Abudu–Andani dispute, a conflict that can be traced back to the mid-19th century and that has torn Tamale and Dagbon for decades. Many referred to the butcher incident as an example of how they had been mistreated by the other side, and Andanis loyal to the NDC claimed the killing was typical for NPP. NPP supporters on the other hand, argued that the men were innocent, as the victim had accidentally killed himself. Aboabo residents described how a group of NDC people had gathered by Azorka to attack Aboabo and its Abudu residents. It took until 2013 for the men to be convicted. The long time in custody without trial was seen from both sides as yet another example of the injustice against them.

The butcher incident illustrates how Tamale is politically divided, but to understand this division of space, which goes far beyond the Azorka lane and Aboabo, we need to go back in time, to see how factions of the Dagbon chieftaincy and the political parties have gradually grown into each other, despite a constitution designed to separate traditional and national politics. Much has been written already about the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict (see Ladouceur 1972, Mahama 2004, 2009, Tonah 2012, Awedoba 2009, MacGaffey 2006b, 2013), and my purpose here is only to present a schematic overview with emphasis on its more recent history, in order to understand the context in which the events of this thesis unfold.

The conflict derives from the power invested in the paramount chief of Dagbon called Ya Na, who resides in Yendi. Since the colonial period and the British’ indirect rule he controls large areas of land. The Abudus and Andanis are the two competing royal lineages who aspire to that power. The Dagbon chieftaincy structure is largely a patrilineal system consisting of hundreds of hierarchically ordered chiefs. The tin-dana (earth-priest) titles are passed on separately and often in a matrilineal way. Chiefs in Dagbon sit on skins, gbon, rather than on stools (as in southern Ghana) or thrones, and possess a special power, nam, the “essence of chieftaincy” (MacGaffey 2013 p 206). Under Ya Na there are a number of divisional chiefs who rule different parts of the kingdom. Before the formation of Northern Territories these divisional chiefs ruled over almost autonomous kingdoms (Ladouceur 1972, p 98). The implementation of indirect rule however, came to rest on the authority of Ya Na and expanded his powers. MacGaffey (2013 p 22) argues that Dagbon was not very state-
like at all before the arrival of the British. Hierarchies of division and subdivision were not as distinct as the colonial rule saw them to be.

To be eligible to become Ya Na one must hold one of three specific skins, Karaga, Mion or Savelugu, called gate skins, and be a son of a previous Ya Na. These succession rules are central to the conflict, because sons of a Ya Na who do not hold a gate skin are unable to become Ya Na.

The conflict can be traced back to the mid-19th century. When Na Yakubu died in 1864, two out of his many sons, Na Abudulai (Ya Na between 1864-76) and Na Andani (1876-99), were able to exclude other sons of previous Ya Nas from becoming legitimate kings. All Ya Nas since then are descendants from either Abudulai or Andani. However, the history is contested and the descendants from the two brothers present different versions of all crucial events since then (See MacGaffey 2013, 54-57). The Abudu and Andani lineages have been involved in several violent disputes over power.

In 1948, the succession rules for Ya Na were changed in collaboration with the colonial administration. The rules changed from relying on divination and a court of elders, kingmakers, to instead depend on the majority of a newly created Selection Committee. The Selection Committee was dominated by Abudus, and it appointed Abudus as chiefs, causing disputes and uproar among Andanis.

In 1960, President Nkrumah established the Legislative Instrument 59 (LI 59) in an attempt to solve the conflict between Abudus and Andanis. The LI 59 claimed that Ya Na had historically alternated between coming from the Abudu and Andani houses. Although that was not completely true, alternation became a “pragmatic solution” (MacGaffey 2013 p 62) to solve the conflict over who has the legal right to the nam. The two houses view alternation as a legitimate method of succession. But it has never really been fully in play, because LI 59 also stated that before the alternation was to start, Andanis should be allowed to enskin two Ya Nas in a row after the incumbent Abudulai III. This was to compensate for the Abudu dominance.

The LI 59 maintained peace until the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966. But it caused problems for the Abudu gate. Because after the two Andani Ya Na that were to hold the nam in a row, there might be no Abudu sons of a previous Ya Na left to be eligible for the skin. The LI 59 thus threatened the Abudus with exclusion.

It was during this time the dispute entered national politics. The Abudus and Andanis had become aligned with the dominant political parties, who in turn promised support for their votes. The Andanis lined up with Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP), later the National Alliance Liberals (NAL) and finally the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The Abudus lined up with the Progress Party and later the New Patriotic Party (NPP) (MacGaffey 2013, p 62-68, also see Tonah 2012 and Mac-Gaffey 2006b).

Against the rules of alternation stipulated in the LI 59 and against the agreement of two successive Andani rulers, the Selection Committee chose another Abudu, Na Mahamadu, when Abudulai III died in 1967. Nor did Na Mahamadu hold one of the necessary gate skins. As a result, violence broke out in Yendi that killed 23 people.
In 1974 during the new national government of colonel Acheampong, a white paper was published that found Na Mahamadu falsely and unproperly appointed and selected. The kingmakers suggested Na Andani II as Ya Na instead (under the name Yakubu Andani). The decision changed several times following the many and quick changes of the national government in the 1970s until the supreme court in 1986 declared Yakubu Andani as the legitimate Ya Na, and Na Mahamadu as an ex-Ya Na (MacGaffey 2013 p 62-65).

When the NPP won the elections of 2000, many Abudus in Yendi believed things would change again. Violence broke out which culminated with the murder of Ya Na Yakubu Andani during the fire festival, Bugum, at the end of March 2002. On Bugum, celebrators make sacrifices to gods and ancestors and in a warlike mood pass through the streets with torches, rifles, and other weapons. On the 25th of March 2002, fighting and gunfire had broken out between the Abudu and Andani factions. The fighting escalated until the 27th of March when Abudu supporters entered the royal Gbewaa Palace and killed everyone they met, including Ya Na, and then set it on fire. To further aggravate the situation, Ya Na’s body was dismembered and parts of it used as trophies when the perpetrators paraded through the streets of Yendi (Awedoba 2009 p 206). Thirty people were killed and thirty-six houses along the palace were burnt down.

While alternation of succession in theory holds support by the Abudus and the Andanis, the dispute today centers around whether ex-Ya Na Mahamadu was a legitimate Ya Na. The Abudus argued that his funeral rites must be properly conducted within the Gbewaa palace. The funeral rites would legitimate him as a Ya Na and enable his sons to become Ya Na in the future. One of his sons, known as the Bolin Lana, heads a shadow hierarchy of Abudu chiefs in Yendi. Yakubu Andani denied the Abudus the right to bury Na Mahamadu within the palace. While the Andanis demanded the government to find and prosecute his murderers, the Abudus argued he was killed in war, a legitimate political action within Dagbon traditions.

The killing of Ya Na and his court thus peaked a long ongoing dividing process between the Abudus and Andanis and their supporters. The killing was followed by a long-term curfew and state of exception in Tamale and Yendi. Tamale’s General Assembly was dissolved until the next elections. Meanwhile, the metropolis was governed by a twelve-member Interim Management Committee, supported by different technical departments (UN-HABITAT 2009).

Interestingly, when traders and security personnel talked about this violent time they described the marketplaces as the only institutions in town working as intended. This further reinforced the process in which the Central Market under democratic rule had become a practically independent part of the city. It had become a self-taxed place with its own regulations and moral rules, which among other things allowed for traders to rebuild and extend their shops.

The Andanis received strong support and help from Rawlings (the founder of NDC), while the Abudu on the other hand received promises from NPP. Since Ya Na was killed during the NPP regime, many Andanis claimed the party played a part in
the murder. The lack of security and the inability to convict the perpetrators during its time in power further deepened these perceptions. The government’s commission of inquiry clearly stated in their report that the police never made a proper investigation of the murder, but also blamed both parties for provocative actions. Later, two men were tried for the murder of Ya Na, but the evidence did not hold in court. A committee of Eminent Kings headed by the Asantehene (the paramount Asante chief) was appointed to mediate between the parties. In 2006, Ya Na was buried, and his son was appointed as regent but without the ability to appoint chiefs or alienate land. The committee’s conclusions, a “Road Map to Peace” and later a “Final Peace Agreement” did not settle the matter. After NDC’s victory in the elections of 2008, Andanis were hoping that Ya Na’s murderers would be punished and a new Andani Ya Na enskinned. In April 2010, the military arrested thirty men in Yendi of which fifteen were put on trial. One of them escaped and the other fourteen were acquitted. In Yendi, where a majority are Abudus, people were celebrating, while in the Andani-dominated Tamale, Andani youths attacked NDC offices, and the city was placed under another curfew (MacGaffey 2013 p 65-68). Awedoba (2009) stresses the importance of various youth groups and their interlinkages with the political parties as central in the persistence of the conflict.

It is in this historical context that we must understand the butcher incident and how it was interpreted. This act of political violence was directly connected with the intermingling of Dagbon chieftaincy with national politics. This interpretation also manifests itself in a division of urban space. Also illustrated by the butcher incident is that the city is divided in line with political party affiliations. Azorka’s corner and the Aboabo are part of a political party infrastructure. Neighborhoods, streets, and mosques are often associated with one of the major political parties. The typical Andani and NDC neighborhoods are Choggu, Sakasaka, and Changli, while Aboabo, Tolon and parts of Zogberli are Abudu/NPP territories. Some Andani informants even feared entering the Aboabo. Palaces are also seen as either NPP or NDC. When it is time for Damba celebrations there is a perception among some that the Abudus and the Andanis gather at different palaces. According to MacGaffey (2006a, 2006b) the biggest mosques are also connected to different sides, a separation that goes back to the 1950s. The Anbariya (Sunni) mosque is known by most in town to be an Andani mosque, while the Central Mosque follows the Tijaniyya movement.

The marketspace is situated in this context of polarization, violence and divisions. Within the marketspace, those divisions are harder to discern. While Dagbamba traders do see themselves as either Abudu or Andani, within the marketspace those identities are not allowed to dominate and influence economic and social life. They are deemphasized by a moral economy of inclusion and solidarity. As this thesis will show, Abudus and Andanis trade together, they claim places together, and assist each other in their daily work. They are joined in their critique against dividing mechanisms.
Democracy Increasing Polarization

The Abudu–Andani dispute is amplified by a democratic political system that vests almost all powers in the president. Ghana is a politically divided country. NDC (in power 1993-2000 and 2009-2016) controls the north, the coast and the east. NPP (in power 2001-2008 and 2017 onward) controls the middle regions, and especially the densely populated and rich Ashanti region, with its capital Kumasi. This divide goes back to the time of independence and the days of Kwame Nkrumah. But there are also many places around Ghana that have strong political tensions within them. As in Tamale, this is often the case where there are chieftaincy disputes (see for instance, Lund 2003, Lentz 2006a). In a way, the democratization has provided a space for conflicts such as that between the Abudus and Andanis to be played out.

The local governments of the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies (MMDA) are, as stated in the Constitution, designed to be “non-partisan” (Nyendu 2015), in the sense that its assemblymen must not be associated with any political party. But, the president of Ghana still has great power over their composition.

The Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA) is made up of a metropolitan chief executive (MCE, or mayor) appointed by the president, two members of parliament (MPs) representing the constituencies, the metropolitan coordinating director, (MCD) and 59 assemblymen. The assemblymen are either elected as individuals representing an electoral area or appointed by the president in consultation with traditional authorities and other local interest groups. The purpose behind the nonpartisan form of local government is to allow members to act independently, rather than following the interest of political parties that is believed to create disunity and divisions. Yet the system is widely debated, and critics have argued that since the president is involved in the composition of the assemblies, they are in fact already partisan (see Nyendu 2015).

The president’s direct involvement in the formation of the local government creates a winner-takes-all system, meaning that the opposition will have almost no representation in the local government (except from the MPs) even if a majority of its residents have voted on them. This winner-takes-all system is further boosted by the government’s ability to allocate public sector jobs, construction contracts, consultancies, and directorships. After a turnover in government, major reallocations are done

---

21 “A candidate seeking election to a District Assembly or any lower local government unit shall present himself to the electorate as an individual, and shall not use any symbol associated with any political party.” (Ghana, 1992 Constitution: Article 248, p 1, in Nyendu 2015 p 58).

“A political party shall not endorse, sponsor, offer a platform to or in anyway [sic] campaign for or against a candidate seeking election to a District Assembly or any lower local government unit.” (Ghana, 1992 Constitution: Article 248, p 2, in Nyendu 2015 p 58).

22 This is a frequently occurring description of Ghanaian democracy, especially among Ghanaian political scholars (see for instance Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh 2012, Gyampo 2016, Abotsi 2013) and the news media. Also see the Constitution Review Commission (2011), which recognizes the tensions, acrimony and conflicts associated with the winner-takes-all political system.
based on party loyalty. Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh (2012) describe how this polarizing winner-takes-all competition becomes particularly critical in the light of Ghana’s recent oil findings. They see in this regard, a “toxic politics,” with political parties becoming merely campaign machines dependent on “foot soldiers” who uncritically do their party’s dirty work, and in which political “control of the state provides the part in power with enormous material and political resources and advantages over its rivals” (p 101). This hierarchical patronage-driven system in a sense mirrors the traditional political system of Dagbon and the almost absolute power invested in Ya Na.

The national government’s decentralization ambitions, which occur in large through the MMDAs (Nyendu 2015), has further intensified the polarization. The assemblies’ increased power has meant that local conflicts, such as the Dagbon dispute, become national political affairs. The outcome of national elections matters locally not only through the political direction of the elected president but through his or her right to appoint a major part of the assembly and the MCE. Debrah (2014) argues that this politicization undermines the decentralization project.

Buur and Kyed (2007) discerns a trend starting with the numerous democratization processes around Africa in the early nineties in which traditional authorities in various ways have regained their legitimacy and been given a new importance. For instance, Bierschenk (2006) shows how the decentralization in Benin that was designed to bring the government closer to the people and which was relatively successful also had the effect that national politics were enmeshed in local corruption, clientelist relations and rent-seeking. The major competing political parties each have their base in one of the regions. So, what on a national level seems to be a competitive democracy, is on the local level dominated by a single strong party. This politically divided geography in Benin according to Bierschenk, has its roots not in ethnicity, which may be common in other African countries, but in the regional structures of the colonial period. Haggberg (2007) describes “the ambiguous relationship” between party politics and traditional chieftaincy in Burkina Faso under the previous president, Compaoré, as chiefs had become increasingly involved in party politics and political violence while simultaneously being perceived as standing above it. In particular, chiefs allied to Compaoré’s CDP party instigated or sanctioned violent acts on political adversaries. As the violent acts became public through the media, a lively public debate began demanding that chiefs should be accountable for their actions just as any other citizen. This violence was made possible through the democratization that allowed chiefs to hold political positions beside their traditional titles. But democratization also enabled a public debate in which chiefs’ roles in the modern democracy could be renegotiated.

In Ghana, however, chiefs are prohibited from being actively engaged in party politics.23 Any chief who wishes to do so must abdicate from his or her stool or skin. Owusu-Mensah (2014 p 268) asserts, the “objective of this provision is to uphold the

23 Article 276 of the Chieftaincy Act of the 1992 constitution
sanctity of the traditional values inherent in Ghanaian culture and vested in the chieftaincy institution. This, it is hoped, would absolve the institution from the rancor and wrangling associated with partisan politics.” But the Dagbon conflict, as the butcher incident and the killing of Ya Na illustrates, cannot be taken out of the context of political parties. Politics and chieftaincy are for Dagomba the same thing.

Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2000) argue that belonging, ethnicity and regionalism are key features of African parties. They argue that democratizations in Africa have led to a rather non-liberal emphasis on cultural differences, belonging and autochthony. In many situations, a new divide between those acclaimed to be autochthons and those perceived to be allochthons (strangers or newcomers), have emerged, constituting a new form of ethnicity.

Although ethnic or regional belonging may at times be important when accessing a place to sell in the Tamale marketspace, that behavior is then always condemned, and regarded as examples of “tribalism.” As will be shown in Chapter Four, the relation between native and newcomer, which by the way are difficult distinctions to make in Tamale, is also infused with an inclusive moral economy that allows for others to do business if they adhere to certain norms. The moral economy, in this sense, problematizes the emphasis on autochthony as an “inevitable outcome of the ambivalence of globalization’s opened horizons …” (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000 p 443). In fact, the relation between Dagomba and others is not politically infected and does not generate any wider form of mobilization within the marketspace when the moral economy is followed.

From one point of view then, Ghana is a democratic role model in Africa, measuring high on democratic evaluations such as Freedom House or Polity IV.24 The leading position in African political developments is important for Ghana’s self-image as the first sub-Saharan nation to become independent; marketing itself as the “Gateway to Africa,” and having one of the continents highest growth rates.25 But from another point of view, that of how democracy vernacularizes (Michelutti 2007) in local understandings and practices, we see a political situation that is potentially volatile. We see a toxic winner-takes-all form of competition that in Tamale infiltrates social life and enables local chieftaincy disputes to be play out on a national political arena.

Political identities and belongings interact with the moral economy. The tensions within the Dagbon state work underneath other forms of politics which thus complicate politicians’ ability to rule the city. Trading in Tamale takes place within the context of the Abudu–Andani rivalry. The moral economy operates by emphasizing its distance to these tensions, and by accentuating norms of inclusion and by demanding depolarization. The conflict does not prevent actors from trading with another, but it

---

24 In Freedom House’s Freedom in World Scores (2017), Ghana measures 1/7 on Political Rights and 2/7 on Civil Liberties (1 is most free, and 7 least free), and has the highest aggregate score on the continent (Freedom House 2017). In the Polity IV democratic index, Ghana scores 8 on a 10 (full democracy) to -10 (autocracy) scale (Center for Systemic Peace 2011).

25 In 2011 Ghana was even the second fastest growing economy in the world (in terms of % GDP growth) after Mongolia (Pasquali 2015, Nov 01).
shapes the form of interaction and political discussions. In the following chapters I will show how the moral economy is a powerful organizer of social and economic life in the marketspace that interacts with but also downplays the effect of political identities and belonging. I will argue that these sentiments are part of a small-small politics, grounded in the moral economy of the marketspace and that exist in relation to the state that is perceived to booster the conflict and polarize the city.

Marketspace Expansion, Neoliberalism, and Formalization

As we navigated through the marketspace, we saw its expansion. Due to the conflict within Dagbon state, Tamale has been a difficult city to govern and unattractive to foreign large-scale investments. The locally entangled political problems, the lack of industries and natural resources, and urbanization have intensified the population’s dependence on small-scale trade. But the expansion was also caused by political processes of a more global nature, especially the neoliberal transformations of state withdrawal and structural adjustments in the 1980s. However, this political turn was a response to an economy in crisis that takes us back to the time of independence.

According to Boampong (2010 p 135f), the history of “informal work” in Ghana is linked to the failing educational policies of both the colonial government and Nkrumah’s CPP government (Convention People’s Party) of the early years of independent Ghana, and to the low capacity of the modern economy to employ the increasing urban labor force. The extensive education reforms undertaken by the CPP regime after the independence in 1957 aimed at increasing the number of students at all levels, but it did not promote the quality of the schools. Hence, the drop-out rates were very high, and many of those who finished still had insufficient skills for the few white-collar jobs. From the mid-sixties the Ghanaian government reduced the size of the public sector and many semi-skilled and unskilled workers were laid off. As the economic crisis and the unemployment level increased in the late 1970s and 1980s the formal sector expulsion of labor continued.

But the real expansion of the marketspace resulted from the structural adjustment programs in 1980s. This neoliberal turn was not merely an economic adjustment but provided political tools to govern society. Moreover, it engaged with the moral economy of small-small, by emphasizing what Ong (2006 p 9) describes as an “ethos of self-governing.” She conceptualizes in a Foucauldian way neoliberalism as a technology of government, a new relation between governance and knowledge in which the market logic infiltrates politics. States’ ways of addressing social problems become described as non-political and non-ideological technical solutions.

The government led by President Rawlings, who took power after a coup d’état in 1981, strove to stabilize the economy after decades of economic decline and political turmoil. As a socialist he initially wanted support from the world’s socialist bloc. Though Libya did provide some oil at a reasonable price, he was not able to get the
kind of support he believed Ghana needed. Therefore, the country under his leadership took a more pragmatic stance and developed the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) and applied for loans from IMF and the World Bank. This meant that the currency once again had to be devalued, the exports had to be stimulated, and the government subsidies cut. However, the efforts were not enough, and therefore ERP II was implemented in 1986, which basically meant a restructuring of the Ghanaian economy. These programs were described as the stabilization phase (ERP I) and the structural-adjustment and development phase (ERP II). This all meant a deepened engagement with the global economy and an “economic revolution” of macroeconomic and institutional reforms (Hutchful 2002 p 1) that, according to some, made Ghana a “star pupil of structural adjustment” (see Alderman 1994, Hutchful 1995, Amponsah 2000).

However, the structural adjustment programs had conflicting effects on the marketspace. While they opened up new trading and production opportunities following the withdrawal of the state it simultaneously forced many previously formally employed and new job seekers into those activities to survive (Potts 2008 p 159). Economic liberalization and fewer formal employment opportunities increased the competition within the Ghanaian “informal economy” (Clark and Manuh 1991 p 228). The marketspace thus expanded due to neoliberal reforms such as structural adjustments and the continuous demand from IMF and the World Bank on Ghana to deregulate and liberalize its market. Peck and Tickell (2002) frame this as a destructive “roll-back” neoliberalism in which the state withdrew from the market.

This increased competition within small-scale trade following the deregulation also changed its gender dynamics. Since the beginning of the 20th century, women have dominated the food markets, especially in southern Ghana. Before, trading had been an occupation for both men and women. But as cash crop production became a male privilege, market trading became increasingly identified with women. Men have since been often regarded as “constitutionally incapable of trading” (Clark 2010a p 27, also see Manuh 1995, Mikell 1995). Overà (2007) argues that in recent years following the structural adjustments and the “informalization” of urban space, men have also found it more difficult to obtain formal employment. They have therefore taken up small-scale trade predominantly along the streets in the Ghanaian cities to a greater extent than before. Overà sees this process as a de-feminization of urban space. Although the increased competition generated a critique among traders, that critique was not directed against the new traders, but against state’s inability to tackle unemployment (also see Clark 2010a p 226-229).

In their study on men in marketplaces and women in bus stations, Stasik and Thiel (2014) also recognize how the Ghanaian public space is reconfigured in terms of gender. They portray a pattern of uxorilocality (the married couple residing matrilocally) and virilocality (when the married couple resides patrilocally), in the way men are...

26 See Lindell (2010a) and Tranberg Hansen and Vaa (2004) for similar processes across the continent. Bryceson (2006 p 56) also argues that along the structural adjustments, the oil crisis of the 1970s contributed to the casualization of labor and the “collapse of the formal sector”.

56
introduced to the retail sector and women sell from open market stalls in the stations. They find Overà’s description on how actors are forced into trading as a causal result of poverty and exclusion to be an example of economic determinism that overlooks the subtleness of how gender, spatial practices, and social relations interrelate and renegotiate the gender dimension of urban space.

Tamale Central Market is a bit different from the markets in southern Ghana in this regard. Although women are in the majority in the Central Market and other marketplaces, Tamale is historically influenced by the male-dominated Muslim trade networks of the countries in the north and east; for example, the Yoruba community in Nigeria (Eades 1993). This has put the male traders in more powerful positions within the Tamale markets than in the south. There is, for instance, no market queen in the Central Market but instead a chairman. Most of the trader associations I have been in contact with are run by men. As one top woman of one the more important associations in Tamale sarcastically expressed, “We respect men too much. Certain things we can’t do unless there is a man involved.” But there are also many southern female traders in the Central Market. In the decades after independence many came accompanying their husbands who worked for the government. It is common for them to argue that Tamale’s retail sector is very different from the south, being far less organized and lacking the strong female-dominated associations that are common in the south.

When widening the perspective from the marketplace, as a politically demarcated area, to the marketspace that not only emanates from trade within the marketplace but all over the city, the gender dimension becomes more complex. Small-scale trade is no longer a sole female practice, it is today much more heterogeneous. Along the streets of Tamale, there are plenty of young men gathering in clusters selling second-hand clothes and shoes. A large part of Tamale’s population shares many of the experiences of being a small-scale trader, struggling to expand, or searching formal employment. The small-small is thus built into the city’s social architecture. The expanding marketspace also coincided with the fast growth of the city and the many rural immigrants who arrived in a city (Amoako-Tuffour and Sackey 2008 p 244), hard hit by political contestations and lack of civilian rule. Since trade predominantly takes place along the streets of the central city, this development has redefined the purpose of the infrastructure.

The deregulations and liberalization of the Ghanaian economy also changed commodity flows. While imported goods had long originated primarily from Europe and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{27}}\] That said, 45 percent of the working female population in Tamale work within the oddly compounded industrial category of “wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles,” compared to 22 percent of the male population. In total 33 percent of the working population works within that category, followed by “agriculture forestry and fishing” (18 percent) and “manufacturing” (13 percent) (GSS 2014). Note that in the Introduction it was stated that more than 80 percent of the economically active population works in the “informal sector.” The informal sector refers in this regard to a type of employment that exists across all industries.
America, in the 1980s Asian supply centers like Taiwan and Bangkok became prominent. In the 1990s, Dubai and Hong Kong also figured as important supply centers, with China propagating in the beginning of the 2000s (Stasik and Thiel 2014). In Accra new importers settled and distributed goods across the country. In Tamale, the new commodities opened opportunities. Resourceful, entrepreneurial traders saw the possibilities of working as middlemen, buying goods in Accra from importers and selling them further in bulk in Kumasi or Tamale. One specifically important commodity for traders along the streets were secondhand clothes (see figure 5). Depending on the turnover, traders bought them in Tamale, Kumasi or Accra. It was more profitable to buy the goods in Accra, but it required a larger amount of funds to cover the costs. Many of the bales were packed by Canam Intl, one of the largest companies in the world dealing with secondhand clothes. They collect used clothes from the original consumers in North America, sort, grade, pack and dispatch them in 45 kg bales from their factory in India to markets in Africa. The clothes sold in the streets of Tamale carried this history with them. Sometimes they still had their original price tag, which of course traders utilized to increase the price, and sometimes the trousers kept forgotten items in the pockets. The clothes were most valuable when the bales were newly opened, so traders waited until the morning hours to open them, when potential customers were many.

Figure 5. A street trader opens a bale of trousers in High Street

After the deregulation and liberalization, the Ghanaian State has been trying to retake control over the marketspace through various forms of interventions, a process de-
scribed by Peck and Tickell (2002) as the constructive roll-out neoliberalism. Accordingly, it emerged as a reconstruction of the neoliberal market ideals during the economic crises, resulting from the vast market deregulations of the 1980s. The growth of Tamale, which also involved a dramatic increase of the number of motor vehicles, put great demands on different improvements in infrastructure, but also in education, economic development, and health. The low level of internal revenue within the city put the political administration in the hands of national and international donor agencies that in a sense could have undermined the decentralization project. The Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA) was in a challenging position. Taking spatial control of the marketspace in order to increase the revenue became a crucial factor in strengthening TaMA’s financial abilities. Meanwhile, any such attempt to take spatial control of the city could easily backfire and strengthen the opposition, especially in a politically polarized and volatile context such as Tamale.

The roll-out neoliberalism here took its shape as a formalization process, (pointed to in the previous chapter), in which the government strove to take control over the people, spaces, and procedures that it characterized as “informal” (or “non-formal”) (Jennische 2012). Beyond spatial control and increasing revenue, the formalization also entailed various welfare programs such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) Informal Sector Scheme that included a pension fund for workers in “the informal sector” (ILO 2013).

It is important to remember that the Ghanaian government, through the SSNIT Informal and NHIS schemes, was here trying to solve problems for people who had long been excluded from all forms of benefits. Providing healthcare and pension schemes for people without regulated income is a challenging task. But it is likewise important to place this attempt in the context of a specific political paradigm. The developing Ghanaian welfare system was a neoliberal construction, imposed on a competitive market and with services only given to those able to pay the premiums. Formal sector workers were automatically covered by a salary deduction for the NHIS, while the informal workers were obliged to pay a premium. The welfare schemes, especially the NHIS, became very politicized in the national media by the political parties and by international organizations. The World Bank, for instance, celebrated its wide coverage (World Bank 2010; Witter and Garshong 2009). Oxfam (2011) on the other hand criticized the NHIS for benefitting the elite. They argued that since the system was funded mostly on taxes and only to some extent on premiums it is unfair that only those paying the premiums should be covered since all Ghanaians in some way pay tax.

Wacquant (2012) defines an “institutional core” of neoliberalism that consists of an “articulation of state, market, and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third” (p 71, italics in original). In other words, it is a process in which the state sanctions a marketization of citizenship. While it is important to bring those elements into the analysis, I find this rather structural approach too rigid to address what is going on in Ghana. For instance, as Hilgers (2012) reminds us, most African countries have not had any welfare system at all before those that are
now being implemented. Ferguson’s (2015) study on the new schemes of cash transfers in southern Africa, like the basic income grants in South Africa and Namibia, show how these are emerging at a particular time during which neoliberalism is combined with certain welfare ambitions. Those schemes are built on a “politics of distribution,” a new way of thinking on poverty and unemployment in which the state begins to realize that far from everyone can be employed. In Ghana, however, the welfare state is to a large extent built on the principles of commodification and market expansion. Peck and Theodore (2012) argue in this line of thought that we must pay attention to various historical geographies of neoliberalism, in how these tend to tell different stories of what is in the center of neoliberalism, namely how it “works as contradictory process of state-authorized market transformation” (p 178). This process becomes clear in the Ghanaian government’s ambition to take control over a market it simultaneously aims to set free.

Similarly, for Ong (2006), the essential character of neoliberalism is how it works as exception, which it does in two ways. First, neoliberalism becomes an exception in itself when introduced in contexts associated with other forms of rule. Second, there are exceptions to neoliberalism, since it is preoccupied with defining people or spaces excepted from neoliberal rule. She illustrates “neoliberalism as exception” by distinguishing between technologies of subjectivity and technology of subjection. These are useful for describing the Ghanaian government’s formalizing ambitions. They attend to how government and citizenship are not merely a legal relationship but invokes different biopolitical strategies.

Technologies of subjection “inform political strategies that differently regulate populations for optimal productivity, increasingly through spatial practices that engage market forces” (Ong 2006 p 6). For example, TaMA attempts to control the marketspace through decongestion exercises in which traders occupying streets, pavements, and market alleys are evicted and redirected to less congested marketplaces within town. In that respect, traders became mere objects that hinder the movements and flows of goods, people and the market itself. I will describe that process in depth in the next chapter. The technology of subjection can also refer to a fortressization of urban space, that in Tamale is well illustrated by the regulation that inhibits foreigners to trade. The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) Act prohibits foreigners from the retail sector in order to protect Ghanaian market traders from foreign resourceful capitalists. I will discuss that further in Chapter Four.

Technologies of subjectivity build on “knowledge and expert systems to induce self-animation and self-governance so that citizens can optimize choices, efficiency, and competitiveness in turbulent market conditions” (Ong 2006 p 6). These technologies become clear as an “ethos of self-governing (p 9)” in the Tamale marketspace, through the NHIS for instance, but also through how traders are encouraged to take loans or optimize their potential by furthering their education. In that part of the formalization, we see a way of governing that morally engages with traders’ future. (see Chapter Seven). As stated, welfare is a choice for traders and others categorized as
informal, while formal workers enjoy it by default. The government has thus implemented a form of “graduated citizenship” (Ong 2006 p 78f) that differentiates the population through privileges and rights. But more than that, it puts access to the welfare state in the individual’s ability to govern him- or herself, and render citizenship, in a sense, a choice and a possibility.

However, this “ethos of self-governing encounters and articulates other ethical regimes in particular contexts” (Ong 2006 p 9), which allows for governmentality to be fruitfully merged with moral economy. Reusing the analogy of the crossroads, in the Tamale marketspace, the ideas and symbolism of neoliberalism merge with a vernacular moral economy that emphasizes gradual progress, solidarity, and rejects quick profits and competition. The individual is in the small-small only with difficulty withdrawn from the social context of credit relations and obligations to fellow traders, family and kin. Traders’ optimization of themselves is here morally controlled by a constraining temporality that defines the marketspace. The small-small is thus in struggle with other ethical regimes, and the idea of a neoliberal self-governing individual must be situated in the dynamics of space. Viewing the Ghanaian government’s intervention in the marketspace as a form of neoliberal mode of governing thus only conveys one part of the transformation process. I attempt to show in this book how these techniques interact with the socially and spatially contingent temporality of the small-small moral economy.

Conclusions

When I returned to Tamale in 2016, the Central Market had been partly rebuilt, and the Aboabo lorry park had been cleared from all traders and was being rebuilt. The construction work of the unfinished Tamale Supermarket had resumed. The town was even more congested by traders than before, but there were no immediate plans for any new decongestion. Despite the renovation of the marketplaces finally taking place, which many traders had complained the government had neglected for so long, I felt that the disappointment among the traders toward the local and national government had intensified in other regards. The ambitions to solve youth unemployment were failing, causing frustration among the younger traders. Tamale was an NDC (the government party at the time) stronghold, but several considered voting for another party. By the end of 2016, the NDC lost the elections to NPP. A major reason was NPP’s more employment-oriented agenda and their “One District, One Factory” pledge.

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe the making of Tamale marketspace as a simultaneity of histories and processes that follows the act of small-scale trade, and to describe some of the political processes that I find particularly important. I have outlined the colonial and postcolonial history of Tamale and the role of the market trade. The Abudu–Andani conflict, and how it intermingles with a polarizing
winner-take-all form of political system, further contextualize the marketspace. Politicization and occasional violence have characterized Tamale and Dagbon for decades; meanwhile, the market life has continued. The small-small moral economy has even subdued the conflict. But in other spaces of the city, the conflict is potentially always present, forming a backdrop to which the small-small contrasts. I also described the broader political and economic transformation of neoliberalism that Ghana is going through, and how that shapes and expands the marketspace. In the relation to histories of divisions, polarizations, violence, market expansion, and increased competitions, the inclusiveness, solidarity, and modesty of the small-small stands out. The following chapters attempt to explain how this is possible.
PART TWO
3| Claiming and Reclaiming in the Marketspace

Street corners and market stores are important resources for making a living as a trader. Such places are often inalienable possessions that are continuously claimed for as long as possible. To claim a place is challenging, but it occurs in a moral economy that values the norm of letting others in. As stated earlier, Massey (2005) understands space as relational, open, and multiple. It is always in the making and becoming, and as such it enables a politics of space and discussions about access. In the streets, claiming requires networking skills and an understanding of social hierarchies. Traders must maintain clientelist relations to property owners. In the Central Market it also requires capital. Many of the stores are bought and leased in a market that is unsanctioned yet assisted by the authorities. Gradually, traders expand and develop their places. They establish themselves by investing in tables, sheds, benches, and cement. In the marketplace they rebuild their market stalls into stores with solid walls, iron doors, and electricity. In this chapter, it will become clear how this small-small claiming of public space depends on relations, negotiations, and struggles with other actors. The first part of the chapter ethnographically describes the practice of claiming in the Central Market and then along the streets. While doing this I also further introduce some of the key informants of this study.

The second part describes the government’s response and attempt to reclaim spatial control. The many traders’ claiming of place taken together put pressure on the local and national governments to act. In urban Ghana, like in so many other similar contexts around the world, this action often takes its shape through evictions, confiscations, and relocation of street traders to the marketplaces. In the first half of 2013, the local government, the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (from here on TaMA, or the assembly) removed traders’ structures and goods from the streets and market alleys in what was framed as a “decongestion exercise.” This attempt to formalize the marketspace by taking spatial and political control serves as a basis for the discussions on morality, trust, and citizen-making in the forthcoming chapters.

The assembly was supposed to allocate stores and stalls in the marketplace. An individual who wanted to acquire a store was to send in an application to the authority, who then would allocate a free spot to the applicant. The holder of a store or stall then paid a monthly “business operation fee” as rent. Legally, the store still belonged to the assembly, though many traders tended to see it differently. There was a formal difference between a store and a stall. The assembly separated the shops between type A, B, and C. A and B were stores located primarily around the stalls (type C), located in the middle of the market. However, as will be clear in this chapter, the distinction is difficult to maintain. Since vendors had built walls around the stalls, upgrading them to stores, it is difficult to keep them separated in the discussion. I will use the word store or shop for both stores and stalls unless the distinction is important.

There were several rules for renting a store in the Central Market. Only the leaseholder was supposed to sell from the store, and the leaseholder was only allowed to have one store. It was not allowed to alter the shop in any way, for instance by building walls or installing electricity. These rules were constantly broken under the oversight of the assembly. Also, the store contract was not to be sold, rented out, or given away. But, since the assembly had no stores or stalls to allocate anymore, these were the only ways through which traders could acquire a shop in the market.

An alternative market for stores, in which traders themselves bought and sold, had therefore evolved in the Central Market. The price usually ranged between GH¢ 1,000 and 2,000 (500-1,000 USD in 2012), but I heard of shops being sold for GH¢ 10,000 (5,000 USD). The price was dependent on its location, size, and whether or not it had walls. The best locations were on the eastern side, close to High Street and near the entrances. The stalls were cheapest. They were in the middle of the market where the movement was slower. However, buying a business did not involve any transfer of contracts or legally changed ownership. It was mostly merely an agreement one made with the previous owner.

It was the assembly’s revenue unit that kept the contract set up by the assembly and the legitimate leaseholder. Although it was against the rules, one trader told me it had previously been possible to get one’s name on the contract after a transaction. This was more difficult at the time of my fieldwork. But it was also unnecessary, as the contracts were not up to date anyway and only rarely used in the interactions between TaMA and the market vendors. One representative from the assembly argued that it was impossible to change the name on the contract, unless it had been allocated by them. But representatives from the revenue unit asserted it still occurred, especially when traders wanted to give it to their children.

But, as stated, shops were bought and sold without changing the name on the contract. Many traders were not even aware the contracts existed. They believed ownership was regulated through the revenue collectors’ registry, in which the tax payments

---

29 The Ghanaian currency is pronounced Ghana cedi.
were registered. In the registry, it was common to have the name changed. Thus, buying a store in the Central Market only required a payment to the previous owner and a changed name in the registry. In this thesis, when I refer to someone owning his or her store, I refer to someone who believes they own it, since they had bought it from the previous owner. The name of the new owner is stated only rarely in the actual contract.

It is important to realize the strength and resilience of this market for stores, and how confident traders were in having their investments returned if they were to sell it. For most traders, however, stores were inalienable possessions, and like Peebles (2014 p 606) puts it, they are “the most liquid in the event of catastrophe.” It was thus also because the shops were so easy to sell that traders kept them as long as possible. Usually, traders sold their shops only when the need for money was too great, and no other options were available. If traders became too old or felt they were in no present need of the shop, they preferred passing it on to a family member, before renting it out or selling it.

However, some few very resourceful traders did speculate in the value of the shops. One senior trader had six stores in 2012, one for each of her children. But, earlier she had owned many more than that. She had made it into a strategy to buy a store if she found one at a good price and then sell it at a higher price later. In between, she rented it out. As she became older, she settled with the six shops and gave them to her children.

Linda, an Asante woman in her fifties, had bought her store in the sense that her name was in the registry, though not in the contract. She sold towels, sponges, underwear, and belts in bulk to hawkers who roamed the streets, or to traders who traveled to other village markets in the region. In the late 1980s, she accompanied her husband to the north as he was dealing in hardware in Bolgatanga. They settled in Tamale where Linda opened her business. For a while, she rented the store through a colleague of her husband. Before he died, she bought it from him and made sure the revenue collector put her name in the registry. Although it was not allowed to have multiple stores, she also rented the store next door to use as a warehouse. Linda asserted confidently that buying and selling of stores was allowed, if you let the assembly know. Traders like Linda, who owned their stores, had a good sense of its value and were often investing in it.

Mary had a stall opposite of Linda. Mary was Ewe and came from the Volta region, in the southeast. She had been in the market for more than twenty years. She had many reliable customers and was a well-established trader in the market. Many of her customers served food from chop stalls around town. She sold cassava dough and corn dough, which are common in dishes originating from southern Ghana. Mary’s mother,

---

30 I have chosen to follow Clark’s (1994) distinction between the spelling Asante, referring to the cultural and political subgroup of the Akan people, Ashanti refers to the region. Ashanti was the spelling chosen by the British colonial authorities, while Asante is a better phonetic spelling.
who introduced Mary to the market as a child, was still in possession of her own stall on the corner, also selling cassava dough and corn dough, but due to her age, her daughter-in-law, Mina (Mary’s sister-in-law), took care of it for her. It is, of course, no coincidence that Mary was selling the same things as her mother. And Mary’s daughters were also helping her in the business and learning the trade. Fortune, Mary’s twenty-four-year-old daughter, took the greatest responsibility. She was going to secretarial school but was still managing the business on a daily basis for her mother.

Mary had preferred a store along one of the bigger alleys. It was busier there. She believed they lost customers in the narrow aisle. But a bigger problem than the store’s location was that Mary was merely renting it from a friend of her mother’s. She was too old to work in the market, but still did not want to sell the shop.

To rent, like Mary did, was the most common way to lay claim to a shop in the Central Market. The trader then paid the monthly rent to the revenue collector, and then separately to the leaseholder. Mary wanted to invest in the place, and build walls and doors, so she could protect her goods during the night. She also wanted to wire electricity to the shop, so she could install a fan. She joked at the corrugated roof that was open with a flap in the back of the store: “It’s my air conditioning.” The stall was still in its original shape, the way the assembly had designed them. The size was around 2x2 meters and demarcated to the adjacent stores with a meter-high cement wall. Wooden beams held the corrugated roof up. The cement floor lay a few decimeters below the level of the pathway. This was the same for all the shops in this aisle, causing problems during rainfall. As a response to that, the storekeepers had together financed barriers that stopped the water from running down into the stores. Many of them were complaining at the assembly’s reluctance to improve the pathway. They found it unreasonable they had to pay for the improvements themselves. They believed the taxes and fees they had been paying should cover such developments.

Especially after Linda repainted her store in a beautiful creamy white color with dark brown doors, Mary talked frequently about improving hers. She started a susu, a personal saving account with a micro-finance institute, of GH¢ 5 (2.5 USD) a day. Susu normally refers to the Ghanaian version of the collective rotating saving and credit system that are common across West Africa. In line with the government’s policies however, it is becoming increasingly more common that actors now practice their individual susu, through a bank or micro-finance institute. I will elaborate further on this in Chapter Five. Mary believed GH¢ 300 would be enough to buy the sea sand and the cement. In addition, she would need to pay for the wooden doors and the workers. But her situation at that time had stopped her from these kinds of investments. The woman having the lease had been so far reluctant to contribute to the construction of any walls, but Mary hoped that in the end they would be able to share the cost. After all, it would increase the value of the store if the woman chose to sell. Still, any reconstruction of the stall would be against the assembly’s regulation. Yet, that had not stopped anyone.

On the other side of the Central Market, Ibrahim, a fifty-year-old Zabarma man from Niger, had a shop where he sold fabric. His story shows how traders strove to
settle down, claim a place and become sedentary. When Ibrahim came to Tamale fifteen years previously, he had been working in several parts of West Africa—Niger, Ivory Coast, and Benin—and he had learned many languages. He came to Ghana to do business, believing the opportunities would be better there. He arrived in Wa, in the Upper West region, but found the market slow. He tried other towns in the north until he ended up Tamale. In Tamale he found that “business was moving.” He bought a bicycle and went around in town to sell. After some time, he established some regular customers and earned some money. One of his customers, an Asante man who had worked for the Ghana Water Authority, had a shop in the Central Market which he did not use anymore. His wife used to sell *gari* (dried, fried, and granulated cassava) from there, but they had become too old. Their children were going to school, so there was no one in the family in need of the store at that time. The man therefore began to rent the store to Ibrahim.

Ibrahim made the store into his own. He established himself at the marketplace, making himself well known among many traders and customers. He liked standing by the pathway holding the wooden beam and greeting passersby. He greeted them in the language he believed they spoke, Dagbani, Twi, Hausa, and sometimes Fulani. He immediately greeted white people with “Ça va?” hoping someone would respond, creating a bond that many others could not. People around him admired his religious piety. My assistant, Aziz, saw an Islamic role model in Ibrahim. He was careful with his prayers and appearance. Usually he prayed in the small prayer room close to his shop, unless he was attending to customers when the time was due. In that case he postponed the prayer until he was free to roll out his carpet in the store. He kept the Quran and the prayer beads behind his fabrics.

The law delimited market trading to Ghanaians (more on that in the next chapter), but that did not stop Ibrahim from laying claim to a shop in the Central Market. But he was cautious about working in the same way as his Ghanaian competitors and following the rules of the moral economy. He was also meticulous with paying the taxes, proudly showing the receipts and the stamps as confirmation to his contribution to the society. Like most Ghanaians, he bought his fabrics from Togo, where he had a contact, another Zabarma man, who bought the things Ibrahim ordered and send it to his house. His range of goods and prices were the same as any other fabric seller. He allowed credit and trusted customers would pay him when they were able to. Compared to some of the other foreign traders then, who formed new import channels, sidestepping middlemen and dumped prices, Ibrahim was not seen as a threat or a problem. He also started a family in Tamale, and after a certain number of years (at least five), Ibrahim could apply for citizenship by naturalization.

Ibrahim’s shop was important for other Zabarma immigrants. He had become a hub for young Zabarma traders who otherwise roamed the streets and stations selling watches and jewelry. Most afternoons, young “brothers” came and sat down on the floor or on the wooden bench beside Ibrahim. They rested, talked, and took turns going to the mosque for prayers. He made the impression of being a big brother to his countrymen. He helped them, gave them advice, but simultaneously made sure he
stayed superior. He regularly sent them for smaller errands such as buying food or drinks. Once, Ibrahim and one of the young traders had bought the same digital watch. For Ibrahim, however, it was unthinkable they were equal, and he insisted that his watch as well as his phone was better than his friend’s. Through his store then, Ibrahim could position himself in the Ghanaian community, but also hierarchically separate himself from fellow roaming Zabarma.

Although the contract holder was often a different person from the trader selling from the store, it only rarely caused conflicts over who had the right to sell. I came across only one such example. I was interviewing the engineering officer of the assembly, talking about the contracts and the physical structures of the market. During our interview, he went through all the piles of paper he could find in his office until he found a lease contract. It was the only contract he had seen. He said that he had acquired it when trying to solve a conflict that had erupted in the Central Market:

Somebody else was claiming the space; somebody said, ‘this space is for me,’ another also said ‘this space is for me.’ So I asked, ‘All of you, bring any documentation that shows the space is for you’ [he pointed at the document I was holding] . . . What I am saying is that these documentations, it should be easy for us in the assembly lay hands on them.

But it was very difficult for the assembly to keep track of the contracts, and even more difficult to use them in managing and controlling the marketplaces. This made it possible for the traders themselves to manage entitlements to the marketplace. Sometimes the assembly interfered, like above, and sometimes the Dakpema, the self-proclaimed Chief of Tamale, was involved.

While I was interviewing the revenue officer of TaMa, two men interrupted by entering the office. The older man, Alhaji, had previously been a butcher in the Central Market. He talked about how he had arranged a place close to the butcher house for his youngest daughter to sell tomatoes. The daughter shared a table with two other women, one selling dawadawa31 and the other, children’s underwear. These women did not have any store but had placed their tables in a market aisle. Alhaji’s daughter complained that the woman selling the underwear was gradually expanding her place, giving no room for Alhaji’s daughter. The other women told Alhaji’s daughter to move and threatened to complain to the Dakpema. Alhaji told them to go ahead and advised his daughter to not fight with anyone. But as the tension persisted, Alhaji set up an appointment with the Dakpema’s Zaachi, who was the person in charge of the security on behalf of the Dakpema. After having considered the situation, the Zaachi then told all three women to not cause any problems and leave space for Alhaji’s daughter to sell as well.

The revenue officer laughed and said that the Dakpema could not do anything and that it was right for Alhaji to come to him. The revenue officer saw Alhaji’s visit as a confirmation that he and the assembly, in the end, were the real authorities of the

---

31 Dawadawa is an aromatic paste made from the African locust bean plant and is used in stews and soups
Negotiations and Relations in the Streets

Claiming a place in the streets of Tamale was a different process than acquiring a store in the marketplaces, though it still required social and legal negotiations. On the one hand, it was set in a moral economy in which trader’s right to make a living pressured property owners, public officers and other traders to let others in and not obstruct their business. On the other hand, it also depended on trader’s social capital. Getting permission from a property owner required connections and networking skills. To know someone, who knew someone else, was a start.

The rules that regulated street trade were seldom communicated to the traders. But the general view was that selling from pavements, bicycle lanes, or streets was unauthorized. Traders could sit outside a supermarket or department store if they had permission by the owner. Several traders asserted that trade was not permitted closer than seven feet away from the street, but I could not confirm this with anyone at the assembly. The rule was nevertheless ignored by most. While it was crucial to have permission from land owners and other traders close, traders also had to negotiate with the authorities; namely, tax collectors, city guards, and the police especially. To avoid them, traders often had to pay small bribes.

Seidu, Mohammed, and Yussif were three men in their early-to-mid-twenties who shared a place above a gutter in a street corner outside a bar in central Tamale. I usually started my day in their corner. We talked for some time, in the shade of their Vodafone and Airtel umbrellas. In the afternoon, I often came back to write notes or just relax. From their wooden bench, we could look out on the streets, at the passing cars and hawkers, and at the goat on the other side, who regularly tried stealing pineapples from the fruit and vegetable seller. Like Langevangle (2008) argues, claimed “bases,” like this street corner, are important meeting places for young men in Ghana in constructing identities.

Seidu first started selling his mobile phone credits after finishing senior high school. He wanted to continue study but could not afford the fees and thus needed something to do while planning and organizing his life. A senior friend had a place on a gutter outside a bar, where a small-boy, Rashid, was selling mobile phones and credits. A small-boy is a young boy who helps senior traders to do their business. Rashid was about to leave, so Seidu stepped in to take over the work. Seidu felt his senior friend had employed him and began calling him “boss.” Seidu took over the street corner and the glass case to display the credits, while his boss removed the phones from the street to sell them at his own shop instead. Soon, some of Seidu’s friends asked him about the possibility to sell from the same street corner. The market there
hence gradually expanded as Mohammed, a close friend of Seidu’s, (and whose explanation of small-small introduced this thesis), began selling sandals from his small wooden shed, beside him. From that day, they shared much of their time and work together. Whoever arrived first in the morning arranged the tables and wares for both and sold them as if they were his own. Soon, Yussif, another friend of theirs, began to sell locally produced sandals from a wooden table. However, Yussif had been accepted to nursing school and was only rarely in town during my fieldwork. Mohammed and Seidu sold his sandals meanwhile, and Mohammed also reinvested the earnings in new sandals. He was practically running the business for him, until Yussif came on holidays to collect any profit. In Chapter Five, I will discuss how traders sharing place in this way is important for reproducing the moral economy, generating trust and solidarity. Even as life progress into other domains of society, the place is continuously claimed and preserved.

When Seidu took over the business for his boss, he was bound to him. He could not start his own business and remain in the same street corner, because the place belonged to his boss. If Seidu was not satisfied with the agreement that he and his boss had made, he would have to move to continue selling credits. For some time, Seidu considered a move, especially during the spring of 2013 when he felt business was going down. It was a general perception by traders that the elections in December 2012 and the ensuing court case affected the small-scale traders negatively. But he could not find a suitable place to claim. Other credit sellers already claimed every street corner in town. Selling the same commodity is a valid exception from letting others share the place. Also, the street corner he and Mohammed already claimed was well located. The guests at the bar behind them were often in need of credits, especially in the evenings.

To claim the place, Seidu and his friends had to regularly negotiate with the bar owner over the terms of their presence. They often ran errands and did him favors. He had agreed to let Seidu and his predecessor sell from outside his bar. Later he also agreed to let Muhammed and Yussif sell from there. At one point, some more friends asked for permission to sell from there, but the bar owner said it was enough with Seidu, Muhammed and Yussif. Sometimes, the bar owner got irritated at the young traders who often had friends coming by to socialize. One especially loud evening, the bar owner said in anger he would send them all away. The next day, however, Muhammed begged him to let them stay.

The bar owner’s permission exemplifies the moral economy of the marketspace in which actors are obliged to let others in to trade. Seidu asserted that by having the bar owner’s permission, they were not under the scope of the authorities. True as that may be, another reason for why the authorities did not mind them was the character of the place. Their wooden bench stood on the barrier to a deep gutter and their structures were placed above it. The bar’s urinal ran out in the same gutter, so it often smelled of urine. The place did not obstruct the movement of people or cars, and thus did not add to the congestion.
Beside negotiating with property owners, traders need to be accepted by already established traders. The story of Kwame, a young Asante, further illustrates this. Kwame was in his early twenties and had recently come to Tamale from Kumasi, to sell his belts, boxers, and t-shirts. He did not yet speak Dagbani, only Twi and English. The first time I met him, he was sitting on a white plastic chair in the middle of a traffic island. “Come sit down,” he said. “This is my spot.” I sat down briefly. He explained that he was new in town but that he had claimed this spot, and from now on he would be here every day. This was the only day I saw him there. The city guards sent him away shortly thereafter. The next couple of times I met Kwame he was struggling to find a spot to place his chair. He asked me if I knew someone who could help him.

He had begun roaming with his goods on a wheelbarrow. On top of the goods he had placed his plastic chair. He had a bad hip, he explained, so he was anxious about finding somewhere to sit down. A month later, I saw him again. He had then placed the wheelbarrow on the street, by a crossing where some other traders already had placed their goods. He was not selling the same things as them, so they did not mind having him there. But the authorities shortly sent them all away because they were occupying the streets.

It took a while until I met Kwame the next time. At that point, he was selling his items from outside one of the major supermarkets in town. He had got to know an Asante girl who sold pineapples from there, and she invited him to sell from the same place. They were sitting together on the wooden bench. For some time, Kwame did not bring his plastic chair to town.

He enjoyed the place, happy to have somewhere to sell from. It was a good place as well, where many potential customers were walking by. However, the place was not really his. Usually, another man also sold boxers from there, but he had traveled outside of town. Kwame, with permission from the pineapple seller, could sell from that place while the other man was away. Nevertheless, Kwame was hopeful, thinking that he would get permission from the other man as soon as he came back. Otherwise he would have to move, he said.

But when the man returned, he did not want Kwame around, since they both were selling boxers. The people around, however, wanted the man to allow Kwame to stay. Despite that, Kwame believed it was a “tribal thing” that people “up here” did not want strangers around. I asked him what would happen if he ignored the man and sold from there anyway, since it was not their land. “No, it is not their land, but they would probably go to the owner of the store [the supermarket] and report. They have got permission from him to sell,” he replied.

Eventually, Kwame was lucky. He found another place nearby, outside a general electric shop. A group of fellow Asante traders was selling outside of the shop and they even seemed glad to welcome a brother. He was sitting next to a woman in her early thirties. She was selling mobile phone credits. It was her husband, who sold mobile phones and who had been there the longest, who gave Kwame the permission
to stay. This confirmed Kwame’s perception that Asantes are more welcoming to oth-
ers than the Dagbamba. The shop owner was also an Asante lady, and it did not occur
to Kwame that maybe it was only Asantes who were welcome there.

Kwame worked hard at the new place. He helped everyone around with all kinds
of errands; he sold their items, he went to the bank, and he bought food. It was im-
portant for him that the traders around liked him, he said. He made a good friend there,
another young Asante man who was selling his brother’s shoes. He was also new in
town and soon they became very close.

Kwame’s story illustrates how access to a selling spot was socially dependent and
hinged, as do so many other things, on connections. Some claim there is an ethnic
dimension to this, that the Dagbamba only care for other Dagbamba, and Asantes only
for Asantes, for instance. It is difficult to assess the reality of such perceptions, but
there were pockets of traders such as the place where Kwame ended up, where almost
all were Asantes. But the perception of being aggrieved is of course important in itself.
This ethnicity in practice thus relates to a discussion of politics of belonging, im-
portant in many Ghanaian contexts (see Berry 2006 p 256f; Lund 2008; and Amanor
2006), and issues of firstcomers and latecomers. Cultural and political constructs as
those positions may be (Lentz 2006b p 14), they still influence ideas of who has the
right to urban space.

Within the marketspace, however, the politics of belonging also interacted with the
small-small. In line with the moral economy of letting others in, denying actors access
on ethnic grounds was always condemned and unsanctioned. There were also many
places where traders were ethnically mixed, which further complicates the view of
ethnicity as the sole reason for exclusion and inclusion.

Mr. Alhassan, a revenue officer working for the assembly, often took the role of a
broker between actors in the marketspace. He was a well-known figure to Tamale
street traders. Although he was collecting revenue from larger stores, traders often
negotiated with him when they could not pay their taxes. He also sometimes assisted
traders in claiming a place. For instance, he assigned Saibu a place in an unbuilt plot,
when he came to sell shoes in Tamale with his “brother” in 2002. Saibu, a Dagbamba
in his mid-thirties, left Yendi after the killing of Ya Na. He did not feel safe there
anymore. For Saibu, the killing was a personal tragedy since Ya Na had adopted him
as a child. His biological father was a junior brother of the same lineage to Ya Na and
had “given” him Saibu to raise as his own. Ya Na had many children. “Hundreds,”
Saibu said, while simultaneously greeting two of them passing by on a motorcycle.
Being the son of the late Ya Na was helpful in the Tamale marketspace, he argued.
For instance, he believed his relationship with Mr. Alhassan depended on him being
the son of Ya Na.

Tragically, Saibu’s brother was some years after brutally murdered on a trip to buy
new goods. In a single blow, Saibu lost his brother and the capital they had built up.
However, fellow traders around town helped Saibu to recover, so he could take over
the business entirely. Next to Saibu in the unbuilt plot were two brothers, Yakubu and
Habib. They were selling secondhand shirts and trousers from the ground. They became close friends. But when the construction of a new bank started at the plot, their place disappeared. In need of finding a new spot, Saibu contacted Mr. Alhassan, who Saibu found to be “a good man” who could help them rightly claim a new place.

It was a strategy for traders to create personal relations with representatives of the authorities, and to have family members in the right positions was an advantage that could open opportunities. The public officers governing and regulating the marketplaces and street trade were often bendable and flexible. Mr. Alhassan helped the three traders and redirected them to a nearby street corner, which they shared with the already present street traders selling newspapers and underwear.

Alhaji Amir and his brother Abu had a spot outside a larger store in the center of town. They were the only clothing sellers allowed to sell outside of that store. The owner of the store was a close friend to their family. Alhaji Amir and Abu had taken it upon themselves to regulate the place, making sure it did not become too dense with traders, and assisting him when needed. Not even their close friend Hussein could sell from there. The brothers argued it was by order of the owner. Hussein complained in disappointment to me about that. Without competition, the spot had served the brothers well. Both had several small-boys selling clothes for them all around town.

Claiming a place thus also involved a negotiation with traders already selling within the space. Other traders needed to acknowledge and permit the newcomer to stay. Following the moral economy, people were in general welcoming if it did not threat or affect their own business. The moral economy implied a right to buy and sell, to support one’s family, and make it small-small. This right to trade would break when traders constructed new ways of conducting business, that threatened the dynamics of the small-small. Still, traders realized that there were competitive advantages of sometimes breaking the moral standards. The example of Alhaji Amir shows, how the moral economy, rather than being a dogmatic rule, was a norm and principle that actors valued and often adhered to and sometimes disregarded. We will return to this moral conflict later in the next chapter.

The Assembly Reclaims Control

In the first half of 2013, TaMA and other assemblies around Ghana saw the need to retake control over the city. While I analytically approach small-scale trade through the marketspace, as a space that emerges with the act of trading, the state’s defining of marketplaces was a strategy to control and govern the expanding marketspace.

In Tamale, the encroachment of public space, during decades of political neglect due to conflict, lack of resources, structural adjustment, and urbanization contributed to a severely congested city center. After the elections of 2012, and during imminent threats from a wave of fires in markets around the country, the national government decided that the major cities and marketplaces were to be decongested. In Tamale this
meant that traders occupying streets, pavements, and market alleys were to be removed and directed to newly constructed “satellite markets.” In this process, the politics of informality served as a rationale for the relocation of street traders to formally planned marketplaces. Evictions and decongestions have been a common political solution in Ghana (see for instance, Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah 2008, Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom 2011).

This particular “exercise” was conducted in two phases. In February 2013 TaMA and other assemblies across the country set out to decongest the streets and urban surfaces. Most of the confiscation of structures occurred in the early morning, whilst the traders were asleep. In June, a task force, together with the Progressive Traders Association (PTA), also began decongesting the Central Market. The PTA is the umbrella organization of the various trader associations in the Northern Region. It hence seeks to combine the associations to work together in its advocacy work. However, many smaller and less organized associations were skeptical of the work of PTA, arguing they were too intertwined with the assembly. PTA is organizationally located under the Ghana Union for Traders Association (GUTA), with its head office in Accra.

In similar eviction processes it has been common to argue that the evictee’s position has been one of resistance. For instance, Crossa (2009) describes how the implementation of entrepreneurial policies in Mexico City, that among other things sought to evict street traders from its historic center, faced multiple forms of resistance that shaped the historic center in other unplanned directions. Street traders were able to use their associational powers and spatial strategies of mobility as they turned into moving street vendors displaying their goods on their bodies or on blankets. The street vendors’ resistance is therefore, according to Crossa, a struggle over their rights as citizens in the historic center rather than a territorial struggle over places. Doshi (2013) argues that there is a “politics of the evicted” in the slum frontiers of Mumbai that not only concerns the diverse and complex politics of resettling the slum dwellers from above, but how slum residents themselves resist, negotiate, and transform that politics in various directions.

Resistance does not aptly frame the response of traders in Tamale during the decongestion, although it did contain elements of it; for instance, in the way traders refused to move. Most traders were ambivalent about the process. They reluctantly approved the reasons for the decongestion, but were simultaneously disturbed by the arbitrary enforcement, and the way it obstructed the moral right to support a family. Though they understood the need to decongest, they blamed the government for not having provided possibilities to make a living in another way.

The government’s practices during the decongestion were informed by both technologies of subjection and subjectification (Ong 2006). Traders became objects impeding the flows of the city. At the same time, market vendors reluctantly accepted the politics at an early stage and removed their extensions before the outset date. They saw the value of a safer marketplace that better accommodated customers. In Chapter Six I argue that these evictions together with other political efforts were part of a
bigger agenda of building an inclusive nation. In this line of thought, Hunt (2009 p 331) argues that the relocation of street vendors to planned marketplaces in Bogotá, Colombia, was a formalization process, that along with educating them in democratic practices, entailed a citizenship project that aimed to eradicate their “culture of informality.” I will now describe what lead the assembly to intervene and how this process took shape.

**Congested Streets and Stations**

The political interest to intervene should be placed in a history of failures, conflict, and neglect of the marketspace. The building of the Aboabo supermarket, initiated in the 1970s but abandoned in 1979, the inability to address the problems of a dirty and inaccessible Central Market, the inefficient revenue collection, and the constant talk and plans of renovations, are but a few examples. But the impending problem was that of congestion, which the government and the assembly addressed through temporary though repeating decongestions. The government found it difficult to control the expanding marketspace. In all the growing cities the central marketplaces had expanded and encroached the streets, stations, and open spaces. This development had increasingly put pressure on the urban infrastructure. Traders and others crowded the city centers of the metropolises Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale. Congestion was thus a serious problem. A recent World Bank report ranked Tamale second after Accra in citizens perceiving traffic jams as the most important factor inhibiting work commuting (World Bank 2015; see also Fuseini and Kemp 2016 p 118).

But a major reason for the decongestion beside generating better flows and movements in the city, was to reclaim public space in order to better control, regulate and tax. In other words, to produce governable spaces and subjects (Roy 2009). However, even if the state had been more proactive or efficient it would have been a challenge, since almost everyone was involved in some form of trade. Even the mayor had a shop, and many government workers had stores that were taken care of by family members. Government workers had benefits compared to others, as they could more easily obtain loans under better terms. But formal employment opportunities were scarce, and the street was the only opportunity for many to support their family. Unregulated trade was not only due to state neglect, but a result of people’s survival needs, and the opportunities provided by the streets.

There had been several prior attempts to decongest the cities and move traders from the central areas. In April 2005 TaMA initiated a decongestion exercise intended to clear the city from illegal structures. They demolished and towed away kiosks and unauthorized stalls. In an interview at the time, the MCD pointed out that “the metropolis was being choked [choked] daily with the illegal structures and that the Assembly would sustain the exercise to decongest and beautify the city” (Ghana News Agency 2005, April 5). The assembly did not sustain the decongestion exercise. The
traders quickly reclaimed their places in town. Also, in 2008, the NPP government tried to take spatial control but chose to discontinue the attempt. According to the PTA secretary this was due to fear of losing the elections in 2008, which they did. The secretary therefore saw the more recent attempt in 2013 as “courageous.”

The secretary’s comment points to the obvious fact that decongesting cities from traders are sensitive political issues. Hence, it came as no surprise that the incumbent government waited until after the elections to decide on a decongestion of the major cities. As the assembly’s public relations officer (PRO) explained “There is a season for that [decongestion].” Affected traders were angry of course, and disappointed at the government to whom they just recently gave support through the ballot box. The decongestion exercises around Ghana were big news in the press and the media.

The local government had, from the speakers on their green and yellow pickup, informed traders in the most critical places across the marketspace to move before the beginning of February. Traders were encouraged to move their business to the marketplaces in Kukuo, and Kalpohin, and the old unfinished supermarket in Aboabo (see figure 4, 6 and 7). The authorities would seize any structures and goods left by the street if they did not move. At first, traders believed the whole thing would blow over and did not feel threatened by the government’s notices.

However, the local government was indeed serious, at least for a couple of months. They formed a task force of 41 local men (Ghana News Agency 2013b, February 4). Traders called them abaye, a word originating from Accra meaning “they’re coming” in Ga, and which is a frequent name for task forces or officials who chase traders away. The task force members were given a ridiculously low salary framed in terms of an “allowance” of GH¢ 50 (25 US$) a month but were expected to work from eight am to five pm, Monday through Saturday. Their task was to clear the streets from traders and inform them about the rules. They were given uniforms, white shirts and green trousers. But many of them saw the need to individualize the uniforms by wearing different t-shirts, hats, and shades. Often, they carried wooden sticks, handcuffs, and baseball bats.

“They came at dawn,” Hussein said, pointing at the place where their wooden table, bench, and umbrella used to be. “They have taken everything.” We stood in the bicycle lane, on February 4, 2013, where Hussein and his friends had been selling their clothes for years. His claim to the street was invalid. No trading was supposed to occur from here, was the message. Hussein was no longer permitted to sell his rumpled suits, to fold the trousers and pile them on the table, and to hang the jackets on the fence. It was not his place anymore.

32 Also see Overå’s (2007 p 555) spelling aabae, and Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah’s (2008) aababaei. The latter define its meaning as “raiders.” Abaye was the spelling my informants gave.

33 By comparison, the statutory minimum wage at the time was almost GH¢ 120/month.
Figure 6. Kukuo Market

Figure 7. Kalpohin Market
Right before noon, on the same day, I stood on a traffic island in the middle of High Street watching the demolition progress. I was not alone. There were many of us standing between the lanes, observing. There were about ten military men with machine guns hanging from their shoulders and with wooden sticks in their hands. They were standing in front of us, watching us. The police were there, the city guards, and the community police. The mayor (MCE) himself, Haruna Friday, was also there. He was the main character of the show. He worked hard, wearing all khaki and a black rolled-up top cap. He carried away benches and tables, putting them on a big truck. I saw him folding a big political banner from his party, the NDC. I heard him speak. “Everything should go; we can’t leave any shop. It will look like we’re discriminating.” I remember that phrase clearly: “It will look like we’re discriminating.”

The group in front of us was demolishing the wooden shops that illegally had been constructed on the side of the street in front of the banks. Before, one could buy grilled chicken and meat there, along with DVDs, fruits, clothes, and Qurans. One of the men picked up a large wooden bar, which he wielded at the remaining structures. We all stepped back to avoid the swing that took up a great deal of space. At times, when spectators came too close, the military men took a few steps forward threatening us with their wooden sticks or with their mere presence.

There were no tears among us, but resignation; no protests, but recording mobile phones. Perhaps the real issue was the feeling of arbitrariness regarding the event. “Why are they tearing down these structures, while leaving the ones on the other side?” the man in front of me asked, referring to the stores along the Azorka lane. Azorka was a lead figure in the local NDC, and since those traders were not affected by the decongestion, it further added to the feeling of contingency and politicization.

The women selling vegetables, tomatoes, onions, garden eggs, and yam from the sun-drenched pavement next to the Vodafone office (see figure 3), knew they were selling from a forbidden spot. The narrow pavement and the many traders had pushed pedestrians out on the street. When the green and yellow pickup stopped in the crossing the weeks before, with information about the decongestion, all the women had sat down on stools and empty soda crates without giving attention to the information given them. There used to be many traders sitting in a long row, but on this day, only few of them had come. And they were standing, anxiously. As soon as the word spread that the task force was approaching, they took their trays and moved down to a nearby empty alley.

At the “black market” for currency exchange, opposite the Vodafone office and on the other side of the street of the women, older men sat in the shade on plastic chairs. They regularly sent small girls on errands, like buying them food. They talked openly about their illegal business; but were threatened by no one. The policemen, the politicians, the tax collectors, the military, all exchanged their currencies there.

---

34 The community police is the official name of the youth placed in the security module of a government youth unemployment program. See Chapter Seven.
Saibu used to display his nice Ghanaian-made leather shoes, imported brands, and copies of them, on a large wooden rack. It was like a small closet, in which one could enter and look around at all the shoes. On this morning, the authorities confiscated the rack, but Saibu was not easily moved. He paid the fees for the rack and brought it back to town. He stored it in a nearby shop, waiting for things to cool down until he would put it out on the street again. Meanwhile he began using something else to display his shoes. I told him I saw the mayor demolishing stores a few blocks away earlier in the day. Saibu explained that the mayor “is not correct, he wants us to follow him and then this . . .” Saibu was very disappointed. He felt betrayed, since he had voted for the NDC, and now they brought this upon him. But he was not afraid. Mr. Alhassan was involved in the task force, and that gave Saibu a sense of security. Saibu also had family connections that he could utilize; one of his many brothers were also part of the task force. “It helps coming from my family,” he explained. Still, he lost his shoe rack that morning, and still, he anxiously looked along the street to see if the task force was coming.

Many traders along the streets were affected by the local government’s actions that early morning. And it happened before anyone could see them. But the traders of the street were not altogether against the decongestion when it did not obstruct or threaten their business. TaMA framed the decongestion in terms of beautifying the city, and many traders saw the same need. But, to the traders, it was not clear what the rules really were. The messages seemed arbitrary, partly because the infrastructure of Tamale did not always make decisions easy on what was a pavement, open space, or road, for instance. This uncertainty stimulated small bribes to the task force. Hussein gave the task force some few cedi every day, to let him continue selling from the bicycle lane. He said it was no problem when they were alone, but when they came in groups, he had to follow orders. However, the frequency of the bribes made it difficult for Hussein to sustain his business, and he saw no other place from where to sell his clothes. His turnover quickly decreased, and eventually he was not able to repay his debt for the goods he sold, and until then he could not acquire any new bales.

Having contacts and ways into the corridors of the political and public offices, such as the ones Saibu had, was important in bending the rules or interpreting them favorably. At least one of the women outside of the Vodafone office had the phone number to a task force member. As soon as he knew they were coming their way, he contacted her, so they had time to move. But for some, like Salifu, these connections did not help.

One day in March, I sat next to Salifu on his wooden bench. He gazed with irritation and disappointment at the yellow container shop on the other side of the entrance to the petrol station. The yellow container belonged to the MCE. But it was not what he saw that primarily upset him, it was rather what he did not see: his own blue container. Just until recently it was placed in front of where Salifu and I was now sitting. The open square of gravel and dirt in the concrete marked the site of where his shop had been. On this day, there was no petrol in town. It happened sometimes, and it lead to irate discussions and frustrations among the public. Such shortages often affected
the petrol station adjacent to Salifu’s spot, causing them to turn down customers. The possibility of finding petrol was easier and cheaper in the outskirts of town, which Salifu used as a business opportunity. He bought petrol in the outskirts and sold it at a higher price from this street corner in town. The petrol sale was not enough, or rather, the petrol shortages were not as frequent anymore, so Salifu also vended in oil and various engine accessories, primarily directed at motorcycles. The petrol was stored in barrels along the street, while the rest were in the container, now confiscated by the executors of TaMA.

“They came on Monday,” he said, “together with the police and military with guns.” Without the enforcement, it would not have been possible. The public around was engaged and they would have obstructed the confiscation. Salifu’s store mattered to the adjacent neighborhood. In the evenings, many of the residents came by, sat down on the wooden benches next to Salifu and his family, socializing. The shop was open past midnight. However, at the time of decongestion, Salifu’s friends were not able to interfere, because the guns and the uniforms deterred them.

Salifu, still with his eyes locked on the MCE’s yellow container, wondered why he, who had been around here for 25 years, always paid the taxes, and paid for the concrete around his shop which connected the pavement to the car park of the petrol station, suddenly had to move. What irritated him even more was his relation to the MCE. They belonged to the same extended family. Their family houses were next to each other, and they often met and interacted at funerals. Recently, Salifu told me, when he began receiving warnings about a probable eviction of his shop, he brought one of their shared family elders to the house of the MCE. There, they were told to wait as the MCE was in the bathroom. They had to wait for two hours, before the MCE came. The MCE then told them he had no time to talk but would try and find a new spot for the shop. “We were greeting correctly, asking about the well-being of his family, and even though our elder was there, the MCE’s decision is final... Why all this for my family, just because it makes him happy?” Salifu asked, while his oldest daughter browsed among the slippers hanging from the rack of a roaming shoe seller, and her little sister played by our feet with a plastic spoon in a small pool of mud.

Suddenly, we all turned our eyes to the other direction. A police convoy passed behind us. Two black Toyota Landcruisers with shining fenders and flashing sirens, followed by a military vehicle filled with armed soldiers in camouflage, turned westward in the crossing.

“It’s them,” Salifu said calmly, while paying 2 Ghana cedi for a new pair of black plastic slippers with flowers on the ribbons to his daughter, before he turned his gaze back to the MCE’s yellow container.

Later, Salifu received mixed messages from the representatives of the local government on whether he could continue to sell from the street corner. And when I left in June he was still there, though without the container. It was never clear to him on what grounds they confiscated his store. The risk of fire was a probable cause, but at the same time, he continued to sell petrol and oil. By moving his table one meter, he could place it on the car park of the petrol station. Since they agreed on having him
there, it seemed like he would be able to stay, although the risk of fire remained. Salifu had always been on good terms with the owner of the petrol station. Sometimes he found it difficult, because they changed managers every second year. But they had never expressed any problems with him also selling petrol and oil on their premises.

Salifu encouraged me to write an article to a newspaper about his situation and the effect of the decongestion on people’s livelihood. However, I was conflicted. On the one hand, I wanted to pursue on the details of the event. I wanted to ask specific questions to the management of the task force, to the MCE and the petrol station owner, about the reasons for confiscating his store, yet letting him stay. But on the other hand, I realized that those questions would put his business in the focus of the authorities and, given the inappropriateness of selling petrol and oil directly from the street, there was a considerable risk they would relocate him from there altogether.

As this went on while the election petitioners were preparing their court case, a growing number of affected traders felt betrayed by the government they voted into power and began hoping the court would change the outcome of the election. The decongestion continued during the rest of my fieldwork. The traders quickly learned the schedule of the patrolling task force and adapted their businesses. Hussein learned to sell the most during lunch break and after five pm. But it was not enough. In fact, the decongestion was devastating for him. But most others, like Saibu, just shifted their selling point some decimeters and changed how they displayed their goods. For them, the only real difference was the small bribe of a few cedi they now and then had to pay the task force.

**Extensions, Congestion, and Fires in the Central Market**

During the end of 2012 and early 2013, there were several devastating fires in marketplaces all over Ghana. In Accra alone, Kantamanto, Makola, Kaneshie, Agbogbloshie, Konkomba, Madina and Dome marketplaces were struck by fire. Beside the destruction of thousands of stores and millions worth of cedi, this caused a general concern about safety in the marketplaces all around the country. It was a mystery why suddenly so many markets were hit, and experts from the USA were called in to find the causes. Fires have always existed in the marketplaces but now it reached the highest level of political concern.

The last time Tamale Central Market was destroyed in a fire was in 1982. In the revolutionary context, market traders all over Ghana were accused of increasing food prices and of “capitalist profitmaking” (Clark 1994 p 391), which justified the appropriation of traders’ profits and property. In Tamale it was assumed to have been the military who initiated the fire just as they did in several other marketplaces over the country at that time (Clark 1994 ch 10, Robertson 1983, Campbell 1985). However, smaller fire outbreaks occurred now and then. During the spring of 2013 a store burnt down in the southern part of the market, but fortunately it did not spread further.
Figure 8. TaMA decongesting the streets of Tamale

Figure 9. The main road in the Central Market after the decongestion. The VRA power pole is visible in the middle.
Although traders were concerned about fires, cooking and frying in pots placed on charcoal occurred at several places in the Central Market. The illegal wirings that gave power to many of the stores had uncovered connections that were obviously dangerous. Meanwhile, the market aisles were narrow, and the entrances crowded. Transport carriages blocked passages, creating lines of people waiting to pass. There were flammable materials everywhere. The risk of a disastrous fire caused the fire department to position personnel at the market to supervise and inform the vendors. Although conspiracy theories flourished in the media, traders in Tamale did not give much attention to the fires across the country. When I asked them about the causes of the fires they believed it was due to irresponsible traders. In the end, they believed God would protect them.

Before the fire in 1982, Tamale Central Market consisted of simple sheds and wooden tables. After the fire, the assembly demarcated the plot numbering the stores, built the zinc roofing and defined the lanes. The traders built everything else; all the concrete, the flooring, the doors, the electrical wiring, etc. The market was planned with lines of concrete stores encircling lines of sheds in the middle. A road went around the sheds in front of the concrete stores. This road was built to allow transport vehicles and fire service to enter the market. The vehicles were to come in by the southeast corner, and drive in the shape of a U to the exit in the southwest.

Although designed by the assembly, the traders financed the construction. In this process, around 1990, the traders individually went into agreements with the assembly in which the traders could sell from the market without paying the monthly rent for twenty years. They called this agreement “build, operate, transfer” (BOT). Since the traders had built the market, they would operate it for twenty years, and then transfer it back to the assembly. The assembly could still collect the daily market tolls. These terms quickly changed, so that traders instead would pay half the monthly rent. Once again, political decisions of the market were contingent. Many traders believed they had signed a contract in which they were the owners of the stores. A senior executive of the Central Market Traders Association (CMTA) argued that the assembly rushed the procedure of getting the signatures from every trader, who in many cases were illiterate, so that he or she did not have a chance to consult with any “learned person.”

Before we realized, almost everyone had signed, and those who refused were forced to accept their demand, or they would have to hand over the store . . . We wanted to own the stores permanently. You know, the land is not owned by the assembly, it belongs to our local chiefs, Dakpema and Bugulana.

However, during the time the market was in the hands of the traders they gradually abandoned the original plan. Against the rules, traders began building stores in the middle of the market, where there were supposed to be sheds. Storekeepers built extensions inward that engulfed the road and delimited it to a narrow walkway. In the middle of the northern stretch of the market road where vehicles were supposed to pass, vendors built a whole new row of stores. The Revenue Authority had given these “illegal” stores registration numbers to collect the fees.
The lack of political control and management of the Central Market has thus a long history. In fact, in the 1920s there already were reports of an almost congested Central Market on market days and it was difficult for the authorities to keep up with the growth of the town (Eades 1993 p 31). But the construction of unauthorized extensions intensified during the democratization in the 1990s and the politicization following from that. The secretary of the PTA argued that during the military regime, nobody could get away with "illegalities" in the market like constructing extensions that departed from the plan and trading leases, etc. But since democratic politicians wanted to be reelected they were unable to manage the marketplaces. "They need their votes. Also, the assembly was never there," he argued, and further claimed that market vendors could easily buy the revenue collectors' approval.

The traders know the rules, yet they do it anyway, they enjoy the illegalities . . . Now, the assembly doesn't know what the Central Market is like. We try to inform them, since they don't know . . . Everything is politics here, even drinking water, people can drink water and taste the alum that is used to purify it and claim that it was better during the other party's time in government.

From the assembly's point of view, the structures and extensions were illegal and violated the agreement. Yet, as stated, these "illegalities" were very common at the market. Only few traders were aware of the rules (although PTA's secretary argued differently), because only a few of them had signed a contract with the assembly themselves. Also, the VRA (Volta River Authority; the government agency for the generation and supply of electricity) contributed to the congestion. In the middle of the road passing through the Central Market, they had installed a power pole that made it impossible for any vehicle to pass, even if the stores were not extended (see figure 9). In 2013 the VRA promised to remove the pole, but in 2016 it was still there.

The finance and administration chairman at the assembly in 2012, Hon. Awodu Latif, remembered when vehicles could enter the Central Market during the 1990s. I asked him how this situation of congestion had arisen.

It's negligence by the assembly, to be honest with you. Because . . . it would not have happened otherwise, maybe we would have seen temporary structures, but not permanent structures. But because we neglected our duties, I must be honest with you. That is why it happened. So, it's part of our negligence.

He argued that the negligence may have had different causes, such as the political polarization and the chieftaincy conflict. Any contact public officers had with traders during that time was interpreted as part of the larger conflict, making it difficult to control and regulate. Furthermore, when the Ya Na was killed, the assembly was dissolved, and the interim management committee was not able to sustain the politics. Another reason, Latif argued, comes with the logics of democracy. The whole situation was different during the military era in the 1980s.

Even though we always say that military rule is a dictatorship sometimes it controls discipline. But now that we are talking about democracy things do not order well. Because we are supposed to practice democracy and do what is
right, but the democracy we sometime practice is that when I am doing the wrong thing, you cannot tell me. You cannot correct me. But during the military regime, any soldier man passing by and seeing something that somebody is doing, which is not right, [that person] will see the uniform and take to the heels, and never come back.

After the initial twenty years passed, the market was to be handed over to the assembly, who in turn would start charging the traders regular fees. However, this transfer stalled, and the control and responsibility of the market was unclear and under negotiations. The assembly strove to regain control of the market but found it difficult to increase the revenue and to develop it in general. Many traders disputed the assembly’s right to the market in the first place, while some public officers of the assembly disputed the BOT. For instance, the PRO could not say that such an agreement existed, since he had never seen that contract himself.

The difficulties of governing the marketplace also derive from the complex market authority structure. The responsibilities of the traders, TaMA and various chiefs respectively were unclear. Traders blamed TaMA for being meticulous with collecting taxes but ignoring the need for development of the market. TaMA, on the other hand, blamed the previous government and reluctant traders for the problem in the market. While traders believed they were proper owners of their stores, the assembly asserted they were only leaseholders. TaMA also claimed that chiefs had no authority whatsoever in the market, yet Dagbamba traders argued the market as a whole belonged to the Dakpema. The Dakpema himself, of course, confirmed such a statement, seeing himself as the Chief of the whole of Tamale, though his claim to the market was in turn questioned by both the Bugulana and the Gulkpe Na. Non-Dagbamba did not give much attention to the Dakpema but did respect his authority as a traditional chief.

The aftermath of the Kantamanto Market fire in Accra in May 2013 uncovered similar disputes over market authority. The Kantamanto Market is located around the Accra Railway station and stretches out on the seldom trafficked railway tracks. The losses of the fire were enormous with more than eight hundred stores destroyed. After the fire, the mayor of Accra announced that plans existed for developing the marketplace to better suit the modernization of Accra (Benzoni 2013, May 16). The traders feared that a realization of those plans would mean the end of their businesses and wanted therefore to rebuild the marketplace themselves. They even had a fifty-year lease signed in 2007 that gave them the right to the marketplace (Daily Graphic 2013, May 10). The traders had financed the expensive contract from their own pockets. At the same time, the Ga Traditional Council and the chief Gbese Mantse asserted that he had the right to the land, since the 99-year-old lease with the railways authority signed during the Gold Coast era expired in 2008. Hence, Accra Metropolitan Assembly should not have had the right to sublet the marketplace from the start (Efah 2013, May 16). It was nevertheless a “mysterious” coincidence generating a great deal of conspiracy theories in the media that the Kantamanto fire occurred during the time of the court case of the election result (Oteng-Ababio et al. 2015).
There were thus many reasons for why TaMA began to decongest the Central Market. The ambition to regain economic and spatial control was also encouraged by a set of international donors. However, the trigger that forced TaMA to act was the many market fires occurring around the county. TaMA thus began to react in 2013 and formed a committee with the task of decongesting the Central Market. In the beginning of June 2013, and after a couple of months of decongesting the streets, TaMA extended the “exercise” into the marketplace.

The PTA was deeply involved and took it upon themselves to organize the exercise. They informed traders and marked stores that must be removed or diminished. The general idea was for the market to return to its original plan, with no extensions or traders occupying the roads. The original plan which the authorities and the PTA referred to, however, was not available. No representative from any part of the assembly could say where that plan would be, but everyone agreed there was one. One representative claimed he had a long time ago seen the plan but could not say where it was now. Instead the committee had to rely on senior workers, such as revenue collectors, and the PTA to determine what was what. The PTA began looking at the stores inside the marketplace to find how the design was supposed to be. The original wooden beams were sometimes visible, but in many cases, they had to rely on their own memories.

However, before any demolition started, market vendors had taken it upon themselves to minimize and remove their extensions. They had seen the events unfolding in the streets around the marketplace and realized something similar could happen to them.

A *Daily Graphic* article, (Musah 2013, May 22) described how TaMA was planning to decongest the Central Market in cooperation with PTA. The chairman of PTA was quoted saying “they will do all in their power to ensure the success of the exercise when it starts”. I took the article to Hajia Mariam and her daughter Fatima to hear their opinion. I sat down in the blue plastic chair on the veranda and realized I had not been there for some time. Fatima was pregnant again, and due in September. The shop had been repainted in a bright blue color, far nicer than the previous screaming neon green. The shop’s biggest change was the container they had placed on top of the veranda. This gave them the opportunity to move the lockable doors out to the end of the veranda, instead of on the original store. Their shop had in this way doubled in size. They had installed a fan in the ceiling and designed the veranda neatly. “It was costly though” Fatima explained, “1900 [GH¢] (950 USD).”

Hajia Mariam explained that the business was slow at the moment. “Visitors, officials from the assembly, a mobilization group” had informed the traders selling in the alley in front of them that they must move. Fire trucks were supposed to be able to enter. The group had told Hajia that their store was too big. She pointed to the concrete floor at where she was told the store must end. But there was nothing there that demarcated the boundary. Fatima said they had until the 18th of June to correct any faults, though in other articles it was said it should be done by the end of May. About half of the extension would still be allowed to remain. Hajia and her daughter had not yet
decided what to do. On the one hand, they were critical of the decongestion, since there was no plan for the traders who had to leave but still had to provide for their families. But on the other hand, there was the risk of fire due to all the cooking of food. So, “in the end, it is the right decision,” Hajia stated.

I gave them the day’s paper and the article I had just read. Hajia called in one of the women selling in the alley in front of them. They read about the PTA, and Fatima asked her mother if that was the association she was a member of. Hajia explained that she used to be active, but recently she had stopped going to the meetings, though she could not explain why.

“What do you think will happen?” I asked.

“Anything is possible,” Hajia answered. “Don’t underestimate them [not sure if she referred TaMA, PTA or both]. They can sack them [referring to the woman and the other traders in the alley], they can sack us too.”

“But this is your store, is it not? Isn’t it registered in your name?”

“It is written in my aunt’s name, but she is dead.”

A male shopkeeper came by. He and Hajia talked for a moment, while Fatima continued to read the paper. They spoke in Dagbani, but I understood they were talking about a shop close by the Cultural Centre which had been taken down and removed by the assembly. He suggested that Hajia therefore should do as they were told.

“What will you do now?” I asked as soon as the man had left.

“I think we will call the welder, he will have to rebuild the store again, so the door will be here.” She said, pointing at the non-existent mark in the floor.

They were not angry or frustrated, more annoyed and tired. Had it not been for my questions, they would not have given it much attention. With a sigh of displeasure, they would have complied with the decision. When my questions stopped, they changed the subject to a different article concerning the Nigerian reverend TB Joshua and the accident where several of his followers died in the commotion following the distribution of holy water. She then placed her veil around her gele (headscarf) and rolled out the carpet behind the counter and prayed.

The decongestion of the Central Market thus took a different shape than the decongestion of the streets. Irritated by a forced introspection, traders themselves began the formalization of the marketplace. They themselves rebuilt their stores and removed their extensions before the outset date. Some unauthorized stores were demolished by TaMA, while others awaiting a decision when I left and were still pending when I returned in 2016. Shopkeepers had mixed feelings about the exercise. They saw it as reasonable and important, but simultaneously annoying and costly. Appreciating the commercial benefits of a safer, cleaner, and more accessible market, the effect on the evicted traders nevertheless disturbed them.

The PTA were more eager, pushing the government to go even further with the formalization. Through advocacy work they had tried to find ways for the assembly to rehabilitate the Central Market. Before the fires started and the action of the suddenly motivated TaMA, they had already filmed a 30-minute documentary that addressed the problems of the market and called for some action. They had also hired a
consultant to conduct a research study based on a minor survey of the Central Market traders. They used the documentary and the research report as a starting point for inviting actors to a “stakeholders workshop” entitled “Rehabilitating the Tamale Central Market.” They invited the MCE, the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS), the VRA, and representatives from some of the many chiefs, including the Dakpema, Bugulana and Zobugu Na. They also invited the media. Metro TV filmed the entire meeting. I was also invited.

The secretary of the PTA gave a sincere speech pledging that if nothing else was done, at least the fire hydrants must be freed. The traders had placed their booths and tables on top of them. The representatives from the GNFS argued that it was just a matter of time until the catastrophe arrived, and it would be the worst in the country.

During the meeting, representatives of the Bugulana reacted against the Dakpema being interviewed in the documentary, while the Bugulana, being “senior” to the Dakpema as an earth-priest, tindana, was not interviewed. An uproar started between the two groups. After the shouting, however, they departed as friends. The whole event seemed rather theatrical, as if they tried to claim authority in a field in which TaMA now paid them only little attention. PTA’s secretary later explained that he saw it as a rather silly conflict. “This does not solve the problems we’re facing. They are the chiefs of the land, they are the ones who will be receiving the credits [parts of the revenue are supposed to go the chiefs], not me, so why are they again fighting. When we call them, they should come, sit down and give us their blessing.”

From PTA’s perspective, the “stakeholders” concerned in a rehabilitation of the Central Market were PTA along with various authorities and chiefs. The meeting had almost no representation by any trader beside themselves, and PTA members were primarily traders with large stores outside the marketplace. The Central Market Traders Association (CMTA) was not invited due to an “oversight.” The formalization in this regard was managed by TaMA in a symbiotic relationship with the PTA. The PTA saw themselves as having pushed the local government into the direction of improving means of regulation and security. They enacted what Roy (2009) calls a “civic governmentality,” in that they played the role of a mediator between state politics and market traders, and at the same time practically served as a government over the marketplace, producing governable spaces and subjects. For that reason, it was in the interest of PTA that street traders relocated to the marketplaces. However, Central Market traders were not keen on change, which was why, in a sense, PTA was right that little would be accomplished without them pushing for it.

The position of CMTA’s chairman illustrates further the ambivalence of market traders toward the formalization. Seeing the need for improvements, they could only reluctantly and with annoyance work for any form of change. He stated that even if they had been invited to the meeting, they would not have come. He believed he had no mandate to work for any changes of the market. During a rehabilitation, traders would have to be relocated, and lose business. Also, traders feared they would not be able to reclaim a store at the market once it was ready, and that the fee would increase, he argued. Since many traders had bought their shops from the previous leaseholder,
they would risk that investment and the money invested in the building of the store. Hence the CMTA could not take part in the process leading to a changed market. The CMTA chairman claimed they would not be involved until there was a real proposal that needed signatures. Yet, they and all traders of the Central Market were aware of its problems, and they would all like to see a more involved assembly.

This shows the complex dynamics of mobility and temporality within the marketspace, and how that is built into the process of formalization. While traders depend on movement and flows, they are equally dependent on keeping the political and spatial status quo. Infrastructural improvements or any development may alter the commercial conditions; their business opportunities; or the movement of goods, capital, and people. In Chapter Six, I discuss how state politics and development projects are risks to traders’ livelihood. A small-small politics emerges as a critique against the unreliable, obstructive, and politicizing governments that threaten the moral economy of the marketspace. The government is thus in a delicate situation where they try to carry out important tasks and solve problems, but at the same time cannot make too substantial changes, which could affect people’s livelihood and cause political turmoil.

In the process of decongestion, the market vendors took on a different role than street traders. In the market, actors reluctantly accepted the politics at an early stage and corrected the faults before the outset date. Still, the state’s actions seemed just as arbitrary in the market as outside of it. The rules were not clear. The actual plan, to which everything was supposed to return, was missing. Several storekeepers were told they had to move. Structures in the market road were painted with red letters, REMOVE by [date] TaMA. But the stores were never taken down and after some time the decision changed. The stores could remain, even though it made the road impassable for fire vehicles. The stores outside of Hajia Mariam and Fatima were still there in 2016, even though they had received information to leave in 2013. The new owner of the store in the middle of the road had bought it for as much as GH¢ 10,000 (5,000 USD) in 2012. Before the decongestion she had constructed concrete walls and made it very neat and attractive. During the midst of the decongestion she was told she had to leave. The store was torn down leaving only some low walls as remnants. In 2016 however, the owner was still present in the same spot, selling the same things. But she had placed a tent inside the walls. There was still no room for any vehicle to pass.

Conclusions

The spatial dimension of market and street trade that this chapter has explored has enabled the emergence of several embryos for future discussions that begin answering the questions posed in the Introduction.

First, to be a trader in the marketspace means to actively engage in the making of the city by continuously claiming a place through ongoing negotiations with other
traders, authorities, property owners, and sometimes chiefs. It is an unregulated process but at the same time under the oversight of the authorities. The marketspace has expanded through individuals claiming places, street corners, pavements, and market shops and aisles.

Second, this chapter has initiated a discussion that begins to answer the second set of questions that concerns the transformation of the Tamale marketspace, the formalization, the politics of the state, and the making of the future Tamale. The ethnography above illustrates the social embeddedness of the politics of space. It shows the increased engagement in the marketspace by the local government, and how access to that space hinges on people in multiple social positions, friends, neighbors, station managers, government officers, and politicians. Even in the marketplace where there are rules on how traders acquire a store, those rules are rarely ever followed. Formal rules and regulations that are to separate the formal and the informal, are by-passed by the authorities themselves, rendering any dualistic approach impossible.

This discussion further accentuates a citizen-making process that is anchored in space. For long, the state has viewed the marketplace as representing the continuity of the city, its history, and its future, while simultaneously viewing the congested street as a by-product of the present. Therefore, street traders were to be relocated to the marketplaces, to be formalized and become proper citizens. Meanwhile, traders enact the right to trade and to make a living. In Chapter Six, I will show how traders build, on this right and on their sentiments of disappointment, an alternative small-small citizenship within the wider marketspace. It emphasizes inclusion, trust, and the ability to make a living.

The challenges for the local government in reclaiming spatial control also invite a discussion about change and status quo. Traders are threatened by political interventions. Since politicians need their votes, they often hesitate in fully following through with their politics. Years of political neglect and lack of governance have put traders in charge of organizing the marketplaces and regulating access. The cumulative effect of traders claiming place has come to a point in which initial rules and regulations now lack legitimacy and cannot be re-enforced. This struggle between change and non-change, or permanence, will be further developed later, but it is here in the spatial dynamics of the market, that such discussions begin.

Finally, this chapter points to the importance of further analyzing the moral economy of the marketspace. Although politically unregulated, claiming place is morally sanctioned, by emphasizing the actors’ right to accessing the market. The slow but steady expansion over public space relates to the gradual progress of the small-small. The moral economy is not only in social space as Fassin defined it, but interacts with, depends on, and produces that space.

Also, the moral problematizes a politics of belonging. It is not that ethnicity or gate-belonging is unimportant in the marketspace, but that it interacts with an inclusive moral economy that defies dividing mechanisms. This reaffirms the preliminary conclusions in the previous chapter in which the market helped restore social life after
the violence, but also builds up to the coming chapters in this part of the thesis, in
which the morality and solidarity will be further explored.
4 | Norms, Outlook, and Breakdown

Following Fassin (2009), this chapter sheds light on the multiple ways the norms and values of small-small are articulated and used in the marketspace. In the first part I will describe the morally correct way of doing business. The norms of gradual progress and letting others in are historical products regenerated in the present, through prolonged and ongoing interactions between actors. In the second part, I show how these norms and values enable an outlook on society. Drawing on Zigon (2007) and Bloch and Parry (1989), who in separate ways approach morality through how it relates to the tension between individual progression and the common good, I will describe how small-small reproduces itself within the marketspace. This occurs through instances of moral breakdowns that generate responses on moral grounds from traders. I shall be using two groups—the sakawa boys and the foreign businessmen that traders refer with the epithet “foreign influx”—to represent such moral breakdowns by appearing as the immoral Others.

The sakawa boy is a trickster who embodies the complete moral opposite of the small-small urban trader, rushing for quick money by cheating others. The sakawa boy is an example of a figure emerging from the “occult economies” that have proliferated since the turn of the millennium, (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). He (they are predominantly young men) relies on occult rituals, juju (a fetish object, and its magical powers) and on sacrifices. The phenomenon of sakawa thus also points to the importance of being and appearing religious. In the new economy, traders are also concerned over the foreign influx, the investors who have moved to Ghana and Tamale for the sake of business from abroad. Some of them conduct business along other sets of economic norms. They are morally condemned for making big profits through selling their imports directly to the end consumer. The challenges the sakawa and the foreign influx pose on the small-scale everyday market show the value actors place in the norms of gradual progress and letting others in, and how these are reestablished during the economic transformations.

For the overall purpose of the thesis, this chapter thus ethnographically anchors small-small, and shows how it interrelates with other economic and moral practices. This chapter also contributes another perspective on the state’s formalizing endeavor. Regarding the sakawa and the foreign influx, the state attempts to protect the small-small from the greed and occultism of the sakawa, and by law prohibits non-citizens to invest in the small-scale trade. Formalization thus emerges in this chapter as a moralizing project.
Gradual Progress and Humbleness

Situated in space, the small-small also orders time. “Follow the money small-small,” as Mohammed explained in the beginning of this thesis, refers to the norm of gradual progress. To “rush after money” risks friendships and loyalties. Mohammed was at the time planning to travel to Nigeria to buy goods when I met him that day under his umbrella on the gutter in central Tamale. It was shortly after the Christmas holidays. Many customers bought slippers as Christmas gifts on credit from Mohammed, so before he could travel he needed to collect the debts. Eventually he might call them, but if they did not have the money he would not pressure them. He would travel anyway and buy sandals and slippers with the money he had. It was common that people bought on credit from Mohammed. He normally only allowed people he knew to do so, however. He noted their name and phone number and the amount in a notebook that he stored in the house. He did not like to call them, because he believed it was their responsibility to repay him.

A week before Christmas a friend of his had come by and asked for a loan. His mother had become sick and he needed the money to pay for her care. The friend borrowed GH¢ 900 (450 USD) from Mohammed, which equaled about a third of what Mohammed normally spent on goods in Nigeria. The friend’s mother recovered, and he promised to pay Mohammed back as soon as possible after the holidays.

After the holidays, Mohammed was approaching a critical time. His goods were scarce, but he lacked the funds to reinvest. Certain his friend would keep his promise, Mohammed was afraid it would take time. A week later, Mohammed had not yet traveled to Nigeria and his table was almost empty. He still awaited the money from his friend, and until then it would not be profitable to travel. He had the option of asking one of his friends that he usually traveled with to buy some goods for him, but he decided to give it some extra time. It would take yet another week until Mohammed received the money and he could travel himself. The shoes and sandals did not arrive until the end of January, almost a month later than the original plan.

Mohammed felt obliged to help his friends in need, despite the effect on his business. He also offered to lend money to me when the ATM was unable to deliver. Making the business grow must never jeopardize his friendships. However, framing one’s business as small-small can also be a way to avoid helping others financially. It lowers the expectations on the business and also expectations of help from the more distant relatives and families. Small-small thus entails a double standard; it is both a code of conduct and a protection against exposure. It frames modesty, self-control, and benevolence, while sometimes removing the actor from obligations and responsibilities to others.

The lawyer who organized our apartment lease had a flashy, massive office, with an air conditioner set on 16°C, but he also ran a larger electronics shop. One afternoon I met him outside his shop, sitting on a beautiful wooden sofa with leather seat, well dressed, with shiny leather shoes, claiming he was “making something small-small.” Another time, during an evening stroll in a neighborhood close to my own, I met the
metropolitan chief director (MCD), outside the concrete wall of his house in which he had built a provision store for his wife. He sat in a leather office chair, smiling, resting, and explaining to me that he was “trying do something small-small here.”

Within the small-small lies a modesty that, no matter how successful you are, makes you look humble, and thus worthy of that success. In a way, it makes the wealth and extravagance socially legitimate. Becoming rich is no problem—quite the opposite. Gradual progress refers to the process of becoming rich, and small-small does not frown on profit or success. In a discussion with Mohammed, Seidu and several of their friends sharing the wooden bench, Rafiq explained how wealth and small-small correlate.

“The good way is when you are using only your own capital, and not someone else’s.” Borrowing money from a bank to invest is no problem, but “squeezing” the profit is. “A shoe like this,” Rafiq picked up one of Mohammed’s sandals, “if you buy it for 20 and sell it for 30-35, it’s okay. But selling it from the big-big store for 60 is not okay. That’s too much. That’s not halal (correct). One should do clean business. Do it small-small like this [referring to Mohammed’s business], and it will grow.” He paused for some time, while his friends agreed, until he continued: “Even the richest man in Africa, Aliko Dangote, started by selling toffee, small-small, along the streets. Now he is selling cement and oil.” His friend chimed in, arguing that it is also smart business strategy, “Even if you have money, you should start small to see if people are buying and then make it bigger.” Small-small, as the correct (halal) behavior thus conforms to their Islamic understanding on how to relate to wealth and economy, in which usury and interest are frowned upon (see Maurer 2005)

Interestingly, what Rafiq did not say or did not know about Aliko Dangote, was that he comes from a wealthy and prominent Nigerian business family. In fact, he is the great grandson of the richest African of the 1950s. It is true that he did sell sugar boxes along the streets growing up. But that was due to his great interest in business (Vanguard 2014), not of necessity. But for Rafiq and his friends, he represented the ideal trajectory, someone who gradually progressed from the streets to wealth, turning small into big.

Small-small is larger than the individual. It forms communities. But it is also a moral judgement or evaluation of the progress of the country. Many of the Kumasi Market women that Clark interviewed for her work described in African Market Women (2010) morally relate to the improvements of the country and of urban life. Madame Ataa, for instance, recommends “slow but steady progress, kakrakakra (literally, little by little) over the lure of ‘easy come, easy go,’” and argues that many improvements lately have “undermined economic stability, and community autonomy. They [the changes] make the country poor by making its people envious, lazy,

---

Note Clark’s translation of kakrakakra. Little by little, and small-small, refer to the same expression that exist in both Twi and Dagbani (biela biela). In general, when Ghanaian speak English, they say small-small. The difference is likely to derive from Clark having done her interviews in Twi, instead of English.
and greedy for quick profit.” For Clark, this points to a possible consensus that “incremental betterment” (p 229) is necessary for making any changes and improvements more likely to last. The gradual progress, or “incremental betterment” thus suggests a valid norm also for the community and for the development at large. It is not only a code of conduct, but a means of change.

Letting Others In

Small-small forms communities through the obligation to let others come in to do business within the marketspace, both spatially and economically. Store owners are obligated to provide space in front of the store for smaller traders. Street and market vendors share the place they have claimed with others. In Chapter Three, I described the process of claiming a place as one that requires social and legal negotiations, and occasional infrastructural changes. It also requires permission from the property owners and already present traders. This permission is given as part of the moral economy to let others in. Economically, traders constantly provide possibilities for others through the constant use of middlemen, suppliers, transporters. Wholesale and retail are not supposed to be mixed. Traders in bulk should not at same time sell their wares one by one. This inclusive moral economy thus conditions a way of doing trade that upholds the distinction between different economic roles and regulates who has entrance to the market.

In the short story “Choosing – a moral from the world of work,” by the famous Ghanaian novelist Ama Ato Aidoo (2002 [1997]) we meet “the writer” who struggles with her economy and decides she must take on a different parallel career to continue writing. After a short try as a teacher, she decides to become a trader. Her search for quick profits motivates her to take a bank loan. She buys her goods and establishes herself at the gate to a marketplace. However, not knowing the practices and prices of the things she sells, she sells them too cheaply. In order to attract many customers and quickly make money, she wants to keep the prices low. The other traders condemn her, talking behind her back, and she becomes exposed to people trying to cheat her. Her business fails, and she is unable to repay her debt. The moral undertone of the novel is not only about the practices of trade but of the mother-daughter relation and of finding oneself. Her mother knew she would not be a good trader but realized that her daughter must figure that out herself. Still, the story describes the moral economy as a socially regulated competition, that concerns price levels and gradual progress. The story ends with the writer returning to writing.

Buying and selling in a small-small way is thus not only a collectively shared individualized practice, but also a collectively shared morality. Rushing one’s progress and being too competitive and greedy is seen as immoral. One has an obligation to provide opportunities for others, to let others make a living from the movement of...

36 It is possible that this character is more or less herself, though that is never clearly stated.
money. Obstructing people from entering the market is perceived to be morally bad. Some of the more established traders along the streets had increased their turnover to such an extent they could allow small-boys to work for them. For a small and fixed price per piece, the small-boys were handed the down-ones, the clothes in a bale that were the hardest to sell. They then roamed the streets in search for buyers. The inclusive part of small-small thus also reinforces hierarchies and patronage.

Although allowing for some level of bargaining, prices on goods were similar throughout the marketspace. They were set somehow organically, but with consideration to the price of the wholesaler or importer; the price at the supermarkets, which traders always wanted to be lower than; and other traders’ prices on the same commodity. A phrase like “That is the price” referred to a common standard of what the price of that commodity within the marketspace was at that moment. Sometimes, especially within the Central Market, traders more actively regulated the price themselves as a group. Schmitz (2016) describes how a group of established traders, all Hajia, in the Central Market together agreed on price levels. This level had to be lower than that of the supermarkets, so that customers would keep coming to the market. She emphasizes how trust in one another was a necessary element for how this works, and how traders who departed from those regulations failed. They saw themselves, by necessity, as a community in relation to external actors.

It was through the norm of letting others in that traders were allowed to claim a place. In September 2016, I met two young men who were starting a business of selling fried noodles at night. They started outside a nightclub in the outskirts of the city center but were planning to move closer to town. They had contacted a provision store owner who had allowed them to sell outside of his store at night. During the daytime, small-scale traders already filled the place, but during the night it was empty. The man requested no money from the two young men but demanded that they clean the place by 7 a.m. at the latest. As we saw in Chapter Three, these kinds of arrangements were very common across the marketspace. Outside larger shops there were always smaller traders selling. In the arrangement, traders were required to clean the place and do errands for the store owner. Coming from the same family or neighborhood, or sharing friends, simplified these setups. Although traders argued there should not be any ethnic dimension to such agreements, we have seen how a politics of belonging sometimes interacted with the moral economy in this regard.

For northerners migrating to the southern part of Ghana, these obligations were necessary for the chance to start a business. For instance, Tufuor et al. (2015) discuss how single migrant women from northern Ghana in Old Fadama Market in Accra formed a “moral community economy” that extended the obligations to the household and that was not directed to a maximization of profit. After the introduction of the structural adjustment programs in 1983 and the transformation of the agricultural sector that ensued, together with families prioritizing schooling for the boys, single migrant women have increased in Ghana. In Accra, and especially in Old Fadama, northern migrant women formed associations and susu groups based on ethnicity for mutual benefits, assistance, and friendship. Newcomers approached established traders from
the same village or ethnic group who often gave them goods to sell. According to Tufuor et al., the newcomer was expected to reimburse the goods once she had become skillful enough, while it was a moral obligation for the lender to assist and provide the resources and knowledge to make that happen.

Depending on the commodity, different actors had separate roles, such as importers, suppliers, distributors, transporters, wholesalers, retailers. It was an effective market strategy to cut the number of intermediaries, but traders often found it important to uphold the distinctions between those roles. Mostly, this has been the task of trader associations. Separate roles were especially important within food trade, and for wares that were associated with larger transport costs. Locally grown food did not demand the same number of intermediary roles for its distribution. Schwimmer (1979), in his study from the 1970s on market structures in the south of Ghana, saw that local producers held the option to retail their own goods, though most seemed to use an actor that transferred the goods between locations. During my fieldwork, local producers were few in Tamale, but their produce was common.

In this regard, the distinction between wholesalers and retailers needed to be upheld. Importing goods and selling them directly to the end consumer, cutting away the possibility for other people to trade those products in between, was seen as immoral. Normally, there was a clear spatial and personal separation between wholesaler and retailer. Wholesalers, such as traders of bags of rice or piles of yam, or bales of clothes, did not usually also do retail. And if they did, they had separate locations for that. A yam wholesaler in Clark’s (1994 p 141) Kumasi Central Market study had a separate retail shop where her daughter and niece were working. When customers approached her wholesale store she passed them on to her daughter and niece. Clark saw this as result of wholesalers need of streamlining their trading practices and avoiding odd piles of goods. I argue that this distinction is also morally defended. According to PTA, the umbrella organizations for the different trader associations in town, this distinction was essential for the entire local economy. Otherwise resourceful actors would easily outcompete smaller traders, which would jeopardize the livelihood of many. The PTA secretary argued that some larger chains, such as the nationwide Melcom, had organized their business in a way that gave the chance for market traders to buy their commodities in bulk at a discount, and then to sell them further in the marketplace one by one.

Though letting others in frames a set of obligations and norms that defines the moral economy and prescribes how to act, part of being a successful market trader was to break these norms, hopefully without anyone noticing it. Linda, the successful vendor in towels, underwear and sponges, is an example of that. She often emphasized that her customers were people who “buy to sell.” In that way, she became associated with wholesalers, and thus her prices that were lower than anywhere else in the market did not generate any issues among her fellow traders. It would be more problematic to her if she instead targeted her business toward single households, as this would make it more difficult for these other traders to sell. Early in the mornings, traders filled Linda’s small but packed store in the Central Market.
Later during the day, however, many of Linda’s customers did buy for themselves as regular customers. Linda thus departed in some way from the norms of the moral economy and at the same time she broke partly with the community by not involving herself in any association. This shows how there is a struggle entailed in the moral economy, a struggle of how one ought to behave in relation to the community, and how success often requires one to depart from what is allowed. It is a struggle fueled by the built-in paradox of the moral economy: while traders are obliged to let others in and support them if possible, the small-small ideal provides the escape from those obligations, by claiming lack of means. We will get back to Linda and to the enabling and restraining mechanisms of small-small in the next chapter.

*Moral Breakdowns*

Zigon (2007) sees morality as bodily dispositions that we unintentionally and without reflection perform, and that we share with most people we meet. But how, he asks, should we separate it from Bourdieu’s habitus, or even culture? Zigon argues that it is when something happens that breaks the norm and makes us reflect upon what is the proper behavior or how things ought to be, that we can approach the moral. This situation of reflection is what he calls the ethical dilemma.

The norms of small-small enable self-improvement and social economic inclusion. It provides livelihood for many, as middlemen, *small-boys*, retailers, and by acknowledging the right of others to trade. It is as if money or profit within the marketspace is a kind of commons, a collective resource that must be shared. The gradual progress of the individual, and the importance of letting others in, build communities and shared responsibilities of the common future. Similarly, Clark (2010) argues the following:

*Competition is expected and rewarded, but within a framework of mutual benefit that gives each person a responsibility to contribute to the common good. Material wealth and progress toward modernity are viewed as positive for their own sake, but not when they undermine the commitment to mutual survival (Clark 2010 p 239f).*

Clark does not really follow up on this moral relation between the individual and the community, but she points to a discussion on how the small-small reproduces itself and the marketspace. Small-small becomes what Bloch and Parry (1989) describes as the “long term transactional order,” a cycle of transactions and distributions that reproduces the social and cosmic order of society. Bloch and Parry distinguish between long-term and short-term transactions but also frame them as mutually inclusive activities. The short-term transactions concern individual appropriation and competition. Accordingly, there is a transformation process between these orders, in which goods derived in the short-term transactions become part of the long-term cycle,
which in turn contributes to the reproduction of the society. The long-term transactions are therefore dependent on the short-term. The individual profits and progression of each trader is necessary for the collective small-small moral economy to be upheld. As Bloch and Parry argue, these two transactional orders are dependent on each other, just as individuals are dependent on a community. As long as the short-term transactions are subordinated to the long-term transaction they pose no threat, but if and when they begin to dominate people will address them on moral grounds. This is what Zigon would call a moral breakdown causing an ethical dilemma. Bloch and Parry thus open for a wider discussion about morality, economics, and the entire reproduction of the society, and how this is situated in the relation between the individual and the community.

In the following sections I will describe what happens when actors in a more visible way than Linda pose a threat to or break the moral economy. First, I discuss the sakawa practices that refer to the searching of quick profits, through cheating foreigners on the internet and in person. These practices threaten the moral economy partly through their search for quick profits, but also through relying on the occult as a means to generate that profit. Furthermore, sakawa practices are here linked to the political party peripheries that further add skepticism and distrust to the already morally dubious political sphere. Second, I deal with what traders call “foreign influx,” which refers to foreign traders who do business in a morally problematic way by disregarding middlemen and blurring the distinction between wholesalers and retailers.

Sakawa, Religiosity and Political Engagement

A sakawa boy is a young man who constantly and in different ways breaks the norms of the moral economy. Normally, the term sakawa (a Hausa word, meaning “putting inside”), refers to cyberfraud activities mixed with occult rituals that some men are increasingly engaged with to raise quick money. As such, it feeds on the fluidity of the digital world and global economy. It has been a common theme for several popular TV shows and films in recent years (Oduru-Frimpong 2014). But in the streets of Tamale it also refers to many different trickster and fraud activities. These practices are mostly directed toward “wealthy” westerners. These activities, that in the short term are meant to generate large sums of money and in an instant change the life of the individual, endanger the moral social order of small-small.

The discussion I referred to above at Mohammed’s and Seidu’s place followed a conversation I had with their friends Rafiq, Hakeem, and Yasir, that illustrates how the values of small-small are influenced by images of the outside and together form their outlook on the world, and on how life should be lived. Mohammed and Seidu were on the other side of the street, playing Ludo with some other friends, while I was talking to Hakeem, Rafiq and Yasir. Hakeem borrowed my newspaper, while he once again informed me:
“All of us in Ghana want to go to the U.S. and your place, and work. Because there the money you get is high, and when you come back to Ghana, you will have money to invest. We will work hard over there.” He stopped browsing through the paper by a picture of Kanye West and told me he is a member of the Illuminati.

“It’s true, he, Jay Z, Lil Wayne, and Snoop Dogg, they are all Illuminati.”

We laughed, especially at his way of saying Snoop Doggy. “There are videos of them showing them doing the secret sign of Illuminati.”

“It’s true,” Rafiq confirmed, “in a video you can see Rihanna from the back doing the same sign on stage.”

“What is Illuminati?” I asked.

“It is a secret occult body” Rafiq explained. “Google freemasonry and Illuminati, you’ll see. They are in all American buildings and on bills.”

Yasir, sitting on my right listening, asked, “Are there any of those Boko Haram and ISIS in your country?”

Rafiq, on my left, continued: “Illuminati here is like the sakawa. Sakawa are cyber criminals, fraudsters. They write letters to white people.” Yasir elaborated that sakawa boys are not only online, “they can do anything. If I for instance show you some goods that I’m selling that are proper, and as I get the money, I give you some goods that are not proper.” They further explained that characteristic for sakawa actors is that they cheat people, especially foreigners.

The sakawa boys gathered in groups at Giddipass (a rooftop bar in the center of Tamale that attracts many foreigners) in the evenings, where they contacted foreigners. They explained to them that they needed help with various things. Sometimes, the group told me, the sakawa boys might leave the bar with a white woman. They could for instance say they were orphans, making the foreigners “feel sorry for them” and help them in different ways.

“They [the sakawa boys] are the ones driving the big-big cars in town, the Camaros, Range Rovers and those things.” With perfect timing, a black Dodge Challenger passed us, first slowly, with a roaring engine, then “vroom” and it took off.

“There is one,” said Hakeem. “He [the driver] comes from my neighborhood, he is just a small-boy, a teacher at first. He was part of those gathering at Giddipass, before he started doing internet frauds.” Hakeem let me know that the driver’s specialty was to pretend to be a woman online, and contact Germans and Americans, making them “fall in love” with him. He also worked closely with a woman, so that if the foreigner would call, she would answer. “He even recorded naked videos of her, for them.” After some time, the foreigner would like to meet and would send money for the woman to travel to him, or maybe he could convince him to pay a bill or something similar. “It’s because they fall in love.”

Yasir then explained that a typical sakawa story was when a gold miner gave a foreigner a piece of high quality gold, of which he claimed he had plenty. After he received the money for the rest of the gold, the gold was gone or of bad quality.

“Or,” Hakeem interrupted, “they take a picture of you and send it to a juju man who will put a charm on you and force you to pay even if you don’t know it.”
“Another sakawa,” Rafiq explained, “is when for instance a white woman can’t have children and wants to adopt from Ghana. The sakawa man arranges everything, using a fake certificate. He makes the woman pay a sum of money, but she will never get a baby.”

“It’s not correct [to do so],” Hakeem said. “If I steal, God won’t let it go. It’s like this, if I like your pen, and take it without you knowing it, and without giving it back, God will deduct it from me on judgment day. That’s why we can’t steal. God will make a collective judgment on our deeds in our lives.” We were then all quiet.

This discussion illustrates how images in the “mediascape” (Appadurai 1996) of an elsewhere (see Simone 2010, Matlon 2015) or the outside (see Chapter Seven) shape these young men’s understanding of the world around them and how they place events and actors in a moral understanding. How the bad sakawa behavior exists everywhere, even among people they admire, like famous popular artists, and how finally God provides the only answer.

It was Friday, and Habib and Hussein had dressed up for the afternoon prayers. Habib was wearing a long white linen shirt and narrow trousers in the same fabric. He had a ring and small pliers hanging on a chain around his neck. “They are my jewelries,” he explained, describing how he found the pliers among the secondhand shirts in one of the bales he had bought and opened to sell along the street. He did not account for the ring. Hussein was wearing a similar but dark blue shirt and small hat with no brim. They were holding their mobile phones, and Habib’s headphones were fixed to his shirt and thrown around his neck, like another piece of jewelry. A young man with dreads and only wearing tank top, stopped his motorcycle for traffic by the street corner. I recognized him from Sparkles, a popular restaurant for young westerners. Habib looked at him, pointed at him with a head nod. “Do you see him? He is fraud boy, a sakawa boy,” Habib said. “One who tricks foreigners. He makes them send money to him. They don’t work like us all day, but are on the internet emailing foreigners, or hanging out by the restaurants.”

Oduru-Frimpong (2014) describes how sakawa practices are condemned all over Ghana. There are plenty of moral narratives in which seeking quick profits through engaging in occult rituals have terrible consequences for the actor, but also about the money involved becoming contaminated, and seen as dirty or evil. A popular Twi saying is: “ape ntem, anyantem, ene owuo ne nam (seeking it quick, getting it quick, [both] leads to death” (in Oduru-Frimpong 2014 p 135). He also describes how the mainstream religion of course condemns these activities, yet simultaneously believes in their efficacy.

Also in the Tamale marketspace, people recognize the effect of what they call juju. One day the junior brother of Habib came running, urging me to come and see what was going on in the crowd across the street. Inside the crowd of young people, a small boy sat on a bench, leaning backwards, with another boy’s head on his stomach. The boy sitting had swallowed a phone and took money from people who called the number and then listened for the signal through his belly. “It’s juju,” Habib’s brother explained. Later, I talked to Hussein about this, and he knew him.
“Oh, that small boy, he does that. It’s magic.”
“Are you sure?” I asked, “hasn’t he just swallowed the phone and then asked people to call it?”
“Can you do it?” Hussein responded, while picking up his Alcatel, 2.0 MP camera phone with qwerty keyboard.
“No, I can’t” I admitted.
“No, but he can, even with your big Nokia, he can do it. If that is not magic, what is?”

*Sakawa* practices have also generated a concern from the government and the political elite. In 2009, the Youth and Sports Minister argued that “the eagerness of the youth to be rich in the shortest possible time is a contributing factor to the rise [of] this social menace” (Ghanadot News, May 19, 2009, quoted in Oduru-Frimpong 2014 p 139). While president at the time, J.E Atta Mills, stated that the

. . . desire by some Ghanaians, especially the youth, to get rich quickly is compelling them to engage in social vices such as occultism, and cyberfraud, otherwise known as sakawa, among others . . . and in their quest to attain riches and status in society are ‘sacrificing their youth, health, family life, and spiritual values in pursuit of these things [which are] creeping into our social fiber, and are gaining roots’ . . . (Ghanaian Chronicle, July 28, 2009, quoted in Oduru-Frimpong 2014 p 140).

*Sakawa* practices, then, are condemned for the way it corrupts the moral economy through the motivation of greed, and the usage of occultism. Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) argue that “occult economies” have proliferated since the turn of the millennium because of a global economy in which the mechanisms of producing wealth seem to lay beyond the conventional and the rational, in which the previous conjunction of labor and class is eroding, and the “will to consume outstrips the opportunity to earn” (p 317). Note, at the very same time Pentecostal churches are flourishing, preaching the prosperity gospel, promising quick wealth and good health. They are in the opposite way of the *sakawa* often obsessed with the occult, claiming its power comes from the cultural past and obstructs the progression of life (Larkin and Meyer p 291). This, once again, points to the paradox of the moral economy, that to become successful, one must go beyond what is allowed but appear to remain within it.

Similarly, for young Muslim men in the streets of Tamale, the internal struggles between the moral guidance of the restricting small-small and alternative ways of becoming rich and successful, co-construct their everyday. The question for them is how to get wealthy without jeopardizing their social position in the community. Realizing that the gradual progress of the small-small may at times be close to stagnation, they often therefore turn their gaze to the “outside of Africa,” something I will further discuss in Chapter Seven. For them, the power of *juju* was real, so maintaining faith, continuously praying, trusting and fearing God, protected them from its allure. This reveals what Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) describe as the “bipolar character” of occult economies: “At one level, they consist in the constant quest for new, magical
means for otherwise unattainable ends; at another, they vocalize a desire to sanction, even eradicate, people held to have accumulated assets by those very means” (p 316).

Sparkles was one of the restaurants Habib referred to. It was a restaurant/bar/night club, located within the premises of the Cultural Centre (officially Centre for National Culture). It was a place that attracted young westerners, recommended in the guide book, as “justifiably the most popular eatery in central Tamale with volunteers & travelers alike” offering a “lengthy dessert menu & real filter coffee!” (Briggs 2014 p 421). Around the Cultural Centre there were small craft shops selling batik shirts, slippers, drums, and arts, etc., directed primarily to the many travelers and volunteers visiting the city. This market around the Cultural Centre and Sparkles was radically different from that of the Central Market in terms of its aesthetics, vending practice, appearance, etc. Inspired by the globally spread images of Rastafari and reggae culture, traders, artists, and artisans wore baggy shorts, beads, and dreads. It was the only place in town where people could be smoking while walking around holding a beer with no problem. Marijuana was also available. It was a fun place, where young people not wanting or unable to live up to the strict and neat social codes of many other urban public spaces could find refuge. Most of the artisans were young men, but there were many women hanging around, some of them selling food, biscuits, water, and cigarettes. The Cultural Centre was also an international place, as many of its actors had traveled not only around West Africa, but in Europe and North America. It was a place for brokers and mediators, characterized by their moral ambiguity (Lindquist 2015), who quickly called on foreigners, asking what they could do for them, always having solutions to their problems or needs.

To traders such as Habib and Hussein, the bars Sparkles and Giddipass represented places where a sakawa would go. However, Habib himself, was by others thought to be sakawa. Although he was a respected street trader, with two wives and six children, and had loyal customers, he also liked breaking several taboos. At times, he was arrogant to potential buyers, demanding them to pay more for the shirts he sold than the standard price. He came late in the mornings, sometimes not at all, letting his junior brother (cousin) do the work. Even his senior brother, Yakubu, and their friend Saibu, who sold shoes in the same corner, sometimes did not see him as taking the business “seriously.”

Habib liked to provoke. This particular Friday, just before he and Hussein continued to the Mosque, Habib wanted to show me something on his phone. He pulled up a picture of a half-naked woman with a very wide behind. He explained that this was his dream woman, a bit older, and bigger. He did not want them small. He showed me a short pornographic clip with the woman (or another one with similar features) having sex with a man. In Ghana, explicit sexual images are morally constrained, and sexual content in films and magazine are often censured. Consumption and production of pornography is illegal, so by openly showing these images, Habib was breaking taboos and playing on what was morally appropriate in a broader sense. Afterwards, I asked Habib what Allah would think of this clip. Habib, being at the same time a devoted Muslim, explained that he goes to the mosque to pray and ask for forgiveness
and then it is fine. It is important, he argues, to pray on time though, “at 5 a.m., 1 p.m.,
3 p.m., 6 p.m., and 7 p.m., because that is the time that Allah listens the most.”

Habib liked to dress in ways that generated discussion, though the white linen dress of
this Friday was in perfect accordance with the norm. Once he wore a bow tie, something
Yakubu and Saibu reacted to, claiming it was a Christian outfit. They questioned if it was correct for a Muslim to wear it. Habib did not care of what they said but enjoyed the attention. One time I met him over by Hussein’s place a couple of blocks away. At that time, he was wearing extremely tight bright green trousers, zigzag patterned ballerinas, and a slim cerise colored shirt with the collar turned up. “These pants are too skinny. Can you wear it? . . . I can wear anything, I’m a real Jack and Jones!” he said, gazing the streets, while sending one of the small-boys away to buy him snuff.

I had already met the boy with the dreads and the motorcycle, whom Habib referred
to as sakawa earlier during the fieldwork. I had conducted interviews with some of
the many youth organizations of the political parties to the upcoming elections. The
boy was a member of one of the more disreputable youth wings to the government
party, NDC. The youth wing was known in the public for their motorcycle activities
and occasional violence. Oduru-Frimpong (2014) argues the attraction of the political
youth wings are results from the same political and economic condition of youth un-
employment, from which the sakawa practices derives. In addition, recalling
Awedoba’s (2009) assertion that the parties’ youth wings are key actors in the perpet-
uation of the Abudu-Andani conflict, their association with sakawa places them in
same immoral folder to which traders hold their distance.

Some few days before the December elections I reached the youth wing office,
through the help of a representative of the mother party. However, “office” may be
stretching the term a bit too far. It was an open dusty space in a street corner in a
central residential area dominated by NDC supporters. A few wooden benches pro-
tected by a roof was placed next to a rough and unplastered concrete wall unevenly
covered by NDC posters of the presidential and parliamentary candidates. There was
no flooring under the benches, and piles of garbage all around. It was a messy place,
especially compared to the otherwise neatly swept verandas of other youth wings of
both parties. The shining motorcycles and scooters were in bright contrast to the dirt.
The secretary of the organization was cleaning them, letting the white foam from the
bucket and the vehicles drip down on the asphalt and run down into the black goo in
the gutter. On the other side, behind the walls of an inactive construction site, a group
of eight boys and young men sat, smoking cigarettes and marijuana. Several of them
were noticeably high. The boy Habib had described as sakawa was among them,
though we did not speak. Instead I primarily talked to a young man with a beard and
bourgeoning dreads. He wore no shirt and his shorts were hanging below his bottom,
showing his yellow underwear. He wore a big golden piece of jewelry around his
neck. Stoned, he had problems formulating words and constructing sentences.

“We are the riders,” he said holding his hands on an imaginary handlebar, pretend-
ing he was speeding with his right hand. Their partly self-imposed task was to ride
around town on their motorcycles, making sounds, holding posters and accessories of their mother party. I write partly self-imposed, as their party did give them fuel coupons to encourage them to be visible. They were important features, often attracting a crowd, especially during political rallies and when party leaders came to town. But on other occasions people mostly frowned upon them. There were several similar groups of riders for both parties in town.

“We ride to celebrate, to welcome our candidates to town. One day it is us, the other day it is NPP,” the man continued. I asked them what was so good about NDC, and one of the other members burst out, explaining how peaceful Tamale had become since NDC came into power, and how well they handled youth unemployment.

“Now, almost every youth has a job.”

My supplementary question was obvious.

“If they dealt with youth unemployment that well, how come you sit here instead of working?” I asked. I got no clear answer though one of them argued they had taken the day off. It was obvious they did not appreciate the question.

The youth wing had also taken other tasks upon themselves in favor of the party. Occasional fights with NPP factions gave them a bad reputation. As soon as I asked the group what they did other than riding, the stoned man pointed out their peacefulness, stating they might drive elderly, disabled people to the polling stations, or take political opponents that had broken the law to the police station. Here, he referred to the butcher incident (see Chapter Two). One of the accused men was forcefully taken from his home and taken to the police by a group of NDC activists.

What Habib was distancing himself against was not only a type of economic activity exemplified by sakawa, in which one was unattuned to the morals of small-small and was perceived to lack work ethics and loyalty, but a certain political activity. Habib himself was a politically engaged individual, but not in the way of the boy he saw to be sakawa. Habib was Abudu and an NPP supporter, so the quick answer to why Habib reacted to the boy’s appearance would be that the boy represented NDC and was therefore probably Andani, and thus a political opponent of Habib. Not denying the potential importance of them representing different parties, such a conclusion would be a simplification that obscures other pertinent moral dimensions. After all, Habib and his brothers had been working closely together with Saibu, an Andani who sold shoes from the same corner. They constantly helped each other in their business, selling each other’s goods, unpacking wares. It had been Saibu’s contact with Mr. Alhassan at the assembly who made it possible for all of them to sell from there from the beginning. Furthermore, Habib cofounded and was presently an elected but contested leader of the organization Namba Yiŋa (eng: “come together as one”) for Dagbamba traders aimed at bringing both Abudus and Andanis together. In the organization, they had been encouraging everyone to go vote and then peacefully go back home. The organization itself did not favor any party over the other.

Instead, the sakawa boy represented a way of doing politics that challenged the politically and morally correct way of taking part in the electoral process, the way that
followed a discourse of inclusion, peacefulness, and rights. The “riders” of both parties were perceived to enhance divisions between the NPP and NDC and to generate violence. They were thus morally condemned in their economic activities, their general appearance, and their political practices. Within the social fabric of the marketspace, the polarization has associated the political activities of some party youth wings with sakawa. While the sakawa figure and the riders accentuated the small-small moral economy by embodying its opposite, they also pointed to the spatial divisions of these moralities. These activities took place outside of the marketspace, and traders upheld their distance towards these practices. As an immoral Other the sakawa help define the small-small by delimiting it spatially and economically.

Yet, there were mediators. The sakawa boy in the crossing by Habib’s place connected the NDC youth wing and the restaurants like Sparkles and Giddipass to the street where Habib condemned him. It was through individuals like him, and also Habib, that immoral politics reached the marketspace. The behaviors of these mediators who brought the disruptive party politics to the streets were often morally questioned. As Mohammed saw it, joining a party could lead to his friends distancing themselves from him. “My friends would maybe think bad things of me.” Because of the “traditional fighting” of the NPP and NDC it was too sensitive. “All NPP and NDC people are violent,” he said. To engage in party politics would for Mohammed necessarily associate him with all that politics in a wider contextual meaning entails. It would connect him to violence, and to the disruptive mechanisms, and to greed.

**Foreign Influx**

Following Zigon and studying morality through its breakdowns, we should in this context also pay attention to the perception of many actors that they were challenged and threatened by economic transformations and outsiders’ way of doing business. The threat came from some of the many foreigners having moved into Tamale for business. This process referred to as a “foreign influx” by the members of the Progressive Traders Association (PTA), represents a kind of breakdown that triggered and articulated moral values. The short-term individual gains of these traders negatively affected the long-term small-small moral economy. Most traders viewed foreign investors as the key to development as long as they did business along the norms of the moral economy. Within the marketspace, the government was often seen as corrupt and nonresponsive to the needs of the traders. But in this instance, the government was perceived to protect small-scale traders through permitting access to the marketspace to Ghanaians only.

The process of foreign influx concerned the way some foreign capitalists of especially Lebanese, Syrian, and Chinese origin did business. They had opened stores around the market to sell imported rice, flour, and cooking oil directly to the consumers. The Nigerian dealers in motorcycles and spare parts were also of concern.
A few traders had formed PTA in response to the foreign influx they feared was changing the market dynamic of Tamale. Even though much of PTA’s work during my time with them also involved other matters, the threat of foreign influx was mentioned at the very first of their meetings I attended. I had at that meeting just presented myself and my purpose, when a man stood up. He was one of the more established members of the PTA and now he asked me how my research would help them deal with this issue.

The secretary of PTA was one of the founders of the association and he became a key informant to me in this regard. He argued that the problem was not that they were foreigners but that they were doing retail instead of wholesale, thus outcompeting established traders with cheap alternative products. The foreign traders had the ability to acquire goods from other channels and in larger quantities than local retailers. In addition to providing cheap alternative products, the foreign traders’ strategy was to jump the wholesale step and to sell the imported commodities directly to the end consumer, eliminating opportunities for other traders to buy and sell their goods in town. This is, in a way, a classic story of capitalism, in which global, more efficient, streamlined actors with access to larger funds outcompete the local smaller actor. But what is revealed are the normative undertones of the business competition that characterize the moral economy.

Foreign influx was also of central concern for PTA’s mother organization, Ghana Union for Traders Association (GUTA) in Accra. GUTA directed much of their advocacy work toward the government, demanding it to enforce the laws that regulate foreign investment in the retail business. The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre Act (GIPC Act 865, Republic of Ghana 2013) was the main legislation that GUTA wanted the government to enforce. GIPC regulated foreign investments in the country, and it stated that foreigners were not allowed to do “petty trading” and other types of business with small endowments. However, foreigners were allowed to own trading enterprises if they (at the time of fieldwork) invested the equivalent of 300,000 USD and employed ten Ghanaians. In 2013, that figure rose to 1,000,000 USD and a minimum workforce of twenty Ghanaians (Republic of Ghana 2013, Section 28). The idea behind GIPC (despite its intention to promote investments) was in this way to deter foreigners from trading in the marketplaces. So, in a way, the small-small moral economy was institutionalized by law, through the GIPC. This prevented other traders, the

---

37 GIPC 2013 Act 865 Section 27 (Republic of Ghana 2013) stipulates: “Activities reserved for Ghanaians and Ghanaian owned enterprises. 1) A person who is not a citizen or an enterprise which is not wholly owned by citizen shall not invest or participate in: a) the sale of goods or provision of services in a market, petty trading or hawking or selling of goods in a stall at any place; b) the operation of taxi or car hire service in an enterprise that has a fleet of less than twenty-five vehicles; c) the operation of a beauty salon or a barber shop; d) the printing of recharge scratch cards for the use of subscribers of telecommunication services; e) the production of exercise books and other basic stationery; f) the retail of finished pharmaceutical products; g) the production, supply and retail of sachet water; and h) all aspects of pool betting business and lotteries, except football pool.”
non-citizens who supposedly did not follow the norms of small-small. So far, I have
described small-small as a mechanism of social and economic inclusion, but in the
context of GUTA and the GIPC we see how this inclusion interacts with nationalism
and protectionism. Also, the moral economy of the marketspace was given a price, a
level of funds that must be invested to be allowed to ignore the morality. The PTA
and GUTA argued that GIPC was a correct legislation since newcomers’ way of con-
ducting business was improper. The GIPC was in this regard a morally righteous leg-
islation that ought to be enforced.

So much for the invisible hand. In this regard, the Ghanaian government’s hand
was very visible. The GIPC set up an inter-agency task force to monitor and enforce
compliance with GIPC Act. In the Northern Region, the 11-member task force con-
sisted of representatives from various government bodies, Ghana Immigration Service
(GIS), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Ministry of Trade and Industry
(MOTI), Customs, Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS), and the Social Security and

One reading of this suggests that protecting the market from foreign investors was
an important task, and a matter of sovereignty. In line with the roll-out neoliberalism,
Brenda Chalfin (2010) argues that the Ghanaian government strives to show sover-
eignty and to address the restructuring of the state toward the global economy through
its customs and border control. She views the Ghana Customs Service as increasing
its domestic capacity and asserting an augmented domestic sovereignty (p 39f). The
government of Ghana and the GIPC strategy to protect the characteristics of Ghanaian
urban economy could be seen as a manifestation of that sovereignty.

Another reading would be that the state merely wanted to portray itself as protect-
ing traders for the sake of votes, while being well aware that such protection is in
reality difficult to uphold while belonging to a liberalized global economy. GUTA
argued that Ghana had become a “dumping ground for shoddy foreign goods” (Effah
2014, June 24). In 2014, thousands of traders belonging to GUTA protested the gov-
ernment’s inefficiency by closing their stores. As a response, the Ministry of Trade
and Industry issued a 30-day ultimatum to non-Ghanaian retailers in 48 markets (in-
cluding the Tamale Central Market) across the country to leave. But the task force did
not enforce the decision.

I argue that we should understand the state’s actions as somewhere in between
those alternative readings. We are seeing a state that is trying to mediate between two
moral registers that are difficult to reconcile. Freedom of choice and competition that
makes up central features of capitalist morality clashes on a structural level with the
morality of the small-small, which emphasizes social inclusion along norms of grad-
ual progress, piety, and modesty. On the one hand the state tries to protect the liveli-
hood of its citizens who make a living in the marketspace by forming laws that re-
stricts trade to Ghanaian citizens. On the other hand, it is bound to agreements and
regulations through its increased engagement in the global economy. For instance, the
government’s enforcement of the GIPC Act conflicted with the free trade regulations
set up within Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS). Nigerian
traders had even dragged the Ghanaian government to the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice in 2013 (Citifmonline.com, September 19, 2014).

I asked Rafiq, Hakeem, and Yasir about foreigners coming to Tamale. They all thought it was very good if they came, arguing that development comes from people who bring money to invest. They had no problems with Chinese or Nigerians, they said.

“But if they import goods from their countries and sell them here, one by one, instead of wholesale, is that also okay?” I asked.

“That is not good,” Yasir responded. The others shook their heads, supporting his argument.

“It is also not permitted; the law forbids it,” Rafiq added. “The government supports the local business. So, doing business like that, which can destroy others’ business is not good. And illegal. Foreign businesses are coming with a lot of money which can hurt people.”

The political protectionism of the GIPC Act shows the powerful domestic interests involved in small-scale trade. The perceived threat of the foreign influx can be explained in the junction of the individual and the common good, of the intrapersonal and interpersonal functions of morality (Wong 2014). For Bloch and Parry it is essential that the two transactional orders, of individual appropriation and of distributions within the community, are kept separately in different spheres; otherwise, the long-term cycle risks being “reduced to the transient world of the individual” (Bloch and Parry 1989 p 28). But I would argue that the small-scale trade in urban Ghana shows that these different transactional orders can appear simultaneously in time and space. Because, small-small is both. It binds the individual’s profits and progression together with the distributive aspect of the community.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have examined how traders mobilize themselves around the norms of small-small. The moral economy centers around a slow and gradual progress that gives opportunities for others and is set in a web of social relations. Ideally, it has a redistributing role as it opens possibilities for others to earn a living. Actors can enter it only if they adhere to this proper way of conducting business and of earning money. The foreign influx and the sakawa represent self-accumulating practices that stand in conflict to this moral economy. The individual and the community are bound together in a moral relation, in which the greed of individuals imperil the foundation of the community.

The case of foreign influx and sakawa shows how this ethical dilemma can be triggered by something spatially external and how the moral economy regulates access to the market. These alternative market strategies come into conflict with the small-small morality. The external influences initiate an ethical demand through a breaking
down of the moral. As Zigon (2007 p 133) puts it, “The need to consciously consider or reason about what one must do only arises in moments that shake one out of the everydayness of being moral.” But the evoked ethical discussion is not only one where the self is being reflected upon, as described by Zigon, but one that leads to moral condemnation of the Other. The strategies of the traders categorized as part of the foreign influx are frowned upon, and the *sakawa* boy is morally condemned. Thus, the breakdown also reproduces the morality.

The moral reflections were triggered following a widened engagement of Tamale and Ghana in the global economy. The outside of Ghana is another moral space that represents both possibilities and greed. The alternative business strategies of the foreign traders, and the rushing, greedy behavior of the *sakawa* are enabled through the increased presence of westerners and transnational information technologies. Leaning on Fassin’s (2009) approach to moral economy, we can in this process see how the state adopts and makes use of small-small values and emerges as an ambivalent guarantor of the marketspace. Discursively and by law it protects small-scale trade from the resourceful foreigners. But the government cannot easily enforce those laws since they are incompatible to the ideals of liberalization.

In the previous chapter I began to describe the state’s attempts to formalize the marketspace through decongestions and relocation of street traders to governable marketplaces. In this chapter, we have seen another example of the roll-out state in the GIPC Act. In Chapter Five we learn how the government institutionalizes the gradual progress through formalizing the *susu* business, and how traders organize themselves around a market solidarity that is based on the norms and values of small-small.

Thus, formalization involves an engagement with the marketspace through the adoption, protection, and invalidation of small-small values. This engagement will be further articulated in Part III. In Chapter Six, we will see how traders morally position themselves in a different way against the state. Based on the same value the government is then perceived as corrupt and negligent. Chapter Seven takes a closer look on young traders’ situated possibilities within the marketspace. We will see how the government often regards the youth as immoral, and lacking skills and education. The government even states in its National Youth Policy that the youth’s “Get rich quick” attitude” is a major challenge to the development of Ghana (Government of Ghana 2010 p 7).
There are many challenges facing small-scale traders in Tamale today. Competition is fierce, employment opportunities are few, and number of people immigrating from all over Ghana and West Africa, most of whom depend on small scale buying and selling, is large. The people in Tamale have seen an almost war-likechieftaincy conflict that has spread into all sections of the Dagbon society, dividing people into factions aligned with the different political parties, different theological directions of Islam, and different neighborhoods. This politicization of chieftaincy, of public institutions and of space, and the failure of the national and local government to provide responses to the many hardships its citizens are enduring, have contributed to an environment of political and economic distrust and skepticism, and have generated disparaging allegations, accusations and rumors.

The distrust is also shown in statistical studies. Sulemana and Issifu (2015) use the results from the Afrobarometer surveys to indicate that mutual trust between Ghanaians and trust toward public institutions is generally low. The Dagbamba especially do not trust the president, the Electoral Commission, or the courts of law. However, they do significantly trust the army, which points to the near history of violence and the army’s role in guaranteeing security. The generally low level of interpersonal and generalized trust is based on questions such as, “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you must be very careful in dealing with people?” and to what extent they trust their relatives, neighbors and other people they know.

The statistics should be interpreted with caution. We get no understanding from these decontextualized results on how these interactions occur. Despite this general and political distrust, small-scale traders form reliable long-term relationships with other actors in the marketspace. Reciprocity, mutuality, and despite all, trust, characterize these relations. To understand this, we need to situate interactions like these in social space. I will argue that possessing a place within the marketspace is an important resource for establishing trust. It not only simplifies credit, it also enables the creation of rotating saving groups, so called susu. Also, the mere sharing of places and the traders’ dependence on their neighbors is equally important. The reciprocity of the services provided for one another within and of that space construct solidarities among actors across time, that in turn may be mechanisms for peace. This argument goes to the heart of what it means to be trader in the marketspace and is important in understanding the small-small citizenship, discussed in the next chapter, that draws on these moral entanglements.
I will first make a short recap of the politicized situation of Tamale from the perspective of marketspace traders, who strive to find ways of behaving, living, and doing business without being too strongly associated with one of the two sides. From there, I will show the effect that this situation has had on trader associations in Tamale. While some of the associations have been drawn into the conflict and almost dissolved because of it, the Progressive Traders Association (PTA) has built their base on being nonpartisan. I will then analyze the way traders rely on credit in doing business; how credit relations may help in times of crisis, but also on how moral obligations to others can be felt as restraints and obstacles against individual growth. I will also describe the *susu* as a saving scheme and a type of solidary mutual help group—although for the last couple of decades, since the structural adjustments and later the mushrooming of microfinance institutes, *susus* have evolved into individual savings accounts that the government in turn has sought to regulate. The entangled moral relations in the marketspace are transformed by formalization, the government’s ambition to increase the use of banks, and neoliberal ideas of individual atomization. Finally, I will discuss the spatial continuity, permanence, and reliability that traders bring to the making of the city through their ongoing claiming of place. Market stores and stalls, street corners, open spaces, gutters, or stretches of pavements are places for not only working, but for living, sleeping, eating, and enjoying. The sharing of that space forms yet another basis of friendship, solidarity, and community.

*Trading Across Divisions*

It has been a long-established truth in anthropology that kindness and trust are more likely to be shown among people sharing commonalities (Shipton 2014). In Tamale, solidarities are in flux, reconfigured and reinstalled after years of conflict between the Abudu and Andani branches of the Dagbon Royal family. A new landscape of trustworthy relations within the town and the market is being produced. Some groups and associations have vanished, imploded by internal differences and mistrust. New constellations have appeared, especially within the marketspace, some that reinforce the dividing mechanisms and some that bridge. Within the marketspace, traders have recreated solidarities that cross the Abudu–Andani divide.

The Abudu–Andani branches and their party alignments divide Dagbon into two sides. The Dagbamba claim they are either Andani or Abudu, although intermarriages are so common that most are able to choose what side they belong to and dispute each other’s belonging (MacGaffey 2006b p 89). Violent clashes are rarer in Dagbon in recent years, but the matter has not been resolved. After the culminating events in which the paramount chief of Dagbon, the Ya Na, and his Andani court, were killed in Yendi in 2002, no new Ya Na has been enskinned. In Yendi, the capital of Dagbon, the situation is more critical. There are not many violent clashes between Abudu and Andani supporters there either, but the Abudus have, for instance, set up a different
chieftaincy structure. Since there is no Ya Na to name lower chiefs, the two parallel systems cause conflicts and turmoil. The either/or form of belonging and the stakes involved that go beyond the ability to appoint chiefs and control land all the way to the power of the presidency, form a polarized environment that surrounds and at times infiltrate the marketspace.

Meanwhile, Tamale is growing and many of its new citizens are non-Dagbamba. Instead, they bring another political discourse that often contains a humorous and sarcastic language that illustrates a general distrust toward politicians. Afia, an Asante cassava and palm nut trader in her thirties, was much younger than most of her neighboring traders. She shared a lane with several Ewe traders. The Ashanti region is the true stronghold of NPP, whilst the Ewes, who originate from the Volta region, are mostly NDC. This relation and the historical struggle between the Asantehene and Ewes lay the foundation for a joking relationship. In the Central Market after the elections in the beginning of 2013, Afia was standing next to her recently opened bag of cassava. Eyes wide open, she pointed fingers and shouted to the Ewe women in the lane, blaming them for the slow business:

You NDC people, do not want any money in the system. NDC are thieves, while NPP are business people. If they would have been in power, they would have sold so much cocaine by now so there would be money all around. Someone should beat the two of you for being NDC. Come outside the market and let’s fight. I’ll beat you!

This was typical of Afia. Everybody recognized her sarcastic jokes. Everybody laughed. Hagberg (2006) recognizes how joking relationships of today must be placed in a context of national political culture. From research in Burkina Faso he argues that joking relationships culturally constructs a space where political criticism can be expressed and help form a political community. Afia’s jokes are typical for how politics is often addressed in Ghana. They are playing on each other’s ethnicity, knowing that it is assumed for all Asantes to be NPP and Ewes to be NDC. They know it is not like that all the time, but they are joking with it. They are also joking about Ghanaian politicians as incompetent. That Afia brings up cocaine is a reference to the allegations from sections of the NDC and the media that NPP has been involved in the Ghanaian cocaine trade, and rumors of its party leader Akufo-Addo being a cocaine user.

The point I want to make is how such an encounter would be impossible between Andanis and Abudus. It is just unthinkable. Their relationship in terms of political parties is tense and very sensitive. Few gladly discuss politics if they know someone from the other side is present. The ones who do are very careful in what they say. Complaining about the government’s inefficiency, corruption, and failures are, however, possible comments. Most traders blame the government for inflaming the conflict, by exaggerating the divide, utilizing the differences, and making a traditional chieftaincy a matter for government politics. Despite political forces of division, within the marketspace actors trade and interact with one another with consideration of gate belonging. No trader claimed there was a problem in doing business with one
another. Many Andanis work very close with Abudus. Saibu, Yakubu, and Habib are examples of that, so are Hussein and Alhaji Amir.

Small-small has had a peacemaking effect as it has recreated the trust between actors, rather than enforcing the divide. From their study on the post-conflict Jos plateau in Nigeria, Lyon and Porter (2009) describe how many trading relationships between people from different ethnic groups were built on moral norms of reciprocity and endured the violent conflict in 2001 that originated from the resentment against traders of specific ethnic groups. Also, actors could quickly reanimate those inter-ethnic trading relationships that had broken during the conflict. Those who were not involved in any food trade at all remained more antagonistic. Social life, Lyon and Porter contend, was rebuilt partly through economic life. A key feature of a moral economy, according to Carrier (2018), is how actors’ prolonged economic interactions and activities generate obligations between them.

Much earlier, Cohen (1965) argued that market trade and credit systems can cross ethnic barriers. The Nigerian cattle trade that he studied was dependent on Fulani herders, Hausa middlemen, and Yoruba butchers. The long-established relationships and the credits given between these groups reduced the risk of potential conflicts. But it also defined and reinforced the difference between them, since a negotiation between a butcher and middleman was also one between a Yoruba and a Hausa.

But, Abudus and Andanis are not different ethnic groups, they are royal lineages that through the involvement of politics have divided all Dagbamba into two factions. They see themselves as brothers, “sharing the same father,” as they often say. They are neither divided by the types of commodities they sell nor by their position within the market networks. In Tamale, it is not just through trading with each other that economic life has helped restore social life; it is also through the sharing of places. Working next to each other in the same street corner or having stores next to one another will inevitably lead to interaction, through talking, listening, and laughing. Trust between traders arises not only because they have separate roles in the market, which Lyon and Porter and Cohen stress, but also because they are anchored in social space.

**Associations and Politics**

All over Ghana, traders have formed associations to improve their working and living conditions. But the influence and power of associations varies greatly across the country. In the south, for instance, market associations have had a great organizing power (see for instance, Clark 1994, 2010b, Lyon 2003, Schwimmer 1979) centering around an influential market queen. But in Tamale the situation is somehow different. Many associations have lost much of their influence as an effect of the Abudu–Andani dispute. Traders talked about a time in the past, when there were plenty of trader associations, for all kinds of things. But after the culmination of the Abudu–Andani conflict
in 2002 and the critical years that followed that, many associations almost dissolved because of the intensified polarization. Some lost their ability to cooperate and stopped holding meetings. They were merely remnants of what they used to be, struggling to remain important and relevant despite decreasing numbers of members.

Market associations in Tamale were not clearly defined. There were rarely statutes, member registries or formal annual meetings. They were often organized around a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer, who usually held their positions until they retired or died. Most associations were formed among shopkeepers in a marketplace or by traders selling the same commodity. There had been attempts to start associations among street traders also, but they were rarely successful. Dagbamba traders who were not members of any association often talked about them as something coming from the south with the Asantes and others. But the associations such as the Central Market Traders Association (CMTA), the Yam Market Association, the Kola Association, and the umbrella organizations Kpalon Bwaani Association and the PTA had all been formed by and were still predominantly run by Dagbamba.

CMTA was the dominant association in the Central Market. The chairman of CMTA was regarded as the chairman of the whole market. The Metropolitan Assembly communicated with CMTA when needed to discuss matters that concerned the Central Market. The history of CMTA in Tamale is long. It goes back long before the fire in 1982. No one could give an exact date or a clear history of the association, but it was initially formed by kola traders, sometime after independence. As the influence of the kola traders grew and the need for someone to represent the market traders became evident, it somehow evolved into the CMTA. By 2012, the kola business had lost its financial strength and was almost a marginal practice in the market, but its traders still held a symbolic power and had positions high up in the associational hierarchy. However, the influence of CMTA was diminishing. It no longer held meetings to the same extent as earlier. Some of its functions, especially its role of representing market traders in discussions with the assembly, had been taken over by the PTA. Some of my informants were not aware of the CMTA at all.

The Yam Market Association in Aboabo is another example of an association that has suffered from the polarization in Tamale. They could trace their history to the construction of the Aboabo market in the beginning of the 1980s. For decades, they organized and gathered the yam traders of Tamale and especially those of Aboabo. They coordinated their work with the (at that time) District Assembly so that anyone wanting to sell yam were advised to sell from there. Most of them were Dagbamba, but there were also Fare-fare, Konkomba, Nanumba, and others. But due to the Dagbon dispute, the association had not held a meeting since before the killing of Ya Na in 2002. There were both Abudus and Andanis among the executives, and though there was no actual violence taking place among them or in the market, it was impossible to hold meetings. One yam trader described a time before the conflict turned violent, when the members could help each other when in need. The association collected fees and could use the money to help members if they were sick or needed
financial support. But as no meetings had been held for long, there was little money left, and it could not support anyone. By 2013 the conflict had cooled down, and the feeling was that a meeting could take place if someone summoned for it. However, until then no one had called for such a meeting. As times changed and more people were coming to Tamale, many of the yam traders in town were not in any way related to the yam traders’ association. Lyon (2000 p 669) argues that trust in the association leaders is very important in sustaining associations of this sort, which is further complicated in contexts of chieftaincy disputes. The politicization of the yam association diminished the support of its members who were from different sections of society.

The difficulty of organizing newcomers and younger traders was a frequent complaint. The Kpalon Bwaani38 Foodstuff Sellers Association in Aboabo gathered smaller associations, such as those of maize, shea nut, yam, fruits, guinea fowl and more. The organization used to have frequent meetings, but no longer. The secretary argued they had not held meetings for several years, since the elders of the organization were either dead or too old and the young traders were not interested in going to meetings unless given gifts. The executives of the organization were not elected. It was only when the chairman died that a new one would be chosen, and that was usually the vice chairman. The secretary explained that he could not become chairman, as both the treasurer and organizer preceded him. This way of ordering leadership resembles the Dagbon chieftaincy structure, in which one must be in turn, holding one of the gate skins, to be eligible for a position (see Chapter Two and MacGaffey 2013). Kpalon Bwaani was formed in 1991 when President Rawlings expressed that to benefit from the government one must be organized. Yet according to the Kpalon Bwaani secretary, the association had not benefitted at all. In general, they did not feel very supported by the government:

We have been collecting the revenue for the assembly, but anytime they can increase the fee without talking to us. But we have been trying to compromise. . . . The MCE has been here and briefed us about the reconstruction, maybe four weeks ago. And before that, some two years ago, we were disappointed on how the market was affected by the rains. They helped us with some gravel and asked us to exercise patience. But now, the MCE was here with one of your people [meaning someone white]. Or was it you? He looked like you [It was not me]. They said they would develop this into a modern market. But we did not get to see any pictures, and they did not ask us what we thought. . . . We are not like your democracies, like the USA who has had democracy for 230 years and which asks for the opinions of the people first, which regard everybody as important. We can’t match the developed countries; we are yet to be developed.

The Kpalon Bwaani example illustrates the problems many older associations faced as a result of the conflict: an aging leadership, fewer members, and a general lack of interest.

38 Kpalon is the name of the area before it was turned into a market, and Bwaani means rice farm, which previously covered the area.
Simultaneously, TaMA needed collaborators in their work to improve the marketplaces. They found a new collaborator in the Progressive Traders Association (PTA) which was not facing the same problems. In Chapter Four I described how the legitimacy of PTA lay in it being nonpartisan and formed after the violence of 2002. PTA refused to be connected to any of the parties but would work with anyone being in power, according to the secretary and co-founder of PTA. He argued that it was important to not allow politics into the association. He himself did not openly discuss his political affiliation, though I am aware of him having been active in one of the major parties.

The PTA had taken it upon themselves to work as the umbrella organization for all the traders’ associations in town. However, they faced other problems of legitimacy among their potential members. Since larger storekeepers outside the marketplaces dominated the PTA, street traders and market vendors did not feel it represented them. The PTA also differed from other trader associations by its organizational and financial strength. For instance, during my fieldwork in 2012-2013 it held regular meetings every weekend, and the executives were formally elected. By September 2016, the member meetings had temporarily stopped as they no longer had access to their previous meeting hall. However, small executive meetings were still regularly held. They received financial support from the national NGO Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund (BUSAC) that in turn was funded by the international development agencies, DANIDA, USAID, and the EU. BUSAC wanted to create a more favorable environment for the Ghanaian private sector by

empowering business membership organizations, trades unions and the media, to influence public policy formulation by undertaking appropriate research, developing evidence-based policy positions and advocating those positions with government and other private sector institutions/organization that may be targeted by the action (BUSAC 2016).

For the PTA, BUSAC funded the making of a documentary, *Tamale Central Market: “A Call for Reconstruction”* which was broadcast on national TV. Through PTA and its connections to BUSAC, global capital and development ideas operated in the formalization of the marketspace. By advocating rehabilitation (see previous chapter), and calling for reconstructions, PTA and its associational entanglements, influenced TaMA to take action.

PTA thus possessed a repertoire of strategies and ambitions far from the other associations in town. At times PTA worked together with CMTA, for instance, but mostly it was perceived as something external to the market traders. By working hard to rehabilitate the marketplaces and supporting the decongestion exercise, the interests of PTA coincided with those of TaMA rather than the interests of other trader associations. While representing the assembly in the Central Market, informing the shopkeepers how to dismantle their shops in line with the decongestion plan, they still claimed to represent the traders in the discussion with the assembly. As the founders and executives of PTA all had larger stores outside of the marketplaces, and worked closely together with TaMA, they were perceived to be both spatially and politically
situated outside of the marketspace. PTA’s outsider status made it a useful partner to TaMA, in its attempt to formalize the marketspace by relocating street traders and renovating marketplaces. TaMA could claim it worked closely with traders through their cooperation. PTA representatives would not be affected by decongestions or renovations in the Central Market, and thus embraced change in comparison to CMTA and others. For these reasons, PTA was discredited by traders with the same mistrust and skepticism that fell on the assembly. As one secretary of another association expressed, “Perhaps, they are the ones gaining.”

In Nigeria, the state’s diminished role within market trading over the last 20 years has meant that market associations have taken over its function of guaranteeing security and have developed institutions parallel to the state (Lyon and Porter 2009). In Ghana, the increased interest on the part of local and national governments in regulating the marketspace comes about through a symbiotic relationship with associations such as the PTA. The PTA sees itself as having pushed the local government into that direction.

Except for the PTA, associations were struggling to regain strength and influence. One key challenge besides attracting newcomers and young traders was the risk of constantly being drawn into politics. Selina, for instance, did not want to be involved in any trader association that for her was mostly either NDC or NPP. The associations were, in her view, made up by traders voting for those parties, and the CMTA, who claimed to be nonpartisan, was an NDC organization, she argued.

In contrast to the many stagnated associations of the market, there were many active party youth wings outside the market in the neighborhoods. Some of them had existed for a long time and had members in their forties and fifties who were respected members of the community. Some, as we saw with the riders in the previous chapter, consisted of younger members with motorcycles who rode in groups around town celebrating their parties. They thrived on the same divide that undermined the legitimacy of market associations. The fact that these vibrant associations existed outside of the market shows the spatial dimension of politics. Organizations that flourished on a politics of belonging, in this way, conformed poorly to the economic and relational mechanisms of the marketspace.

Trader associations in Tamale thus suffered from what they were associated with. Traders saw them as tools for the political parties and connected them to the Abudu–Andani conflict. Trader associations’ problems in the market thus depended on actors moving away from partisan elements. This strategy was believed to generate better business and create a more cohesive moral community. To actively take part in an association might inevitably lead to one being politically compartmentalized. Trust in the marketspace was for these reasons not primarily formed through organizations. Instead, enactments of the small-small, such as credit networks, collective rotating savings clubs, susus, and the mere sharing of place were more important in forming marketspace solidarities.
Buying and Selling on Credit

Peebles (2010) provides an excellent overview of anthropological engagements with credit and debt. From the literature, he notes that while credit is viewed as productive and enabling individuals, and has positive connotations, debt and indebtedness on the other hand is considered hindering and destructive. In The Gift, Mauss (1990 [1954]) provides us with foundations on how reciprocity through giving, receiving, and reciprocating, binds people and groups together. It is the debt, the obligation of returning the gift, that constructs societies and group solidarities. Though important distinctions exist between commodities and gifts (see Gregory 1982 and Robbins 2009), anthropologists have shown in numerous settings how reciprocity is not alien to market economies and commodity exchanges (Zaloom 2006, Gell 1992, Garsten and Lindh de Montoya 2004, also see Peebles 2010.)

Being a member of an association and susu group (see below) can be a resource for obtaining credits. Unless financed by banks, the money in those cases may come from the local government. Since 1993 and the implementation of the Poverty Alleviation Fund it is possible for traders to apply for microcredits through the Metropolitan Assembly. The fund was designed to decentralize efforts in poverty alleviation and to strengthen the “informal sector” of the economy by demanding that each district assembly set aside money for a fund. Individuals and groups have since applied for credits from that fund. Groups are the most common beneficiaries as they are more credit worthy (Abdulai et al 2014). According to Schindler (2010), this, together with the establishment of many microfinance NGOs in the middle of the 1990s that provided credits only to groups, had a transformative effect as associations within the Tamale Central Market changed from assembling and representing traders, organizing transportation of goods, and setting prices, to being formed solely for the purpose of obtaining loans.

However, I do not recognize from my fieldwork that associations were active only for the purpose of getting loans, as Schindler describes above. Only on a few occasions did informants talk about the possibility of getting loans from the assembly through an association. Her study was conducted before the financial crisis in 2008, which may explain our different comprehensions. The senior trader Linda, for example, described how representatives from banks and NGOs in the past were almost chasing the traders in the market, but in 2012-13, it was the reverse.

Credits were even more important outside of associational life. The whole marketspace economy was built on credit relations. Traders both bought and sold on credits. This was especially true for the more expensive commodities like shoes and fabric. Traders regularly obtained goods from their suppliers and repaid them after the goods had been sold. Trust among traders was formed through the credit relations between retailers and suppliers. Moral obligations and expectations were built into

---

these relations and might in times of crises be mobilized to provide security and resil-
ience.

Figure 10. "Sunday market"

In May 2013, I met Hajia Rufia who was selling secondhand handbags at the impro-
vised “Sunday market” on the traffic island in the middle of High Street (see figure
10). The marketspace was different on Sundays. Many of the regular street traders
were at home, leaving their wooden benches, tables, and sheds in piles that still
claimed their place. It was quieter, calmer, the traffic was less intense, and most shops
were closed. Yet the Sunday market of cheap secondhand clothes, shoes, and bags,
opened onto the large traffic island in the junction directly southwest of the Central
Market and taxi station. Here, the business was fast. A man stood in the middle shout-
ing, repeatedly, “2 cedi, 2 cedi,” setting the cheap price on the wrinkled sportswear
piled by his feet.

I crouched next to Hajia Rufia, and she greeted me while making space for me
among the shirts, trousers, and bags that covered the asphalt. Her teenage son sat on
a yellow plastic container, holding the large red Vodafone umbrella that shaded Hajia
and me. Her daughter had gone to the mosque to pray. Hajia explained that today was
a rather good market day, as the first two weeks of the month were better than the
latter two, since workers were normally paid at the beginning of the month. Hajia
came regularly to sell her things on the Sunday market. But she also had a store a bit
south from the city center, from where she sold her bags during the week. She had
started selling from this market two years before. At that time, this market was active
on both Saturdays and Sundays. Now and then the traders had been sent away, and
for the last month or so, they were not allowed to sell on Saturdays. In fact, they were not allowed to sell from the junction on Sundays either, but the task force, enforcing the decongestion, did not work on Sundays. “Two years ago, there was only one sister selling bags from here, and now we are many,” she said.

Hajia bought her bales of handbags from Kumasi. When she started her business many years ago, she used to travel there to buy them from a man she believed came from Mali. She was not sure about his name either, but the two had built a reliable business relationship based on trust, reciprocity, and flexibility over the years. She described him as an agent selling the bales from a third man, not residing in Kumasi, but who sold hundreds of bales. “But it is no company, they are just petty traders,” she confirmed. She started buying two bales at a time, but later the man added two or three bales, which Hajia would reimburse him for the next time after the bags were sold. Since she was “going away with his money,” it was important for her to repay him as soon as she could, acknowledging the trust he put in her. At one point, Hajia told the man that she would not be able to come the week after to pay for the bales he gave her, due to some family matters. He therefore provided her with a bank account number into which she could deposit the money. She found that convenient, and from that moment, she ordered her bales by telephone, and paid by inserting money into his account. Still, she bought two bales and he added two or three. The Malian man in Kumasi sent the bales, marked with her name and telephone number, on a bus to Tamale. When they arrived at the bus stop one of the carriers at the station would call her and send the goods by taxi to her store. It was very convenient, she believed, not having to travel to Kumasi with the costs that would entail. With this arrangement, she just had to pay the taxi driver and give one cedi for each carrier and one for the telephone call.

She used to buy “Korean bales” but by then she only bought “London bales.” They were twice as cheap, yet better, she believed. “They are not as worn, and the stores there sell new bags every year. So, there are many unused business bags. Look at this one,” she said, opening a black faux leather hand bag with a brass lock. “It still has the price tag, [4,90 GBP], and it’s intact. In my store, I would sell this for 8 GH¢, but here the price is 5, yet people won’t buy. This is a common market, you see, Araha da [cheap market].”

After I listened to Hajia Rufia’s story and relationship to the man in Kumasi whom she did not know but still trusted, her son, still holding the umbrella, turned to me and told me to be careful and watch out for thieves. “A woman lost her bag with two mobile phones and GH¢ 200 in it here today.”

The trust formed in the reciprocal relationship between Hajia Rufia and the Malian man in Kumasi, was partly a result of necessities. To sell, to increase and grow, traders needed to have faith in others. In a sense, Hajia’s trust in the Malian man was more in the role he held in the market network and the place he claimed in Kumasi than his personhood. Emotionally it gave her a sense of security. Simultaneously, as so bluntly expressed by her son, other people with unspecific roles, and unknown origins, might be perceived as thieves and thus as threats.
Abner Cohen (1965) understood the importance of credits for the organization of trade in West Africa. He also saw the importance of long established relations, the role of intermediaries, and the embeddedness of market trade in a wider social, cultural and political context. Allowing credit to someone always involves elements of trust. In this line of thought, Grätz (2004) describes the role of credits within the illicit gold trade in Northern Benin. He describes how confidence in individual traders, like Hajia Rufia, are formed as following an “award system” that gradually increases the size of credits. The personal trading experiences and the character of the trader further contributes to this social process. In his study of tomato farmers, agricultural input suppliers, and traders, Lyon (2000) shows how trust is created through the long-term trading relationships established between the actors. This trust, together with networks and norms, generates a social capital that furthers cooperation and coordination. Through this, the trader is guaranteed supply when tomatoes are scarce, while the farmer is sure of having a buyer in times of abundance. In addition, the relationship often involves a credit agreement, in which the farmer is given credit from the trader to be repaid during harvest time. In another study on the Nigerian food system, Lyon and Porter (2009) argue that trust, moral norms, and the social institutions on which the food trade depends are the reason why the 70 million Nigerian farmers can provide food for the 60 million urban consumers despite a weak state, poor infrastructure, and widespread corruption. Based on a study of manufacturers’ and entrepreneurs’ informal business networks in Mwanza, Tanzania, Murphy (2003) argues that trust is vital for network creation. One’s willingness to utilize economic, cultural, and economic resources makes up the social power necessary for individuals to take the risk of participating in, and in the end benefiting from, industry networks.

According to Clark (1994 p 137ff, 175f), credits in the foodstuff sector of the Kumasi market vary seasonally, so that when supplies are scarce the trader buying from the farmer can pay in advance in order to secure the produce when they are available. In times of surplus, the farmer will instead provide credit to the buyers, so they will buy more. Clark argues that giving or refusing credit to someone follows market hierarchies. The dominant party may refuse to give credit and insist on cash payment. In the marketspace this often depends on the actors having a place or not. But these mechanisms may also interact with ethnicity or other forms of belonging.

Amira’s mother, who sold ginger, brushes, and sponges in the Central Market, was not able to obtain any loans. Her business was not trustworthy enough and taking bank loans was not only risky for her, but difficult to get as it required a deposit or initial savings. She had a very limited social network and was not able to rely on friends and family. That she was Hausa contributed to her exclusion. Amira’s father was out of the picture, so she alone took care of Amira. Together it put her in a position where she was not able to increase her turnover. She did not afford to buy the goods earlier in the market chain, in Kumasi or Accra, which could have provided a bigger profit. Instead she bought her goods in Tamale, some even inside the Central Market. She always bought the sponges on credit from the maker who claimed the payment once they were sold. Selling all the sponges took time and the profit was small. Cleaver
(2005) argues that it is important to understand how associational life and access to institutions may strengthen the livelihoods for some, yet limit agency for others. Those who are not able to rely on social relationships to exercise agency will suffer the most. Amira’s mother had only few relations that she could employ to improve her condition. And thus, she had to always balance her expenses in the household with possible investments in the business. Ultimately this was, as we will see in Chapter Seven, why Amira was still waiting in the market for the necessary funds to continue her schooling.

Susu and State Regulation

Buying and selling on credit is not an invention of capitalism. While Graeber (2011) argues that credits precede the monetized economy, Austin (1993) describes how trade networks in West Africa had relied on credits long before the time of colonization. The financial institutions managing credits have had a parallel trajectory after the arrival of the Europeans (Stiansen and Guyer 1999). Extended family kinship, religious groups, and various norms and conducts have been able to enforce contracts. And furthermore, “long-term commitments entailed a moral authoritarian matrix, rather than a legal contractual matrix, as a basis for trust” (p 11). Guyer (2004 p 121) describes how credit and debt relations grew in the Yoruba society during the colonial period because it could function as collateral. Even consumption of durable and valuable consumer goods were ways of ensuring access to credit.

Historically, susu refers to the rotating savings and credit associations that have been common in different varieties in developing countries all over the world, and that traders in the market and along the street use to make their daily fluctuating incomes into something reliable and substantial. The term probably originates from the Yoruba esusu but their history in Ghana is likely to be older than the term itself (Bortei-Doku and Aryeteey 1995, Austin 1993 p 102). As a response to the growing uncertainties of today, mutual help groups are being developed or reconfigured across Africa, forming new spaces and channels for improving living conditions and influence (see, for instance, the special issue of Africa edited by Rodima-Taylor and Bähr 2014). These forms of solidarities reveal, accordingly, “the formal and informal as interdependent dimensions of finance that enable economic growth as well as inequalities, upward mobility as well as deprivation” (Rodima-Taylor and Bähr 2014 p 508). Susu, as an institution, thus has a long tradition in Ghana and is still very vibrant and active. But, as will become clear from this section, the collective rotating version of susu is increasingly being challenged by individualized susu schemes organized by state-regulated microfinance institutes and banks. This formalization of susu has not

---

40 Rotating savings and credit associations, so-called ROSCAs, have generated a great deal of anthropological literature. See for instance Geertz (1962), Ardener (1964), Nwabughuogu (1984), and Ardener and Burman (eds.) (1995).
outcompeted the collective version but is beginning to reconfigure economic relations within the marketspace. I will shortly describe how collective *susu* schemes work before showing the government’s way of transforming and regulating.

*Figure 11. Susu books*

*Susus* facilitate the economy of each trader and his or her household. Making money on a day-to-day basis may be difficult to reconcile with the regular expenditures that characterize having a family; for example, school fees, rent, petrol money, electricity bills, etc. Traditionally, *susus* have been collectively organized by some traders selling the same commodity, sharing ethnic ties, or selling their wares close to each other. Daily, or sometimes weekly, the members pay an amount to the organizer of the scheme, who then distributes it all to another member. The members rotate being the receiver. In comparison to trader associations, *susu* groups rarely have political agendas. Geertz (1962) saw the rotating credit associations as intermediate institutions in the broader social and cultural development. He argued that they are products of the societal shift when the traditional agrarian society became urban and commercial. They contain both educational and socializing mechanisms as they “teach” actors how to trade and develop a “commercial ethic” of obligations and expectations. They represent an intermediate stage in cultural change in the sense that while economic activities are increasingly separated from the traditional society, they are still under the dominance of its values. This is a quite functional understanding of *susus* as facilitators for cultural developments.
A *susu* comes with a fee and no interest rate. The popularity of the *susu* thus points to the burden of cash. It is difficult to save and keep the money on your own, given the obligations toward others. At the same time, traders need accumulated funds to invest in the business or to pay school fees with. The *susu* then emerges as a rational form of saving, despite its economic downsides. This collective way of managing savings and credits remains an essential strategy for many traders, farmers, and others in all parts of Ghana. However, it has become increasingly more common for traders to make their own *susu* in addition to, or instead of, the traditional rotating way. Individual private *susu* collectors roam the streets and markets to collect the savings from traders. The savers have small books, like calendars, in which the collector makes a mark on the day the money was collected or withdrawn (see figure 11). Like the rotating schemes, the first saving day is deducted as a fee to the collector.

Watch seller Stephen was meticulous with his savings. He put 5 Ghana cedi into his book every day and 10 on Mondays, as the collector did not work on Sundays. He used to wait for the book to be fully marked. At this rate, a fully marked book equaled GH¢ 500 (250 USD). His business was progressing “small-small,” he said. Fortunately, he did not have to withdraw the money that often. He could save most of it for a future investment in a piece of land. When reaching the GH¢ 3,500 he needed to buy the land, he would start buying the cement and sea sand to make blocks. He would buy it piece by piece, little at a time, when the money was available. “Small, small” he would get there. Stephen was serious in his business, and he had every chance to reach his goal of building his own house on his own land. Guyer (2004 p 121) argues that housebuilding in this way is a way of saving, investing, and creating assets out of elusive incomes. Yet many are failing in similar attempts. Close to the major cities and towns of Ghana there were numerous abandoned building projects, manifesting a waste of resources as the piece-by-piece investments never accumulated enough to complete the constructions. They became paradoxes, recently built ruins, possible homes for squatters or more often goats and lizards.

Since money was a volatile resource for traders, they tried to find ways to insulate money from obligations to others but also from their own consumption. A friend of Seidu gave him GH¢ 500 to keep, so he would not spend them himself or give in to family obligations. Seidu could buy more credits for them if he chose to, yet Seidu did not trust his business that strongly. Instead he stored 200 Ghana cedi in the house. He bought credits for the remaining amount, but to keep track Seidu simultaneously set up an individual *susu*, to make sure his friend’s money would not disappear. Saving money is difficult unless some sort of regulations and prohibitive measures are put in place to obstruct the access to the funds.

The increased presence of the individual *susu* collector system resulted from the neoliberal transformation of the Ghanaian economy. Bortei-Doku and Aryeetey (1995) argue that this “*susu* collector system” became popular as a response to the economic hardships of shortages and high inflation during 1975-1985, which increased the need for financial liquidity and quick access to funds. The introduction of the structural adjustment programs in the 1980s, that included liberalization of prices
and strict fiscal and monetary policies, which complicated the situation for households by reducing their incomes, further augmented its popularity (also see Aryettey and Gockel 1991).

In line with the formalization, the individual *susus* have been further promoted by the present and previous governments since it simplified state regulation. These *susu* schemes are predominately organized by the many microfinance institutes whose offices encircle the Central Market. The major banks are also becoming interested in these services, and *susu* collectors are now competing with “mobile bankers” in providing the service for traders. Saving schemes are offered along with other loan services. Through a similar kind of book that is kept by the borrower, the mobile banker comes daily to collect the loan’s installments and interest.

In fact, the *susu*, through the Non-Bank Financial Institutions Act, 2008 (Act 774), became a regulated business, in which presumptive *susu* collectors, *susu* companies, and other moneylenders must obtain a license from the Bank of Ghana (Republic of Ghana 2008, Bank of Ghana 2011) and register with the Ghana Cooperative Susu Collectors Association (GCSCA). Of course, some dodge this obligation, yet traders’ increased awareness has forced collectors into applying for a license. According to Gyasi Jnr (2012) it is common that many *susu* collectors have transformed into microfinance institutes, and simultaneously, microfinance institutes have expanded their business and evolved into full-fledged banks. The UT Bank is an example of this trend. A couple of years ago, it only dealt with microcredits. Furthermore, Gyasi Jnr argues that this rapid expansion of financial services is directly related to the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, GPRS II.

The formalization of the *susu* groups was thus part of a government agenda to change the economic behavior of small-scale traders and others to increasingly use the banks. In this process, traders were shifting their relation of dependence from other traders to state-regulated organizations. Leaning on Peebles, it was a “history of conquest” though some may be inclined to see it as a benevolent and peaceful one (2014 p 606). The managing director of one Accra-based microfinance company expressed it this way:

We are in this business to augment government’s efforts at bridging the gap between the banking population and the unbanked, as well as poverty alleviation as enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals, to provide financial services to the informal sector – that is, to empower our clients by encouraging a savings culture and providing micro-loans in a cost-effective and sustainable manner (quoted in Gyasi Jnr 2012, p 55).

From the government’s perspective, this not only helped to “empower clients” but also gave the government access to funds through the banks. But for individual traders, saving money in a *susu* was not a way to make the money grow. Neither rotating *susu* systems nor most *susu* collector systems accounted for inflation as opposed to
normal bank accounts. As described above, *susu* saving even came with a fee. In strict economic rationales, *susu* was a bad deal. Thus, its popularity illustrates how exposed traders were to claims from others and to irregular expenditures.

The banks were in a lucrative position, since, on the one hand, they got access to funds through the saving services provided to traders and others, sometimes interest-free, and sometimes even through charging them, while on the other hand, they could buy low-risk treasury bills from the Bank of Ghana at an interest rate that since 2012 had oscillated between 18.8 percent in 2013 and 25.8 percent in 2014 (for a 91-day treasury bill, Bank of Ghana 2018). Bank loans to high-risk clients would thus never be offered at interest rates lower than that. In 2013, interest rates for microcredits in Tamale were close to 50 percent per year, and in addition, these credits required a start-up savings in the bank or institute. For ordinary Ghanaians in general, and for small-scale traders in particular, it was expensive to borrow and to save money.

The *susu* was thus partly transformed as a response by traders and others to a neoliberal political agenda, as exemplified by the structural adjustments, into single saving schemes mostly administered by microfinance institutes and banks. This contractualization was further driven by government policies. What previously expressed mutuality, solidarity, and community among traders, had through state interventions been made into business contracts. The solidary relations between traders were increasingly turned into relations between single traders and the state or state-regulated companies.

Geertz (1962) foresaw this development. He argued that in more developed settings, greater demands would be put on “devising legal and economic mechanisms of normative regulation – contracts, record-keeping, professional managers, stable discriminations between debtor and creditor roles, bureaucratic organization, and the like” (p 262f). Ultimately, they are to be replaced by more “rational” types of institutions; banks, cooperatives and others. However, this process has in no way been complete, in the sense that it has not meant an end to the rotating saving schemes, but rather a co-existence. Peebles (2014) puts it this way:

> We might well agree that standard banking increases the material welfare of the people who choose to turn to it. But we should not pretend that it does not arrive with a host of other meanings beyond the material. Western development agencies are perhaps flabbergasted that people keep refusing to bank; but perhaps people are forgoing the potential increase in their material wealth in favour of other valued objects or norms. Shockingly, the unbanked might merely be weighing their options rationally, as any good economist would try to teach them to do (Peebles 2014 p 609f).

But more than a contractualization, this disintegration of solidary relations between traders could, as Bauman (2012) argues, be seen as a new power technique, in which such barriers must be broken: “Any dense and tight network of social bonds, and particularly a territorially rooted tight network, is an obstacle to be cleared out of the

---

41 The inflation has continuously grown from 8.8 percent in 2012 to 17.7 percent by the end of 2015 (FocusEconomics 2016).
way” (p 14). In this way of thinking, we could see this politics as an attempt to break up traders’ claiming of place. To some extent, this is true, but this politics of informality also confirms and acknowledges the presence of small-small. Through susu, the norm of gradual progress is becoming institutionalized. It evolves into an organizational order, bureaucratic procedure, and simultaneously a social economy. While the rotating collective type of susu is built on and produces solidarity and trust between traders, its transformation into individualized susu schemes shows how the state, through a form of developmentality, strives to formalize the economy through connecting (and contracting) individuals with banks and microfinance institutes and ultimately the state, and consequently form citizens (also see Peebles 2014). We will return to this process of subjectification in the next chapter.

But during the governmental attempt to contractualize and individualize savings, traders creatively also formed new collective configurations. Inside watch-seller Stephen’s glass counter, among small batteries, screwdrivers and watches, there were about twenty susu books piled with an elastic band. Stephen explained that they belonged to traders who roamed the streets around Tamale. They passed by Stephen’s counter regularly to add an amount to their account. They put the money inside the book. The collector came in the afternoon, took the money from each one of them, and noted the amount in their respective books.

*The Pressures of Moral Obligations*

I have argued that moral obligations to assist others in need put pressure on the trader’s business possibilities. Accumulated money easily disappears if it is not insulated from easy access. To place the money in a susu is one way of doing that. Another way is to store it with an especially trustworthy friend, like Seidu. Trust involves risk. Sometimes actors default, intentionally departing with the capital or unintentionally failing to repay the credit. Hussein has experienced both, first by being cheated by a friend, and later by failing to discharge his duties himself.

Hussein was a man in his late twenties. He sold trousers and shirts along the street in the middle of town. I met him the first time through Habib and Yakubu who also sold clothes along the street a few blocks away from Hussein. His uncle was an important chief in town, so Hussein believed he could eventually be entitled to the skin. During the spring of 2013, Hussein was constantly seeking ways to leave the business of selling shirts and trousers along the street. His business was failing for many reasons. The decongestion severely undermined his business. He had to bribe the task force to ignore him so that he would not be sent away from his selling spot on a bicycle lane. He also had great problems with the redenomination of the cedi. In 2007, 10,000 (cedi) became GH¢ 1 (Ghana cedi, currency code: GHS). He constantly needed to translate the new currency into the old way, and often it got wrong. But the
major downfall began some years earlier when he had placed trust and confidence in a person not worthy of it.

Initially, his business was prosperous. He claimed he was one of first to sell secondhand shirts along the streets in town. He had initially started in school, by asking one of his school friends to lend him Ȼ50,000 (GH¢ 5 in present currency). She complied, and they went into business together. He traveled to Kumasi and bought the shirts that were hard to sell, the *asie*, or the *down-ones*, as they are often called. He negotiated the price and went back to Tamale to sell them there. He then met with his classmate and gave her the money. She in turn kept some of it and told him to take the rest and do the same thing again. He quickly made some money and after same time he could do the business without the help of his friend. He first bought one bale with his own money, then two, then three and then up to five. The business went very well. He got married and they had their first daughter. Along with her Muslim name, they gave her a Dagbani name, Tungteya, meaning success.

He then started working with another friend who had a store. Hussein gave him four of the bales to sell for him, while he continued to sell along the street. But after a while, the friend took off and disappeared with all the money, leaving Hussein with his one bale’s worth of cash. The rumor was that his friend went to Libya and Spain, but as far as Hussein knew, he was not to be found. At that time, the competition had increased, and Hussein was no longer the big trader he used to be. He found himself in a completely new situation in which the boys who had been helping him sell his goods now had their own businesses. He kept spending the money from the one bale, instead of diminishing his expenditures, and after some time that money was gone as well.

Amir was one of the *small-boys* who previously had worked for Hussein. *Small-boys* assist senior traders in several ways. They do errands for them, sell goods for them, and are given the *down-ones* to sell for themselves. Amir started off by selling for Hussein and others but was eventually able to step up and buy his own. In 2013, Amir had a piece of pavement outside one the big stores in town and had several *small-boys* working for him. The store owner was a friend of the family and Amir could utilize the pavement outside if he now and then helped the owner with tasks, loading or unloading goods, for instance. That piece of pavement was essential for his growth, and as it belonged to the store owner, Amir was not threatened by any task force sending traders off the streets. Recently he arranged for a pilgrimage to Mecca for himself and his father, with the money he made from his business. His father now and then came to town to sit with them; both smiled and displayed their golden teeth, a symbol of Hajj.42

The stories of Hussein and Alhaji Amir illustrate how the market is a space for upward and downward social mobility. Hussein, after the loss of his goods, was moving downward in the socioeconomic hierarchy while Alhaji Amir could expand and gain symbolic capital through his pilgrimage. However, their shifted relationship

42 The pilgrimage gave Amir the title Alhaji.
transferred moral obligations onto Alhaji Amir. He was now in the position to help and support Hussein.

For a couple of months Hussein had no goods to sell. He had gotten two bales on credit from a supplier and friend. However, the quality of the clothes was not as he expected, and he did not have full access to his selling spot. It was impossible to know the quality of the goods in the bale until it was opened. “Sometimes they are good and sometimes bad, you can never know before,” Hussein explained. He had been storing the money he made at home, but he had also given “chop money” to his wife, and 5 Ghana cedi a week to his mother and some to his nephew. Once the clothes were sold, the money covered only one of the bales and until he could pay also for the other one, he could not acquire any new goods.

At that moment, Hussein went to Alhaji Amir to ask if he could give him some goods to sell. However, the ability of Hussein to repay his debts was at that time poor, so even if Alhaji Amir wanted and felt obliged to help, he hesitated. To Hussein he said that he would think it over.

Hussein had been unable to adapt his life and his expenditures to his new situation and income. The expectations on him from family and friends rose during the time the business was growing, and he did not want to let them down. To trust someone, like Hussein did, is the only way to grow within the marketspace. It is both a moral obligation to let other people in, but also a strategy to increase the turnover. But trust involves risk, and letting others sell your goods requires an assessment of character and ability, and also a valuation of their friendship and closeness. Alhaji hesitated because he was not sure he was not sure of Hussein’s ability to repay him, and there were obvious reasons for it. It took a couple of months until Alhaji finally decided to give Hussein the down-ones to sell.

In 2016, Hussein was still selling clothes he received from Alhaji. He had still not been able to repay the debt to his previous supplier, so Alhaji was his only option. He was still receiving the down-ones and sold them together with his wife. She had previously learned how to sew, but was unable to make a living on it, so she had started to roam the city selling the clothes to her friends. However, Alhaji had many small-boys receiving goods from him, so at times Hussein and his wife had nothing to sell.

It is quite common that businesses collapse the way Hussein’s did. During my fieldwork I heard several similar narratives where the moral obligations toward family came in conflict with the business. In September 2016, I met Salim. He was sitting in the veranda of one of the many youth organizations affiliated with the NDC. In his words, it was a “friendly sitting place, where everyone is welcome. A gentleman’s place.” Salim was helping a senior trader sell slippers from a table placed inside the veranda. He previously had a reasonable business of his own, selling children’s slippers for several years. He had regularly traveled to Kumasi to buy goods with his own money. However, when his mother died, he was obliged to pay the funeral costs and other expenses in relation to that. As there were no other means accessible, he had to fund it from his own business, eventually leading to its collapse. He was not able to repay his debts, and until then he was not able to restart his business. Salim’s friend
understood his situation, and took him in. Since then, Salim had been helping his friend sell the slippers. Ferguson (2013) argues that in African national economies, the value in people as a labor force is in decline, which is why actors seek similar relations of dependence and social inequality that Salim had with his friend. “By the end of the month, maybe he will be able to give me something,” Salim explained.

For most, there was no separation between business and personal life. Business was life, and family obligations and demands from friends, could not easily be disregarded if money was available. The business offered some buffer against unexpected costs and external pressures, but when this source was exhausted the solidarity between traders, friends, and others was what remained.

Until June 2012, Saibu used to work together with a “‘brother,’ a big guy” with whom he shared the shoe business. The shoe rack they had then, was much larger than the one he had later. In June 2012, his friend traveled to Togo to buy goods, where he was robbed and murdered. Saibu was left alone in Tamale, and beside the devastating shock of losing his “brother,” the murder also deprived him of almost all the capital they had generated. Saibu was almost broke. But his shoe-selling “brothers” from all over town came to his assistance, giving him shoes to sell, which he could repay once they were sold. It took some time to recover, but the shoe rack never reached the size it once had.

Oteng-Ababio et al (2015) analyze the effect of the disastrous fire in the Kantamanto Market in Accra in May 2013. They discern a resilience of the traders in their ability to recover after the fire. Rotating susu clubs and social networks could be mobilized to assist those affected, enabling them to recover and return to the market. Through credits then, we can see how trust, solidarity, and morality are bound together in the marketspace. Placing trust in one another by allowing credit is essential for doing business. It binds retailers, suppliers, and family members together in networks that can provide security in times of crises. However, in better times, as we shall see, demands and expectations from others are felt as impediments to growth.

Feeling Free

The constant need of money from friends, relatives, and business partners makes it difficult to accumulate the capital needed to grow. Bound together through moral arrangements, social and economic relations may work as a safety net. However, many traders, like Linda, express how they feel held back by those same relations.

Linda could more easily move away from many of the obligations, demands, and holdings that marketspace actors have on one another because she had access to a large amount of capital and was a Christian from the south among many Muslims. She often expressed how she strove to be as “independent” as possible. She did not want to be part of any association or rotating susu, she wanted to conduct a straightforward business in which things were paid for directly. When she and her family first came
to Tamale, she began selling clothes and fabrics. Yet there were too many customers wanting to buy on credit and pay “next week” instead. She found her assets and money locked and inaccessible, and therefore she changed to selling things like underwear, sponges, towels, belts, and handkerchiefs to other traders. “These things move fast,” she said, “since people buy to sell.” Her prices were fixed and buying on credit was not allowed. Although some complained, it did not cause any major problem with her customers. One reason was because she had taken the role as a wholesaler rather than retailer, and it associated her with the larger wholesale and department stores outside of the market. There, prices were fixed and non-negotiable. The atmosphere and practices in her shop were also similar to the larger department stores and supermarkets. Customers, after greeting, took the things they wanted from the shelves themselves, put them in a pile on the counter and asked for the total price. If they had any more to spend, they would add a belt or piece of underwear.

Another reason why she could avoid giving credits was due to the integrated logic of the commodity. Selling used clothes and fabrics required a relatively large investment of capital, since these were bought in bales of several hundred items depending on what type and size of bale. But her customers who sold sponges, underwear, and belts along the streets and stations in Tamale and in other markets in neighboring villages, bought new goods every day for the money they earned the day before. This segment of the small-small economy was an important entry point and attractive to the many newcomers since it took only a small amount to start. These traders usually had no access to a selling spot and were therefore roaming the streets. Their lack of a place was an important reason for why they were not given credit. Even though it was not allowed to buy on credit from Linda, she could not refuse everyone the possibility. Close friends and kin were exceptions, as well as fellow traders in the Central Market, and some “church sisters.”

While Linda was reluctant to give credits to her customers, buying on credits from her suppliers was essential. She always bought on credit from one of her suppliers in Accra. On one occasion, she bought towels and other things for GH¢ 13,800 (6,900 USD) on credit. Her brother, who had errands to conduct in Accra, repaid GH¢ 5,000. The relationship with the supplier in Accra developed over the decades she had been doing this business. Early on, Linda asked for credit and through quickly repaying the debt, trust had gradually evolved between them. Repaying debts involved an emancipating feeling, in Linda’s mind. “So, I’ll be free,” she said. But buying on credits was crucial for her to avoid being short on goods. The towels and things she bought from the woman in Accra were to last about two or three months, but she would repay the debt sooner than that, Linda asserted.

In addition to credits of this sort, Linda took large bank loans to maintain her big turnover. At one point, she borrowed GH¢ 30,000 (15,000 USD) from HFC bank. According to Linda, people had to have a registered company in order to borrow that kind of amount, which Linda did not have. Fortunately, one of the bank officers could vouch for her, which gave her the opportunity. She kept a record of her debts in a small notebook, but other than that she had no registry or inventory of her goods.
Keeping records of the debts and credits in a notebook, in the way Linda did, was the standard way for traders in the marketspace. Mohammed did not write down any prices or numbers of shoes; he kept all of that in his head. Yet, he was meticulous in writing down debts and credits in his notebook. He added a name and telephone number to the debt, yet he never called them; instead he waited. He found it to be the debtor’s responsibility to repay. The only rules were that a customer must repay his or her previous debt, before buying on credit again, and only people he knew could buy on credit. The fabric trader Ibrahim had a similar notebook, but the credits he gave to his customers were much larger. Buying textiles was a major expense for all families, and for some of his customers it could take months to repay the debt. He stored his notebook under his wooden bench, inside his shop in the Central Market. However, as he found it difficult to write and count, his customers and debtors were often the ones taking the notes and marking their payments for him.

To get the loan from HFC bank, Linda had to make a deposit of GH¢ 7,500 and have two formally employed workers as guarantors. Linda used her brother and his wife who were both teachers. However, it would take most teachers several years to be able to repay that kind of loan, while it took Linda three months. Although her husband was employed by a hardware company, it was Linda who contributed most to the household. Demands by banks on formal workers as guarantors, thus illustrates the somehow misplaced trust by banks. It is far easier for formally employed workers to obtain loans, even though some market traders, such as Linda, could more easily repay them. Every day a collector from the bank passed by Linda to collect installments from her. On good days she gave him GH¢ 1,000, on other days only GH¢ 100.

That some traders try to draw away from social credit relations and obligations and enter bank contracts is a trend also confirmed by Schindler (2010) in her study on market women in Tamale. She argues that informal credits that are often regarded as cheap are in fact rather costly. Maintaining the relationships and the moral obligations to peers can create a barrier for further growth. In her study, the market women in Tamale preferred loans from formal banks over *susu* groups, associations, and wholesalers. However, as Linda’s example shows, to cross that barrier is a process of individualization that within the moral economy exists mostly in theory. From the beginning she had access to a large amount of capital that positioned her partly outside the small-small entanglements. Yet, she was equally dependent on credits and favors to maintain her business, and although she tried to remove herself from obligations to others, some requests she simply could not deny.

In a sense, Linda embodies the Ghanaian developmental ideology. She is the model entrepreneur, who attempts to gradually draw herself out of the “informal” credit networks of the market into formal bank loans and is able to grow. Her disentanglement from associations also makes her apolitical, a figure who poses no threat to the political regime yet is fundamental for economic growth. She exemplifies how the aspired formalization of the marketspace involves a redefinition of what it means to be a market trader. The optimization of oneself and the “ethos of self-governing” (Ong 2006 p 9) entailed in this neoliberal transformation encounters a small-small moral economy.
that builds on other ideals. Even though the “public transcript” of microfinances centers on the idea of credit as a right, on self-reliance, and on empowerment (Roy 2010), there are other processes involved. The autonomous entrepreneurial self that the state promotes is situated in space and set in a web of social, economic, and moral relations. As Ferguson (2013) would argue, this is a not process of independence but the rise of new forms of dependence. The autonomous individual is in Comaroff and Comaroff’s (2016 p 51ff) reasoning an imagined construction of European modernity that has not existed there, nor anywhere else. Feeling free is different from being free. Linda strove to disentangle herself from the obligations and demands traders in her position were normally exposed to and felt liberated by that. But she simultaneously entered new forms of dependence. What occurred was more a reformulation of those relations than an actual emancipation. Linda’s economic behavior was no less embedded in social relations than anyone else’s, but she shifted her relations of dependence to a new set of actors.

_Spatial Permanence_

In this chapter, I address the form of trust created through credit relations between traders, suppliers, wholesalers, and customers. These relations are more easily formed between actors who have access to a fixed place in town. It is easier to give credit to someone whom you know where to find. This forms the basis of a spatial permanence that traders practice, every day, year after year, by materially and socially carving out a place and claiming it as their own.

This fixed place is also an asset in relation to customers, who will know what to buy where. A form of trust appears in the shape of expectations in the marketspace. Traders therefore only rarely and reluctantly close their business. As pointed out, neighboring traders are important in this. They protect and help each other. When a trader leaves the market to pick up children from school, go to the mosque, or travel to buy new goods, the neighboring trader sells the goods for them. The interdependence of neighbors forms a social fabric.

Moreover, a place comes to represent the solvency in the economic calculus of the street and market traders, enabling the liquidity of transactions and credits. The claim is kept, preserved and maintained for as long as possible, sometimes for generations. Mobile phones have, as we shall see, strengthened traders’ claims further. Gutters, streets, and shops meant for transportation, communication, and consumption are made into living rooms, holding a great deal of family life and the hosting of guests in the form of well-known customers. Traders’ claiming thus blurs the boundaries of what is private and public. In these ways, trust in the market has a spatial dimension.

To claim a place is a moral right for traders. But different sections of the state at different times shift between acknowledging and suppressing traders’ claims. The So-
cial Security National Insurance (SSNIT) Informal Sector Fund reaches the “informal” traders in the same way as *susu* collectors. Its officers walk daily between stores and traders to collect payments for the pension scheme. Taxes and rents are also paid in the same manner. Mobile bankers, *susu* collectors, and roaming state agents fill the marketspace confirming and recognizing the presence of urban traders. But during decongestions, street traders’ attempts to claim the same place are delegitimized and undermined. In contrast, the renovation of the Central Market initiated by the assembly worked to stabilize the spatial continuity of the market by legitimizing trader’s illegitimate claims to a store.

“You know, we are always in the market, every day, unless when celebrating our festivals or when I’m sick,” Hajia Talata explained after I asked her about her weekend. Every day for the last 26 of her 57 years, except when celebrating festivals, or because of occasional illness, she has come to her store inside the Tamale Central Market to sell her cosmetics, hair products, and soap, among other things.

I met Hajia in September 2016. We sat in her store looking out on the people passing us. A small boy was playing around our feet, on the tiled stairs that connected her store to the ground. The ground was muddy due to the rain. People were holding their dresses to keep them from getting dirty, minding the pools by jumping from one side to another. Hajia had moved in to this new store eighteen months earlier. TaMA had decided to start renovating the Central Market. The first phase involved demolishing the row of stores in which Hajia’s previous shop was located. The new construction was a two-story building and all the previous shopkeepers were occupying the ground floor, in the same location as before the reconstruction. The upper floor was a copy of the lower and was rented to new market traders.

Against the rules, Hajia had bought the old store in 1990 from a friend of the family, as he wanted to buy one in Aboabo instead.

It was during my third pregnancy; I remember bringing the pregnancy to the market. . . . At that time, I had a table outside the store. I was selling cosmetics, just as now. But I had no goods inside. Because the goods were not many and when they are inside, they do not attract customers. After some time, I added the hair products. They are good because they don’t expire.

But Hajia was far from a newcomer to the Central Market at that time. She was raised inside the market. She can remember being in the market since she was ten. “You know this is a family business. At the time, me and my sisters, we used to come to sit and work for our mother. But that was further inside the market. After school and on weekends, we would come here.”

All shopkeepers in Hajia’s lane took the opportunity to lease one of the new stores. New contracts were set up individually between TaMA and the shopkeepers, ignoring whoever was stated as the leaseholder in the old contract. Their moral claims to the shops had been legally validated. Traders’ only option to accept the terms of the new contract was to leave the market. But the reconstruction was very challenging for the traders. To keep their customers, they remained next to the construction site as close
to their previous store as possible and continued to sell their goods. Still, the renovation affected their business negatively. Beside the challenges of maintaining a business during the construction, it was especially difficult to raise the money needed to pay the new rent. The rent was set to a single payment of GH¢ 1,000 for the next two years, a dramatic increase from the previous GH¢ 36 a year, paid monthly (GH¢ 3/month). The single inflated payment distorted the normal ways of paying fees and negatively affected the capital invested in the business. The new shop was only a little bit bigger. But the old store had lights and the muddy alley in front used to be surfaced. Some traders, who either required lights or had not had been able to raise the payment, had not yet reopened by September 2016, eighteen months into the new contract. As the rent increase was not felt to come with any benefits, these challenges fueled feelings of disappointment and distrust against TaMA.

Hajia compared the difficulties arising from the reconstruction of her store to the hardship her parents had gone through when the entire market was burnt down by revolutionary soldiers in the beginning of the 1980s. She remembered the effect the demolition had on her family.

During the revolution, the market was said to be corrupt, but it was not so. The soldiers said, “The market women can take whatever they want,” but it was not so... We lost everything, all the goods and money. At that time, it was common to keep money inside the store. Recovering the money was a struggle. For many it still is. But we did not have to deal with that. It was our parents. We have to deal with the money for the new building. You know we have to follow the money. When the price goes up, we have to raise the prices even if we bought it cheaper. Otherwise the money will not last.

A younger woman interrupted our interview, by giving Hajia a black plastic bag (often called rubber) with food; Accra kenkey with alefu stew and fish. During the rainy season alefu and other leaves are very cheap. Hajia divided the food between herself and the little boy. The boy was the son of the neighboring woman, who sold garden eggs.\textsuperscript{43} He was very fond of Hajia, so while his mother had gone to buy new garden eggs to sell, he stayed around. “The boy is very troublesome,” Hajia smiled. While eating, she continued explaining that for traders to take out GH¢ 1,000 from the business to pay the two-year rent in advance was challenging because it takes time to sell goods of that value, and during that time the money will lose value due to the inflation.

If you have 1000 Ghana cedi it will always be less unless you buy goods. Now soon two years with this building, and some have not overcome it (the expense). Not everyone is not here because there is no light. But some are not here because they don’t have the capital left. If you got capital you can catch up, but if you don’t you will always fall behind, suffer, and not get anything out of it... When you have the money, you can always think ahead, expanding the business, following the money, add new things to sell... no money and you will remain where you are.

\textsuperscript{43} Garden egg is a type of eggplant common in Ghana.
Shortly thereafter, another woman wanted to buy curlers and a comb. As that bag was just behind me, we switched chairs. Suddenly, I noticed the music playing from the NAKIVA FM radio behind us. It was the old type of highlife music that I like, though the sound quality was like a scratchy vinyl record played in a tin can. The small boy, who left to wash his hand after finishing the food, came back, imitating a motorcycle.

Hajia Talata’s market life portrays many of the central characteristics of the small-scale trade in Tamale and Ghana. First, there is a spatial continuity in that day after day, year after year, the same traders come to the same spot selling the same thing. Despite external difficulties, the trade as such provides a resilience that absorbs most challenges. The fire in 1982, which was an intentional demolition by soldiers following the revolutionary rhetoric, did not stop traders from coming to town, though it did make life difficult. In time, many traders recovered and continued to sell the same things. Though some of course have moved on, died, or sold their business, during the last three decades, many of the stores are still in the hands of the families that rebuilt them. As the trader gets old, the stores are often handed over to the next generation, building family history from the shop. At the same time, many traders feel the possibilities in the market are diminishing and want their children to try to find other trajectories. They see the market as a facilitator in this aspiration, as it can pay for the necessary school fees, the pilgrimage, the starting capital for other ventures, and so on. However, some want to take over after their mothers, like Fatima, whose eyes glowed when planning and thinking about how she has gradually been taking over the fabric store of her mother, adding dresses and jewelry. She loved to travel to markets in Lomé, buying new things to sell. And she was good at it. Hajia Talata’s four children, however, seem to be moving away from the market. The oldest one moved to the USA, while two had gone to universities in Ghana. The last born was in senior high school. After school, she still came to help her mother in the market, but Hajia did not know if she wanted to take over after her when the time came. Women stood out in my material as providers of the intergenerational bridge. Daughters were more likely than sons to take over after their mothers.

The marketspace is not solely a place for work, but for life itself. Hanson (2003) argues that there has been a development of households being “monetized” through the opening of shops adjacent to private homes in the center of Ghanaian cities. I argue there has been a simultaneous parallel development in which shops have become small households in themselves. Within the Central Market, shop life was delimited to the opening hours of the market, but in shops outside of it and along the streets, also a large part of the evening could be spent. Shop-keepers installed TVs and stereos; some took all their meals in the shops and some even cooked there. They took naps. They prayed. Kids came after school to do their homework. They ate, rested, and hung out. Friends who were unemployed or waiting for school or just had nothing else to do would come and sit, share food, or
go to pray together. If the traders needed to go out for some reason, the friend or the traders next to them would take over and sell the goods if customers came.

The home has for many traders become a place merely to sleep. Year after year, day after day, shopkeepers and street traders come every morning to their place in the city. As Weiner argues, inalienable possessions bring visions of permanence into a dynamic field. After having stored their goods, tables, benches, umbrellas in or outside a bigger store nearby, traders replace them in the street every morning. Illness, funerals, or family matters may prevent them from coming to town, but then the neighboring trader can give information. To borrow from Appadurai (1996), these are all techniques for producing the locality of the marketspace, in which it is not only a ground, but a “property of social life” (1996 p 182, italics removed).

Of course, things change; life changes. Or, as Appadurai (1996) would put it, social action in the marketspace is not only context-driven but context-generative. Yet, between 2013 and 2016, only a few of my informants moved from their place in the city. Seidu had during those years left the mobile credit business to become a nurse. But in September 2016, the government had not yet positioned him anywhere, so he was still in town selling the same credits, but now for a friend that had taken over the stand after Seidu. The friend, Rashid, was the same person that Seidu had originally replaced. He had during the years furthered his education in statistics and was now doing an internship with an NGO. Kwame who struggled so to get access to a selling spot (see Chapter Three) was still selling wallets, underwear and belts from his wheelbarrow, but he had gotten married and had his small eighteen-month-old boy playing around with the other small kids along the street. Salifu, who lost his container during the decongestion (see Chapter Three), and who was told he had to leave from the place outside the petrol station, was still selling petrol and oil to motorcycles. He had invested in a tent under which he had placed his wooden bench.

The only traders I was not able to track down during my revisit in 2016 were Stephen and Yakubu. Stephen, who used to sell and repair watches (see above), had moved to Gambia to try and see if he could start a business there instead. However, his wife had taken over the business in Tamale. Yakubu, who together with his brothers had sold clothes on the street, received a call from another brother in Accra to join him in his business to sell the same thing.

Technology changes. The advancement in mobile technology has had a huge impact on the business strategies of street and market traders. In 2001, communication centers structured most telephone calls in and outside the country. These were basically shops with one or more telephones from where one could make and receive calls. Every hundred meters or so along the streets there were communication centers, and they were also common inside the marketplaces. In 2003 they were much fewer, and in 2008 almost all had been replaced by mobile telephone shops and credit vendors. The introduction and overtaking of mobile phones in the marketspace was constantly changing and reorganizing the way people conducted small-small businesses. As we have seen, some traders completely stopped traveling to Accra or Kumasi to buy the bulks or bales of goods. By way of a simple telephone call, text message, or a bank
transfer, the interpersonal trust formed in face-to-face reality took a step into virtuality. The recent introduction of Mobile Money has further facilitated this development. This technology lets people save, send, and receive money through the mobile credit sellers, like Seidu.

Despite the transformative power of mobile technology, it has also made it easier for traders to remain in place. Traders’ spatial permanence illustrates a need for traders to anchor themselves in a globalizing social world. Although bound to the act of small-scale trade, the making of Tamale marketspace is neither a local nor fully global process, but a simultaneous mix of histories with various forms of spatial qualities. In this line of thought, Scholte (2008) argues that social life is increasingly set in a web of “supraterritorial” and “transplanetary” connectivities. Many of the traders’ products have around-the-world histories of production and distribution. Remittances received from relatives overseas pass through global bank networks. Microcredit schemes are bound to global currency flows. People migrate to and from Tamale in greater numbers. Meanwhile, Scholte argues, this has by no means marked the end to territoriality, because “contemporary society knows no ‘pure’ globality that exists independently of territorial spaces.” (p 1439). Despite increased flows of people, money, and ideas, not everything becomes fluid or liquid (cf. Bauman 2012).

Conclusions

Grounded in the spatial practices of the market, small-small trade forms trust and solidarity in different ways, through credit networks, rotating susu groups, obligations, and the mere sharing of place. While claiming place enables the accumulation of capital, it also enables and simplifies the creation of trust. Traders without a place are harder to reach and more difficult to claim the debt from. Sharing street corners or market alleys also forms communities, it generates its own context. These relations essentialize what it means to be a trader and create the moral economy. Traders shun mechanisms that break or invalidate the moral economy. Actors avoid trader associations because they are perceived to represent the political parties that divide the community. Hence, trader associations in Tamale are struggling with declining influence and membership.

Resilient as this moral economy is, the formalization as described in this chapter is about renegotiating those relations. The increased prevalence of individually-based susu that result from the neoliberal transformations, as opposed to the collective rotating versions, has enabled the government to regulate and formalize the economic life of traders. These individual susus are provided by microfinance institutes and banks whose activities are regulated by the government and in line with a general development agenda. Through regulating and individualizing susu and encouraging microcredits and bank loans, traders are to optimize their individual progression as atomized entrepreneurs. By replacing solidary relations between traders with formal
contracts, traders are supposed to be freed from moral obligations and dependencies and grow faster than the small-small way.

In contrast to the previous chapter, in which the government discursively and by law protected the moral economy of small-small against the threat of foreign capitalists and the moral decay of the sakawa, this chapter shows the government simultaneously attempting to reconfigure the moral economy at its roots. In other words, the formalization entails a struggle over what it means to be a trader. On the one hand, we have the moral economy, the inclusive norms and values, and the obligations to each other that traders create and rely on. On the other hand, there are ideals about self-fulfillment, entrepreneurship, and individualism.

In the next chapter I describe how the moral community enacts a small-small citizenship that builds on the solidarity described in this chapter, the moral right to make a living, and a mistrust and disappointment against an ambiguous and unreliable state. By doing so, it gives me an opportunity to contrast traders’ spatial practices to those of the state. The state confirms and acknowledges traders’ claims through taxing them, among other things, but simultaneously threaten their livelihood through rehabilitations, renovations, decongestions, and more. These ambiguous spatial practices contrast with the permanence and trust that traders bring to the marketspace through their ongoing claiming of place.
PART THREE
6| Small-Small Politics

The formalization of the marketspace hinges on a politics of informality in which spaces, people, and activities first have to be defined as informal by the state in order to be formalized. Through the implementation of welfare services, the state directed new rights to a segment of the population that was previously excluded. This new attention to street traders and market vendors, in which they were not only seen as presumptive voters but as citizens with claims to services and rights, was also expressed in different policy documents and programs. The citizen-making process, and the ambition of becoming an inclusive state, was in line with a broader global development agenda that sought to respond to the needs of entrepreneurs in the informal economy. Meanwhile, the economic restructuring that Ghana undertook to better become part of the global economy also led to an increasing number of people finding their means of survival along the streets and public spaces. As Bayat (2013 p 33) describes, developing countries, because of the global restructuring, have seen a “double process of, on the one hand, integration and, on the other, social exclusion and informalization.”

This chapter revolves around traders’ responses and views on the state and government during the process of formalization. These responses derived from the norms and values of the moral economy and the traders’ outlook on society. They created a small-small politics; a productive engagement with the national political discourse, that enabled them to dismiss and condemn the government. Market and street traders were disappointed at what they described as a failing government. This disappointment was grounded in the polarizing mechanisms of the democratic process, and in government’s inability, despite its ambitions, to develop and govern the city in a satisfactory way. Also, traders complained about the corruption and the government’s incapacity to let money flow “in the system.” They found the state unreliable because its intentions and interventions always seemed temporary and ambiguous. Traders therefore subversively stated claims to the government, demanding that their ability to make a living and to progress must not be threatened by corruption and polarization.

44 Unless specified, the government in this chapter refers to the local and the national government. As described in Chapter Two, the president is deeply involved in the formation of all local governments. In a sense, the local governments better represent the president than the district’s citizens. This means that the local and national governments are often conflated, and traders rarely distinguish between them. The politics of TaMA is often projected onto the national government and vice versa.
Traders within the marketspace thus formed their own view on development and positioned themselves in a moral mode of disappointment and distrust against the state’s performance.

The traders’ sentiments of disappointment and distrust were productive in that they formed the basis for something more inclusive and trustworthy. In this sense, traders made a politics grounded on the small-small moral economy, thereby forming an alternative small-small citizenship. While Holston (2008), from his study on the urban peripheries of Sao Paolo, Brazil, describes an insurgent citizenship, I am here more inclined to agree with Bayat (2013), who sees this as the outcome of a “struggle of citizenship de facto” (2013 p 26), that is not merely based on insurgency or resistance, but more on redress and necessity. This small-small citizenship was not disengaged from the regular political discourse of Ghana. Rather, it enabled traders to get involved in national politics from a moral position from whence they could claim that the failure of politics was due to politicians’ greed, lust for power, polarization, and misunderstanding of the livelihoods of most Ghanaians.

Although it takes a state’s perspective, Bayat’s (2013) notion of the “the quiet encroachment of the ordinary” captures how the traders’ claiming of public places can be understood as both a practice of necessity and a reaction to the unresponsive state. It concerns the “discreet and prolonged ways in which the poor struggle to survive and to better their lives by quietly impinging on the propertied and powerful, and on society at large.” As such it is a “social nonmovement” that refers to the “collective actions of noncollective actors” (p 15). The nonmovement is made up of individual people sharing practices and activities, in a noncollective manner, without any clear leadership or ideology. These practices are quiet, ordinary, and part of everyday life, yet often disputed and extralegal, and thus challenging the rules and norms of the government. As a nonmovement, the politics of small-small lies in its frequency, its commonness and “the consequential effect on norms and rules in society of many people simultaneously doing similar, though contentious things” (Bayat 2013 p 21). Also, citizenship, in terms of rights, obligations, and influence over political decisions, becomes a particularly critical issue when it concerns street traders, because when defined as “informal,” they are placed beyond the control of the government and therefore denied certain rights (see Brown et al 2010).

The Unreliable State

One day on a street in central Tamale, I stood talking to Francis, a public officer from the SSNIT Informal Sector Fund, the government authority that administrated the pension schemes for workers in the “informal sector.” He wore a shirt tailored from a fabric with the authority’s logotype. He had just been to the “field” informing traders in the Central Market and outside of it. “Everyone knows of SSNIT Informal” he said.
This was far from true. As he invited me on his field visit, a woman came by, recognizing Francis’s shirt. She was on her way to SSNIT Informal’s office to withdraw her savings. She told him she was very disappointed. Previously their officers used to come to her store every week to collect money for her future pension, but for the last two years they had not come. Francis regretted what happened. He opened her book where it said that the last visit was in May 2010. The woman was sad and irritated. Francis was also sad. Disappointed at his colleagues he turned to me. “Do you see what we have to work with? This is not how it is supposed to be. I wonder what has gone wrong.”

The local and national governments’ inability to sustain their spatial politics hampered the ambitions to formalize the informal economy. Traders could not trust that political decisions and interventions directed in one way or another to the marketspace would last. But the unreliable state was not solely the fault of Ghanaian politics. The approach, ideas, and funding took place in a context of transnational institutions, development agencies, and a moving global capital. As a simultaneity of stories, the marketspace was assembled not only by its actors and materialities, but also of policies originating from other parts of the world. Cities Alliance and the World Bank, for instance, have had a significant impact on the modernization of Ghanaian urbanities. Since 2003 there have been eleven nationwide projects developed and co-financed by the Cities Alliance (Cities Alliance 2016a). In Tamale, the World Bank helped finance a large reconstruction of the major streets and boulevards of the city. Many inhabitants and storekeepers in houses, shacks, and stalls adjacent to the old streets had to move to allow the construction of the modern multilane highways with bicycle lanes. As described in Chapter Two, the asphalt is now burning as the large trees creating the much-needed shade had to be cut down, and the replanted ones never grew or were eaten by the sheep and goats roaming the city.

In 2014, TaMA was working to create new markets and finish already projected constructions. The construction of the supermarket in Aboabo (see figure 4) was first begun in the 1970s, but was never finished due to the political turmoil at that time. In 2014 the assembly committed GH¢ 8.2 million for the project to be completed by the end of 2015. In 2016 however, the contractor complained that the money would not be enough. After 37 years of exposure to weather, the metal and concrete were far worse off than the consultant had asserted. The government contributed additional funding, but according to the contractor it would still not be enough to cover the extra costs. So in 2016, it was not clear to what extent the supermarket might eventually be finished. Inside the Central Market, the assembly was to construct a two-story market building that besides 120 market stores also would contain a canteen, a banking hall, and a mosque (Gyebi 2014, August 11). But this project was abandoned in favor of a renovation of the entire market, a project that due to financial reasons had to be constructed in phases. The first phase, the east lane of the Central Market that formed the wall to the High Street, was finished by 2016. The drawings for the next phase were on the way, but the funding was not yet clear, causing a general confusion among market traders. As I described with Hajia Talata in the previous chapter, it also caused
severe problems for storekeepers, especially concerning the fourteen times higher store rent.

In addition to these projects, TaMA obtained funds from the Ghana Urban Management Pilot Project (GUMPP), initiated by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (MLGRD). This 40 million Euro project, funded by loans from Agence Française de Développement (AFD), aimed to improve urban areas in four of the largest cities in Ghana. In Tamale, it involved among other things a construction of a storm drain and retention pond, and rehabilitation of one of the slaughterhouses. The most interesting subproject for the present discussion is the redesign and construction of the Aboabo market and the lorry park, which are separate places from the Aboabo supermarket discussed above. Traders selling tomatoes, onions, and palm nuts had gradually taken over the lorry park intended for loading and unloading of goods and made it into a market (see cover photo). The informalization of the lorry park/marketplace was in the eyes of politicians seen as a problem and not adequate to the fast-growing metropolis. I was told that while the Aboabo market was to be renovated the traders would be moved to the lorry park to sell from there. Yet none of the trader associations I spoke with about the GUMPP was aware of that.

By 2016, TaMA had begun renovating the lorry park. All traders occupying the space intended for trucks were evicted. They packed the pedestrian and bicycle lanes and formed a thick line along the major street all the way into the center of the city, annihilating any traces of the decongestion of a few years earlier. However, there were many conflicting convictions of what was being built. The assembly had first told the PTA that the lorries were to be moved to a new constructed lorry park along the Kumasi road, in the outskirts of town. PTA believed they had agreed with the assembly that the old lorry park was to become a market that could accommodate all the traders previously occupying the lorry park and now the streets, and they had clear understandings of how to proceed: The assembly was to demarcate the large open space so that traders could place their tables and umbrellas in boxes lined on the ground. In this way, the activities of the traders would not inhibit the movement of the consumers. Traders who had left the lorry park also believed they were to regain access once it was finished. However, the assembly decided differently. According to their public relations officer (PRO) it was never intended to be a market; rather, it would remain a lorry park, surrounded by stores. No traders were to sell from the ground, except hawkers, whom they would not be able to control. The traders selling from the streets and who previously occupied the lorry park were to sell from the “satellite markets” in Kukuo and Kalpohin. The new construction along the Kumasi road was intended for passengers, not goods. After I told the PRO what I had learned from the PTA, he told me he believed I had been listening “too much” to them. He argued that they had “sinister motives” to say that to me, and maybe “too high expectations that could not be met.” When I approached the secretary of PTA with the plans of the assembly, he raised his eyes to the sky in disappointment, and stated that the plans must have changed, and smiled with resignation when he realized the tiles now being laid at the old lorry park never would hold for the heavy trucks.
In contrast to the trust between traders and their spatial permanence described in
the previous chapter, the planned rehabilitations that have not been realized or con-
tantly changed, the unpredictable public officers, the arbitrary compliance of rules
and regulations regarding subletting of market stalls, the unclear division of responsi-
bilities, and the temporary measures, made TaMA emerge as an unreliable partner and
a threat to the moral economy in the eyes of traders. Furthermore, part of TaMA’s
project, no matter its benign intentions, endangered traders’ livelihood. The state’s
actions, thus, became part of traders’ risk assessment, like the market women in
Schindler’s (2010) study who saw local authorities’ political ambitions as something
unpredictable. For them, the rehabilitation of the marketplace for sanitary reasons, the
building of a new market hall that would not room everyone, and the increases in taxes
and fees, were real risks.

The threats of the unreliable state are best illustrated by the decongestion exercise.
In Chapter Three I described how the local government in line with national politics
strove to reclaim the streets and marketplaces. It was clear that TaMA put a lot of
effort into the decongestion. While the intervention was effective at first, the politics
could not be sustained. A couple of months later it was as if nothing had happened;
almost all traders were back where they once were. In 2016, the streets and open
spaces were even more congested. But then many street traders, under the threat of
eviction, had to pay small bribes to the roaming task force to remain in town. Gold-
stein (2016 p 77f) describes how the authorities in the Cancha marketplace in Bolivia,
treat street vendors (the ambulantes) differently than the traders of the formal market-
place. They must often pay small bribes and fees to avoid the risk of eviction and
confiscation of goods, a corruption that is simultaneously built into the structure of
the poorly financed authorities.

For the present discussion, it is important to note how street and market vendors
responded differently at TaMA’s attempt to decongest the city. Street traders ignored
the call to move to the marketplaces and endured. Market vendors, however, took it
upon themselves to rebuild their stores and remove extensions. These responses
should be seen in the light of how the government approached street and market trad-
ers respectively, where the latter held important functions in the making of the city,
and the former were mere obstacles to development, unless they became the latter
(also see Hunt 2009). This illustrates clearly the politics of informality and goes back
to the core of the “neoliberal exception,” in which the sovereign can define reasons
for both exclusion and inclusion (Ong 2006 p 5).

A decongestion is the inevitable outcome of an expanded marketspace. The cumu-
lated claiming of place for individual use comes to a point when it can no longer be
tolerated. Like Bayat (2013 p 51) argues, “the state crackdown becomes expectable.
Yet in most cases, the crackdowns fail to yield much, since they are usually launched
too late, when the encroachers have already spread, becoming visible and past the
point of no return.” Thus, decongestions are threats to some people’s survival, but are
not threats to the small-small. Just as inevitable, traders will reclaim their places, and
in the end, the state cannot be too forceful, as that may lead to general unrest and political riots.

The Polarizing State

The traders’ disappointment with TaMA and the national government exceeded the ambiguous attempts to develop the city. They were also annoyed at how the actions of the present and previous governments had polarized the town and country. Traders often blamed the disruptive political parties and the bickering political climate for hampering the development. Ghana has a reputation for organizing free and fair elections, but the events and aftermath of the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections demonstrates how the small-small politics developed in relation to the democracy, and how it was grounded on disappointment and narratives of injustice. Elections are central features of any democratic citizen-making project, and the way they are held shape opinions about the political system and establishment. For Comaroff and Comaroff (2016 p 31), democracy in the south is today a fetish, “widely regarded as an enchanted force, one that, if only it could be fully domesticated, not hijacked by those who seek to empower and enrich themselves, might solve real problems in the world.” While elections are designed to let citizens peacefully express their political views through the ballot, democratization has, in a context like Tamale, also contributed to the deeply polarized environment, which has added to the already critical and at times violent conflict within the traditional chieftainship.

Figure 12. Ballot box
Before the elections, party campaigns inundated the marketspace. The elections were planned for Friday the 7th of December. But, due to malfunctioning verification machines, the elections had to continue on the following Saturday as well. However, on Friday, results were already coming in that leaned toward a victory for National Democratic Congress (NDC, the government party). Yet, representatives from the opposition, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), held a press conference on Saturday afternoon claiming that reports they received from their polling agents all over the country predicted their much-wanted victory. On Sunday, the Electoral Commission (EC), declared NDC the winner. Speculations were rife. Were the reports given to NPP false, or had NDC been able to defy the new biometric verification machines and somehow added NDC votes to the ballot boxes? Or had NPP early on realized the outcome of the voting, and hence spread suspicions of irregularities, hoping for a second chance? Nevertheless, the Ghana National Peace Council as well as the NDC criticized NPP’s early press conference.

As predicted, the elections were very competitive, but eventually EC declared NDC and Mahama winners. In the parliamentary election, the NDC won a majority of 275 seats (148 seats as opposed to 123 for NPP, 1 for PNC and 3 independent candidates). In the presidential election, John Mahama obtained 50.7 percent of the votes against Akufo-Addo’s 47.7 percent. The inauguration of Mahama as president took place as planned on the 7th of January 2013.

NPP representatives boycotted the inauguration ceremony. Earlier, on December 28, the party declared they would file a petition with the Supreme Court, after having reviewed presidential votes from the 26,000 polling stations. NPP disputed more than 1.3 million votes. They claimed the elections were rigged through over-voting, and a malfunctioning biometric fingerprint system. The recently installed biometric machines that were to confirm the fingerprint of every voter broke down in 19 percent of the polling stations (Pryce and Oidtman 2014, Brierley and Ofosu 2014). Deployment of modern technologies, professionalism, and transparency were there to establish trust. But in many places around Ghana, these techniques were perceived as hiding irregularities and cheats. In this line of thought, Coles (2004) argues that trust in elections are often believed to come from the use of modern technology, but if we instead approach democracy as a set of practices and artifacts, and polling stations as types of laboratories that produce a particular kind of knowledge, we would realize that that knowledge is not separated from the social or the political; rather, it comprises both. This knowledge is dependent on social networks with human and non-human actors. The technicalizing and professionalizing of elections is, according to her, an attempt to create trust in the system through anti-politics (Ferguson 1994) that may simultaneously hide the reality of democracy.

#GhanaDecides was replaced by #ElectionPetition, and Akufo-Addo, the presidential candidate of the NPP, tweeted: “As the hearings start I look forward to a speedy resolution of the case and the deepening of our democratic process.” To what extent it has deepened the Ghanaian democratic process is yet to be reviewed, but the petition was not followed by a speedy resolution. It took the Supreme Court eight months,
until August 2013, to declare the NDC candidate and John Mahama as validly re-elected president.

Both television and radio broadcasted the court proceedings live. In the beginning of the case, the frustration and irritation were palpable. Rumors and allegations aimed primarily at the politicians of the other side spread across town. In the NPP stronghold of Kumasi, there were demonstrations (Bonsu 2012, December 18) and protests (Darfah Frimpong 2013, March 17). An alliance called “Let my vote count,” was formed (Bonsu 2013a, January 28.) which provoked the lobby association Coalition of Ghanaian Voters (Bonsu 2013b, February 19), and one of the NDC youth associations demanded police arrests (Ghana News Agency 2013a, February 7).

While the country was torn and conflicted over who should be in power, most traders were upset over how this caused disunity and they were angry over the political elite’s incompetence to maintain stability. They were of course concerned about the allegations of rigged elections, but a general position was nevertheless that it should not lead to the political and economic standstill that the preparation and execution of the trial had led to. It was bad for business, and the politicians should have already solved the matter. The traders thus directed their accusations against the elite, against both parties, and against the political system as such, rather than against a perceived other side.

In May 2013, Saibu was disappointed with his business. He had not been selling any shoes for a whole week and had sold only one pair the week before. To Saibu, the obvious reason for this was the live broadcast of the court proceedings that was to air from Monday to Thursday every week, until it was all finished. Saibu was convinced his customers were home watching TV, rather than coming to town. Maybe he was right. Nevertheless, this annoyed him and his trading friends on the street corner. Their view was that they had already voted, they had done their part. It was now up to the politicians to follow their votes.

But people in town were also following the broadcasts. I saw the Central Market chairman bending over the speaker of his wooden colored radio, and a bit further inside, Selina was turning the wheel frantically on her small green radio, but the reception was crackly. Perhaps the radio wave was lost in the narrow lanes of the market before reaching her store. Hussein had left his pile of trousers at the street with his small-boy to follow the broadcast from the 20” flat TV at the mobile phone shop close by. He had voted for NDC. But since he was frequently sent away from the streets because of the task force, which had severely affected his business, he hoped the court case would give NPP the victory. He believed this would make the authorities leave his business alone. Seidu was listening via the hands-free utility of his Tecno telephone’s FM unit. I often borrowed one of his earphones. We sat tight listening together until there were customers. At the nearby lunch restaurant which had a TV on the wall and which I visited more frequently for that reason, there was never any discussion about what program to show.

No matter whose bench I was sharing, we all sat in our ignorance, trying to understand and evaluate the evidence. People constantly asked, “How is it going?” “Who
is leading?” as if it was a football game. “What do you think will happen?” But we were not only asking ourselves and each other, we were also answering the questions: “Bawumia is right,” “the lawyer has a point,” “the evidence is strong,” “the evidence is weak,” etc. More than what was said, and more than what facts were on the table, we were judging the facial expressions, the presentations. We saw the confidence of the lawyers representing the defendants—President Mahama, the Electoral Commission, and the NDC—their poise, their high chins, superior looking eyes and their humble but assuring tone. Their demeanor and assurances made us inclined to trust them. Dr. Bawumia, the running mate of the NPP candidate and who led the work of collecting the evidence for NPP, was constantly smiling. The sharp questions by the lawyers were not able cut through his convincing smile.

But more than evaluating the evidence, traders complained about the effect the court case had on their business, and what influence the expenses of a re-election would have on the economy. A general claim was that they should all just let it go, accept the loss, like the loser in a football game. In Ghana, politics is often metaphorically described through football.

After a while, also the court recessed for lunch. The president of the court read the time on his watch wrong. Everyone laughed. They commented on yesterday’s football. NDC lawyer Tsikata let the court know that he, being a Real Madrid supporter, was glad about Barcelona’s exit from Champions League.

I sat down on the wooden bench among the Asantes outside the department store, next to Kwame and Emmanuel. They teased the watch seller Stephen for Barcelona’s loss the day before. Ignoring them, he hung up his Barcelona flag on his camouflage-colored umbrella. Emmanuel, the shoe seller usually sitting behind Stephen, explained that with God’s help the business was small-small despite the court case. Paul sat down in front of us, complaining about the politicians, accusing them of all being heavy drinkers. He had seen “Nana Addo” [Akufo-Addo, the NPP flagbearer], order akpeteshie, a strong locally made spirit, at a bar next to the stadium, “Three tots [shots]!” President Mahama was also a drinker, he asserted, as was Afari Gyan, the EC Chairman. To prove his point, he took out his brand-new Nokia with a large touchscreen and showed a picture of Afari Gyan, sitting in a plastic chair, with a Club Beer and a glass in front of him. “This is from his secret bar in Accra,” he said. We laughed. Kwame and Emmanuel were not convinced about the authenticity of the photo, but certain of the general misconduct and immoral behavior of the political establishment.

For a while, we all seemed to read the papers. We looked at the pictures from the stairs of the Supreme Court. There were always two pictures. The first was on NDC lawyers and “General Mosquito,” the party secretary, upright and with authority, victorious as boxers at the weigh in. The second picture was on the NPP entourage. Akufo-Addo took the lead surrounded by lawyers and security personnel, strengthened by the previous day’s encounters. Bawumia followed, still smiling. Once again, we met in town, once again the radio and TV were on, once again we came with questions and answers. Yet Saibu was still not selling any shoes.
The electoral process designed to peacefully manage and offset stratifications in the society, and to bring unity around how to make decisions, also nourished factions and divisions. Incidents that in the larger picture of Ghanaian democracy would be small and insignificant, were magnified to characterize the entire democracy, breeding disappointment and distrust. The political parties and the government were in this way believed to threaten the cohesion and solidarity within the community.

The Obstructive State

Traders were also disappointed at the government for being nonresponsive to their needs and their right to make a living through their business. During the decongestion exercises, a common view among the non-affected traders was that the government was obstructing people’s right to live. Hajia Mariam, an influential and established trader, for instance, wondered where the evicted traders were to go. How would they survive, how would they provide food for their children? She saw the decongestion as an attack primarily on women, who, even though their religion stipulated they were not to work so hard, were still the main providers for the family. The decongestion was then an unfair assault on those already mistreated.

Another way in which traders directed critique was through the complaint that “there is no money in the system.” When the market was slow traders often argued it was due to a lack of movement of funds, and that the government could control this movement.

Young Fuseini had a clear understanding of how the system worked. He was sitting in the shade on a plastic chair outside his mattress store when I approached him. He pulled out another chair and we sat quietly for some time. I put my feet up on the wooden post that connected Fuseini’s veranda to that of his neighbor. Fuseini told me his business was “spoiled.” He had not sold any mattresses for six days and hardly any pillows except for two the day before. Fuseini also exchanged currency on the black market, and this business was better, but the competition was hard as many of the senior black-market traders were better at attracting customers. Fuseini was worried about how he would be able to pay the rent for his store. Because of the unclear ownership of the building, Fuseini had not paid the rent for many years, but now he was to begin. It was set to GH¢ 900/year (about 450 USD) for his large centrally located store. Fuseini did not yet know how he would raise the money, but somehow, he would make it work, he asserted. “Why is the business going so bad?” I asked him. “Because there is no money in the system. The government has not yet paid its contractors,” he responded.

You know, the contractors, those building the schools, the roads and everything. They sign contracts with the [national] government through the local government. And the state has been late in paying them. Not even their heads, the top ones, have received the money. So, they haven’t paid their workers and the contractors are the ones distributing the money in Ghana. . . . I know many
contractors, and they have been telling me. The only way they can get their money is through seeing someone at the local government, paying him some money for him to call the minister in Accra, and then pay him small so that the money will be distributed. . . . You have to pay to get paid. In Africa here, and in Ghana especially, it is common. For example, if you have this book [pointing at my note-book], and I come and say I want it. But for me to get it, you say I have to pay 1000 Ghana cedi. But then there are other licensed contractors beside me who also want it, so they will come and also give you some money. So, unless one has given you money for the book, they will not be able to get it. But then there are different sizes of books. There are the big ones, the middle ones, and the small ones. Everyone goes for the big one. So, if I pay you the money for getting the big one, maybe I at least can get the middle one or the small one. Not all contractors are doing construction work, there are others. But not like doctors and nurses, they are government workers and they go on strike instead every year.

Fuseini argued that one reason why his business was going slow was a deeply corrupt system of government contracts that hampered the flow of money. Because the government was not paying their contractors, there was “no money in the system” to trickle down to Fuseini and the others in the markets. Instead the money entered the pockets of the politicians and officeholders. The general view was that this was the fault of the government; it was their responsibility to make the money move accordingly. Fuseini’s neighbor, Alhaji Iddi returned and we moved to give space for the senior. I realized I was sitting in the chair in which Alhaji usually sat, the chair where one could comfortably place one’s feet on the wooden post.

The lack of money in the system was seen to be due to the government failing in two conflicting regards: spending too much, and spending too little. Linda claimed that the slow market during the spring of 2013 was because “there is no money in the system.” I asked her what that meant, and she explained that it was because the government had spent all the money. “But if they have spent it all, would it not have reached the market?” I asked. “It’s because they are holding the money, and not letting it out.” She then explained.

Yakubu expressed something similar, when I pressured him on why the market was not moving.

There is no money in the system, didn’t you hear about the former MPs [Member of Parliament] getting 2 billion each [referring to the old currency, 200 000 in GH¢]? That’s the problem. The government and the ministers chop [spend] money too much. . . . They should put money into the system. Now contractors are working for one or two years without receiving any money. They should pay them faster, so the market can move. During NPP time this was much better, even NDC leaders say the money was more at that time. NPP, they have friends abroad with companies that create money.

The spending of money did not generate movement. Instead the money stayed within the community of government officials. As Stephen asserted:
The politicians only care about themselves. Take the MMDCE [Metropolitan, Municipal, District, Chief Executives] who have salaries of 7,200 Ghana cedi per month. Not even during my whole life I will be able to make that kind of money. During the campaigning, they can ask us to do anything; “Sleep there” they say [he points at the pavement to his right], and we sleep there, but then they don’t mind us until the next four years. It’s the same for all parties. Before the elections of 2000, which was the first election I was allowed to vote in, I thought it would be better with the NPP in power, but it turned out they were just as greedy, . . . . The problem is the teachers’ salaries. After every election, as long as I can remember, the teachers have gone on strike [which they were also doing at the time of the interview]. It is time they take some from the MMDCE’s salaries and give it to the teachers instead. It would make the education more qualitative as well.

In the view of Fuseini and others, the problem of “no money in the system” was connected to the widespread corruption in government contracts. Similarly, Bierschenk (2006) argues that government contracts in Benin are a major cause for the increasing corruption affecting the country. This is due to the “feedback mechanism” (p 549), in which parties need sponsorship from business people, who in turn rely on government contracts. In Ghana, government contracts are subjected to favoritism and financial irregularities, and may risk the government’s chances of securing loan packages from the IMF (PRS Group 2015 p 12).

The comment that “there is no money in the system” was especially common to hear during the spring of 2013, the time of political liminality when everybody awaited the outcome of the petition. The trope was a way for traders to understand large macroeconomic processes, and their role within it. Through it, they realized their inability to produce incomes and growth themselves, having to rely on the flow of money generated primarily by government contracts. As traders made business on the margins, with small-small profits on every transaction, they saw the importance of money moving between individuals, and through institutions and companies. Hence, “no money in the system” was an accusation against the state and government for not taking the financial and moral responsibility to make money move.

In this way, money is a resource that must not stand still, but flow and circulate. Peebles (2014) describes the critique directed against the unbanked people of the world as inhibiting economic growth since their money cannot be used as credits to others. He argues that the unbanked are regularly described as “hoarders,” who create “dead capital” when refusing to let their money circulate in the way necessary for global capitalism. In this context, the many unbanked traders directed that same critique against the government. This critique was morally configured, connecting the small-small norm of letting others in, to a macroeconomic level, in which the government ought to let others do business on the flow of cash. Traders in the marketspace thus took what they argued to be a righteous position within the moral economy, accusing the government of hoarding.
The Inclusive State

The National Urban Policy (NUP) articulated the government’s politics of informality and inclusion. The NUP acknowledged the problem of a weak urban economy that failed to create industrial development and growth, development of the urban hinterland, and that had a large “struggling informal component that receives little institutional credit support.” It stated that there was a policy vacuum in that local assemblies lacked structures for responsible economic development, and therefore was not able to produce any formal policy direction that could support the “urban informal sector” (Government of Ghana 2012 p 16).

Through NUP, the government strove to respond to what they thought were the needs of small-scale traders and adopted a set of policies with the ambition to include traders. These policies were set in a context of neoliberal ideas of self-governance, and the inclusion was thus an outcome of the continuous struggle by traders to make a living in the marketspace. Yet it was not the outcome that traders necessarily asked for. What we see in this part of the formalization is a governmental regime that aimed to optimize the population by promoting market forces and encouraging the citizens’ ability to govern themselves (Ong 2006 p 6). For instance, one of the objectives of the policy was to promote urban economic development. The government’s way to reach this objective illustrated the ambition to include and optimize actors of the informal economy that had felt excluded, so they could become citizens of a modern welfare state (see initiatives v through viii).

Initiatives to achieve Objective 3: Promoting urban economic development

i. Promote local economic development (LED).

ii. Improve urban services and infrastructure to support economic development and advance industrial investments and production.

iii. Target infrastructural investments in growth centres as the choice destination for investments and other economic activities.

iv. Enhance the competitiveness of Ghanaian cities in regional and international context.

v. Change official attitude towards the informal enterprises from neglect to recognition and policy support.

vi. Ensure that urban planning provides for the activities of the informal economy.

vii. Build up and upgrade the operational capacities of the informal enterprises.

viii. Improve funding support for the informal economy.

(Government of Ghana 2012 p 23-24)

As the Chief Director of Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), Nana Oduro Kwarteng, argued: “The whole idea of urban development is inclusivity” (Quoted on Cities Alliance’s website, Cities Alliance 2016b).

An important part of this formalization and optimization was the idea of relocating traders from the streets to the marketplaces. The marketplaces, being governable spaces (see Rose 1999 p 31-39, Roy 2009), were key parts of the envisioned Ghanaian
cities of the future. The government had explored different ways of developing and constructing new marketplaces. They set up models for how the marketplaces on district, municipal, and metropolitan levels could be developed. These model markets were modernized marketplaces including a daycare, parking spaces, toilets, fire protection, and running water, etc. (Ministry of Trade and Industry 2010). The model was thus still a marketplace, made up of many small stores run by individual traders, and not a shopping mall, even though there were a few of those popping up in Accra and Kumasi. Renovations of marketplaces occurred all over Ghana, but I did not come across anyone being developed in the direction of the models proposed by the government.

From her study on street vendors in Bogotá, Colombia, Hunt (2009 p 331-332) argues that the relocation of them to the outlined marketplaces, and the subsequent recovery of public space, is a “spatial technology of governance,” that intends to eliminate traders’ “culture of informality” and construct citizens. The political elite denied any structural causes for the street vendors’ situation. Instead they saw street vendors as incapable of planning their lives, as illegal and connected to the mafia, and as immoral. From this position, the street vendors needed to be educated in their civic duties. Although similar expressions existed in the Ghanaian context, and traders were encouraged to relocate to the marketplaces, there was a much greater understanding of the street traders’ need to provide for their families. Evictions and decongestion politics was never completely enforced. In the end, traders could, sometimes even with the assistance of the authorities, reclaim the streets. The moral economy thus to some extent exceeded the market space and was recognized by parts of the state.

The inclusive state approach shows how the formalization, as a spatial technology of governance, involves an ambivalent engagement with the moral economy. Often traders’ economic practices were valued differently depending on the place they claimed. Small-small ways of getting by were appreciated and worthy of protection and development within the marketplaces, but more disparaged along the streets. The relocation of traders was thus a process of making moral citizens.

However, the government was pushing these citizenship projects in other ways as well. The relationship between individuals and states, in which citizenship was born, can like Lazar (2014 p 68) argues be both “contestatory and cooperative.” Along with the massive uprising of microfinance services, various welfare projects such as the NHIS and SSNIT Informal pension scheme were designed and set up to include the recipients into the formal economy (Jennische 2012). However, both NHIS and SSNIT Informal were insurance-based systems financed partly by taxes and partly by the premiums paid by the beneficiaries, but covered only those individuals who paid the premiums, or who were formally employed. In this context, it was not being a citizen by law that gave small scale urban traders access to the welfare system. Building on a biopolitical technology of subjectivity (Ong 2006), this political direction formed citizens who could optimize themselves in a competitive setting. It was only by being a successful market actor, through taking loans, and by paying the premiums,
that actors got access to these services. The moral citizen was thus also premium paying and indebted.

While welfare projects such as these were techniques for the government to formalize and optimize the marketspace economy and simultaneously construct a governable citizenry, traders only rarely recognized access to these schemes in terms of rights as citizens. Rather, they stressed the right to conduct trade, the right to sustain themselves, and to make a living. From the traders’ outlook, the main task of the government was to enable that right, and most importantly to not obstruct it.

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) initiated several World Bank-financed urban projects: the Urban Environmental Sanitation Project II, the Urban Management Land Information System, the Urban Poverty Reduction Project, the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme, and a USD 175 million project on Local Government and Capacity Support implemented in 46 metropolitan and municipal assemblies (Ghana Business News 2011, October 4). In participation with Cities Alliance, the World Bank, and others, the Ghanaian government initiated the Land, Services, and Citizenship for the Urban Poor Programme (LSC), with the purpose to include the urban poor in the making of Ghana. The program started in Accra but would eventually be implemented nationwide. LSC strove to include the urban poor in the planning and decision-making processes, and foster “pro-poor cities.” In addition to training community leaders, and mobilizing and federating savings groups, the LSC funded a radio show, The Urban Voice, that aimed to raise awareness about urban issues and promote an “active urban citizenry” (MLGRD n.d.).

Such urban politics is not constructed in a contextual vacuum; rather, they represent a “mobile urbanism” (McCann and Ward 2011) that is copied and moved between different contexts across the world. McCann and Ward see policy making as both relational and territorial. It is relational in the sense that they are transferred between cities across the world, a process dependent on “transfer agents” (e.g. policy actors of various sorts). Global networks of local and national policymakers bring “certain cities into conversation with others (while pushing others apart)” (p xiv). It is territorial through being grounded, fixed, and dependent on local contexts and interests. The travels and transfers of policies, the political struggles it entails, and the relationality as well as territoriality constitute, according to McCann and Ward, something they call “urban assemblage.”

But more than assembling the city, these relations between states, international agencies, and multinational corporations are part of what Hindess (2005) calls the “supranational governmental regime” that constrains national governments’ abilities to rule and sets it in an international system of states. As such, there “are important structural or systemic limitations on the role of citizens in the government of contemporary states, however internally democratic they might appear to be” (p 251). The problem, Hindess argues, is not necessarily the effect of these external constraints on contemporary states, but the “grossly unequal character of the international order from which these constraints derive” (p 253). Many of the postcolonies, for instance, have
been subjected to an additional form of supervision through an international regime of development.

Formalization simplifies taxation. The Ghanaian government had created a system of taxation through tolls, fees, and income tax, that specifically targeted “informal” workers. Income taxes were to be paid to the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) while business operation fees and market tolls were to be paid to TaMA’s revenue unit. For the income tax, businesses were separated into the larger stores who were registered by the authority, and the smaller, “informal” enterprises. The authority categorized and assessed the non-registered businesses in terms of type, size, and expected income. The tax ranged from GH¢ 20 to 80 per year. Traders were to pay the tax quarterly to the collector and receive a sticker that they attached to the wall of the shop. However, due to printing problems in Accra, the stickers were no longer available, so traders were to show the receipt as confirmation instead. Also, tax collectors approached traders at other intervals instead of every quarter, due to lack of staff. Most shopkeepers in the marketplaces paid income tax but so did established traders along the streets, such as Salifu and Saibu.

Figure 13. Market tolls

In addition to this, TaMA collected business operation fees. These also depended on the size of the store. Street traders and hawkers paid a market toll (see figure 13) of GH¢ 0.20. This toll, also called ticket, allowed them to sell in town for the day. However, tax collectors were far too few to cover the vast and expanding marketspace, and those obliged to pay could dodge it by claiming a lack of money or intimidating the collector. The tolls were not collected during the most intense part of the decongestion
in February and March 2013. But in April they started again. The price rose to GH¢ 0.50. The ticket itself still had 0.20 printed, but the price was corrected in writing. From that time, traders could meet tax collectors in the morning, and task force personnel in the afternoon. The harassments, as traders perceived the action by the task force, had diminished at that time. Yet traders, like Kwame and Hussein, saw the toll they paid in the morning as something they could use if bothered by the task force later during the day. They saw it as a confirmation and acknowledgment of their business. Many Central Market traders, who had been paying market fees and income taxes, still argued the local government had done nothing to improve the marketplace for the last few decades. They felt that their taxes had financed the politicians’ well-being, rather than investments in public goods. Increasing the level of revenue was nevertheless a prioritized area in TaMA’s development plans (TaMA 2014).

Taxing has a specific relationship to citizenship in former colonies. Roitman (2007 p 201) describes how the status of the free man could be defined by the empire through “the transfer of certain amount of private wealth, which was then deemed public wealth.” But, the unregulated merchants in the Chad Basin who in protest refused to pay the trading licenses, did not become citizens so much in the transfer of money through taxes, but through the “conditions that allow[ed] for this transfer” (p 202). Similarly, in Tamale tax was perceived as a recognition of the right to trade, but it was not constitutive for the process of citizen-making. Rather, traders upheld the possibility of making a living, and of accumulating and growing, as necessary rights; in other words, the conditions requiring taxes to be paid. The fact that “there is no money in the system” was therefore not only an accusation against the government for obstructing the market, but was similar to the decongestion, a violation of this right to make a living.

The government had thus made efforts to understand and approach traders on their terms. It aimed to construct policies that brought actors, such as urban street and market vendors, into the political process and under its sphere of control. This formalization and citizen-making process was based on the politics of informality. On the local level, this process partly occurred through various projects aimed at developing the urban space and addressing the needs of traders while including them in the process. The ambitions were high, but the political circumstances, the financial difficulties, the factions, and traders’ disobedience, made the government’s spatial politics appear as ambiguous. Traders experienced temporary political decisions, development plans that were seldom realized as intended, and an unreliable state.

Much of the politics of inclusion was intended to enable traders to optimize their entrepreneurial potential and take responsibility for themselves. The development plans of the city and the decongestion were thus spatial interventions meant to optimize the productivity of the city. The attempt to govern the population through the regulation of space is a form of spatial governmentality (Merry 2001). Zoning, by defining where trade is to be allowed and where it is not, simplifies governing of traders. They are more easily taxed and targeted for political decisions. It also provides a
sense of order to the city. But in Tamale, the political interventions were always temporary, uncertain and negotiable. Much of the politics fell short and was not continuously enforced. The politics was arbitrary, since public officers, like Mr. Alhassan (see Chapter Three), simultaneously assisted traders in claiming a place along the streets of the city while leading the decongestion. The ambiguity was in this way built into the logic of the state apparatus.

In Bayat’s view (2013 p 85), structural change is only available through the government accepting the realities of the streets and adopting policies in that direction. “[T]he cumulative consequence of poor people’s individual direct actions may, in the end, result in some improvements from below and policy changes from above.” In this way, the politics of inclusion is the both the context in which these struggles unfold and, at the same time, the possible outcome of those struggles.

But structural change was not what traders necessarily wanted. After all, and as it were, traders in the marketspace could better their lives, although in a small-small way. Since change endangered this, development was a contradictory process to the traders. Its eventuality depended on it not threatening the status quo. Therefore, the government found itself in an almost unsolvable conundrum. Any attempt to develop the city risked the livelihood of its citizens, and their votes. In a sense, the ambiguous and unreliable state follows from a situation in which the government must show its power and ambitions, while on the ground do as little as possible to risk the foundations of small-small trade. The formalization emerges as being built on contradictions: in pushing it, the government simultaneously allows informal trade.

Small-Small Citizenship

The small-small politics was expressed in different ways. There were those who withdrew from any form of engagement with national or local politics, refused to join a political party or even vote. But such withdrawal was rarely motivated by a non-interest in the politics or development in Ghana; it was rather the ultimate critique of what they saw as a corrupt, unresponsive, and destructive state. As such it was a political statement. On the other end of the continuum, there were those who tried to benefit as much as possible from the political parties, and the politicized situation in general. They joined a party and, by following its orders, they received benefits and resources. Such an involvement, however, was difficult to combine with the moral economy of street and market trading, which required making and maintaining relations.

Instead, most traders’ political engagement was somewhere in the middle. They voted but did not campaign for any party. They often engaged in political discussions but not in a polarizing way. They blended a pride of being Ghanaian and of the Ghanaian progress with complaints and critique of the political establishment and could thus easily gain support and consensus with others, no matter their party preference.
In contrast to a polarizing and corrupt political elite, they emphasized dignity, honesty, community, and trust. In common for all these approaches was how distrust and disappointment were utilized to produce something else, another world, an improved personal future, or an alternative citizenship.

While the elections were a major part of the construction of the Ghanaian liberal democracy and its citizens, the politicized conflict and the inability of the government to solve the issue increased the demand for another kind of community. The marketspace formed such a community. There the conflict was not as present, it did not obstruct the everyday life and trade to the same extent. We can only understand this community through its relation to the unreliable state. It builds on the small-small politics, the norm of letting others in, and on many of the solidarity mechanisms described in Chapter Five.

There is no need to link citizenship necessarily to membership of a national state (Lazar 2014; Sassen 2003). It is possible to discuss it in connection to any political community. In Tamale the small-small citizenship can be described as a parallel form to what Holston has described as an “insurgent citizenship” (Holston 2008). The insurgencies and resistance he portrays in Brazil are grounded in a political inequality and class differentiation. In Ghana, the small-small politics resulted from the perception of a neglectful and corrupt state that was nonresponsive to the needs of the traders. The privileged elite was rarely under attack. It was thus not so much grounded on resistance and insurgency but on the right to make a living. It manifested its appearance through the right to do trade, to support oneself and one’s family in urban space. Often it rested on actors claiming a specific place designed for something else, a gutter, part of a walkway, or traffic island. It was a citizenship that in the marketspace connected the political disappointment directed against the government to the perceived moral righteousness of doing business.

Other actors involved in the marketspace besides small-scale traders also sanctioned and acknowledged this right to do business. Larger store owners blamed the government for not creating enough jobs and complained about the unfair treatment of street vendors. Earlier in this thesis we saw how owners of supermarkets, larger department stores, and petrol stations allowed for some traders to set up businesses outside their entrances, even though they might be selling the same thing. Customers understood the importance of loyalty in the market and rarely changed sellers even though prices were lower with someone else.

Citizenship in the small-small gave one the right to buy and sell on credit. As illustrated with the foreign influx, this alternative citizenship did not care about the country of origin, despite it being illegal for foreigners to do trade under certain circumstances. But it did demand its citizens to follow the same moral behavior. Sassen (2003) argues that globalization and the development of human rights have in the global city enabled this tension between the citizenship of the national state and social membership of the community. The case of Tamale shows that similar developments occur also in cities rarely included in the global city category (see Sassen 2001).
For Saibu, the Andani shoe seller who also was the son of late Ya Na, politicians and public officers were the ones to blame for the situation in which the conflict and polarization negatively affected even the possibilities of making a living. His disappointment towards them was the basis for his engagement.

It is the politicians who destroy for us, and we let them do it, just see what happened to Ya Na. See how the politicians and the authorities are involved in it. Only God can be trusted. When I lived in Yendi, during the war, I used to wear this local protective armor, *bonna*, that we make ourselves. The ones chiefs normally wear. My man [friend] told me to take it off, so one day I hang it on the lamp button in my room, before I walked out. I remember how we that day stood eye to eye with a policeman holding a gun [He held up his arms like holding a rifle or machine gun] We get terrified and my brother believes he is going to die. I tell him to take it easy but also run away. So, we ran. If I would have worn the *bonna* the police would have known what house I belonged to and he would have shot us.

Saibu shared a street corner, bench, and umbrella with the Abudu brothers Yakubu and Habib. They were close friends, helping each other unpacking goods, covering for each other. They talked, laughed, and prayed together. I asked Saibu one day if them being Abudu created a problem. “No, it’s not like that,” he answered. “They know who I am and who my father was, and I know who they are. There is no problem. We can even argue about it. But as they know my father, they won’t speak about Ya Na. Instead we argue about politics.” Through the moral economy of the marketspace, Saibu and his friends were able to produce a different way of living and being without the suffocation of identity politics.

Habib’s political engagement illustrates the role of small-small politics in making a community. The purpose of the association Namba Yiŋa (*Come Together as One*), that he formed together with other young Dagbamba traders along the streets (see Chapter Four) was to allow for conversations about business and life in general. They had about fifty members. Every member had to pay one cedi every meeting. For this, they could get financial help to pay for weddings, *outdoor* ceremonies for the newborns, or assistance for a ruined business. Habib had been the leader of the organization for the last two years, but some did not appreciate him. His critics wanted to disallow members who could not afford the fee of one cedi per meeting from the association, while Habib thought they should be able to pay back later. They did not talk about politics within the association, but they encouraged everyone to go and vote, and from there to go directly home, without causing any disturbances in town. Namba Yiŋa was a response against the dividing mechanisms of the national politics and the Dagbon state, and a space where Abudus and Andanis could meet and form a community. While Habib was important in the production of this space, he simultaneously approached NPP to set up a deal with them, that if he would get the association to vote for NPP, they would “arrange things” in favor of Namba Yiŋa members. He could not define “things” concretely but referred to some fuzzy contracts that were to be drawn up if the NPP came to power. He thus saw the opportunities arising from the political
tensions and tried to make them work in his favor. But, he was not able to convince Namba Yiŋa to take his path, and his attempt instead strengthened his critics who valued the nonpartisan aspect of Namba Yiŋa.

Most Dagbamba traders were tired of political parties, but not of politics. The most important thing for them was to continue selling their things. Politicians and the government authorities aggravated the situation. As stated, traders distanced themselves from the parties, describing them as more or less corrupt. But, they devotedly discussed issues of development, and criticized the state and the local government, for instance. Traders were politically aware, convinced, and proud, devoted voters, on the one hand, yet skeptical toward political parties on the other. The skepticism, frustration and distrust directed toward the national and local government, politicians, and the state in general, contrasted with the confidence and trust that traders often exhibited when entering into relationships within the marketspace.

Traders’ memories of the history of violence, the killing of Ya Na, the curfew and the tensions remained. They still made people cautious and inhibited their voting. This affected also the non-Dagbamba. Ibrahim, the Nigerien fabric trader who by naturalization had become a Ghanaian citizen, explained before the elections that he was not going to vote. “In Tamale, it is too polarized. The town is divided, when they should be one.” He talked about the violence and remembered the importance of not breaking the curfew in 2003 and 2004 that banned people from the city between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Those who stayed out too late were either sent to prison, or worse, taken to the military barracks where things could go very bad. If Ibrahim had lived in another city, like Kumasi or Accra, he would have voted. But in Tamale it was still too sensitive. Ibrahim’s unwillingness to vote was based on his critique against the government for not solving the dispute, and the fear that any voting would further intensify the divisions in Tamale. He argued it was common that the political parties tried to buy votes. Although most people took the money and voted the way they wanted anyway, it rendered the elections pointless. Seidu also refused to vote in the elections of 2012. He said, “I don’t feel it in my heart to vote this time.” It was difficult for him to explain further, but he said he did not feel the NDC was performing well and he did not appreciate NPP enough either. Party advocates buying mobile phone credits from Seidu while attending the adjacent bar often urged him to join their party. Yet, he always tried to distance himself from them and explained he was not interested in taking part. It is important to see these actors’ reluctance to engage in party politics and voting not as a depoliticized position, but as a conscious non-participatory political act (Ahmad 2014), as a critical stance against corruption, political violence, and disunity. Ahmad argues that the Karachi residents, after the Pakistani elections in 2007, retreated indoors out of moral decency and out of indignation at the political violence taking place on the streets. For her, that withdrawal and denunciation was not due to disengagement but articulated “the possibility of conjuring and addressing an alternative, emergent public by recuperating the highly contingent righteousness of the ordinary” (p 411-412).
The Tamale marketspace enabled a political position of non-participation. Here, it was possible for traders to formulate a political alternative of peace, righteousness, and unity, together with other traders and customers. While Ahmad discerns a “sociability of indignation,” it is in the marketspace of Tamale more accurate to talk of a sociability of political disappointment. For the Serbian student activists that Greenberg (2014) studies, a politics of disappointment is a condition of living in contradiction. They are both the objects of disappointment, failing to live up to the ideals and potentiality ascribed to them, and in contention with the contingency of political action. To the activists, the politics of disappointment also became a strategy. Through awareness of the contradictions and contingencies of the political process, they could form an activism directed at the present rather than at a utopian future. In the case of Ghana and specifically within the Tamale marketspace, this engagement occurred partly through not involving themselves in party politics, and partly through taking a morally superior position against the capricious and provisional politics of the state.

**Conclusions**

Small-small politics builds on the moral economy and represents traders’ productive engagement with national politics. It allowed them to dismiss, condemn and disregard the state. In their view the state was unreliable, polarizing, and obstructive. For traders it was a necessary right to trade, and they demanded that the state not invalidate that right nor risk their livelihood.

In this chapter, the Ghanaian government’s attempt to formalize the marketspace emerges as a contradictory project of citizen-making. Based on an underlying politics of informality, the government tried to include those defined as “informal” into a governable polity. The welfare schemes have been discussed numerous times, and so has the relocation of traders into marketplaces, but in this chapter, we have also seen how citizen-making occurred through the electoral process, the National Urban Policy, and spatial development. This politics must be understood in a broader and more global political paradigm. Transfer agents, international organizations and development agencies were involved in forming and funding these solutions. The Ghanaian government found itself in the same challenging conundrum that it did in regard to foreign influx and Ghana Investment Promotion Center Act. The inclusive state project, the welfare schemes, and the economic support were attempts to respond to what was believed to be traders’ needs. Yet, the government was unable to enforce the politics since any change to traders’ ability to make a living could have political repercussions. This in turn reinforced the perception of the state as unreliable and obstructive.

Meanwhile, traders enacted an alternative citizenship through claiming their right to trade and to make a living. This citizenship was grounded in the moral economy, in the relations of the marketspace, in the practice of trade, rather than on their locality. The norms of gradual progress and letting others in are built into the right to claim a
place. It is the marketspace, as an analytical perspective then, that enables us to discern how this small-small politics evolves and how it develops into a form of citizenship.

Traders’ and the government’s disparate views on development and the difficulties of implementing political decisions and interventions have spatio-temporal consequences. The disparity spreads from a politics of space into one of time. Although change may be possible through the notion of an inclusive state, for traders this transformation must be slow, gradual, and reliable. Development, for them, is in this context by necessity a small-small process.

Governmental strategies, like renovations, regulations, and relocations, endanger the livelihood of traders. Changing the dynamics of the marketspace becomes almost impossible without political effects, dangerous for any democracy. As small-small cements itself in the material and social city, development relies on the individual traders who gradually better their lives, send their children to school and universities. These possibilities are the subject of the next chapter.
This chapter picks up on the conclusions of the previous chapter in that it revolves around the future and change. I will here examine young traders’ outlook on the world and their imaginaries. Studying the new generation of traders is a way to approach the making and the future of Tamale’s marketspace. As Honwana (2012 p 3) states, the “[y]outh are a critical indicator of the state of the nation, of its politics, economy and social and cultural life.”

Youths’ imagined possibilities are situated in the moral economy. The obligation to let others in gives young traders the opportunity to enter in the market, if not to succeed one’s parent, then to start something new, “between the lines” (Simone 2004 p 426). Inserting oneself as middleman is a possibility in time and space that the youth ponder, constantly looking for market openings, and novel business strategies. The market is often thought of as a space of possibilities, of personal and societal transformation, and of development. For some, the Tamale marketspace can work as a switchboard between different spaces and life trajectories. It can facilitate personal, financial, and political growth. For others, the possibilities of the marketspace are very limited.

As we saw in Chapter Five, the moral economy was simultaneously enabling and restrictive. The expanding marketspace provided a livelihood for many, but self-fulfillment for few. Restrained by the same moral economy that let them in at the beginning, young traders at the same time considered and searched for opportunities to leave the marketspace, perhaps for a career within the economy of perceived reliable formal employments, or through joining a political party, or more drastically, finding routes to spaces of alleged prosperity outside of Africa. The right to go outside illustrates an emerging global citizenship. However, at the time, they waited for these possibilities to realize. A struggle between permanence and change was embodied in young people’s lives and choices.

These aspirations have an important gender dimension. It was especially young men of the streets who tried to find ways to leave the marketspace, while young women, responsible for their present and future family, felt obliged to take over the businesses of their mothers.

The marketspace was almost saturated by too many traders trying to make a living, selling the same things. But the education path was also saturated by too many educated young people lacking formal employments. They sat along the streets of Ghanaian cities, some selling items, some waiting. The promised salaried employments were few. Without the right connections, that kind of work was difficult to obtain. But
while the youth were stuck in time and space, in a position Honwana (2012) and others have described as “waithood,” the government moved them through the categories of unemployed, underemployed, or self-employed, targeting them with policies aimed at making them employable through education and training skills. This education mentality was shared between the government, global institutions such as the World Bank, the traders, and their parents.

Meanwhile, in the National Youth Policy (NYP) the state described the problem of youth as one of morality. Accordingly, the youth suffered from greed, and were socially and culturally inapt for facing the challenges of the present. The formalization, as described in this chapter, aimed to mold citizens who could live up to the ideals of the small-small, while acquiring the skills attractive to the global labor market. The youth became the center of attention for development, and for the future. This position of uncertainty, thus, was not one of the margins or periphery, as it is often argued. Rather, the youth held a central position, through politics, ideas of development, and through living in the city center.

First, I will briefly describe the youth employment situation through statistics. It shows the challenges for young people in obtaining salaried work. Based on this knowledge the Ghanaian government formulated a politics in which the youth were to become proper citizens through acquiring skills, education, and moral traits. I will then reintroduce some of the young traders and describe their relation to the market, education, and the future. Waiting constituted a central activity for many of them, during which going outside of Africa and joining a party were ideas and strategies they considered, along with new business opportunities.

Youth and Employment

The slogan for NPP, the opposition party, for the 2012 elections was “Free SHS” (Senior High School). NPP lost the elections that year, and though it is difficult to say to what extent it was due to the slogan not really adhering to the needs of Ghanaians, they changed their communication strategy for the 2016 elections. Instead, “One District, One Factory” became the key message dispersed in the Ghanaian public, though they maintained the policy ambition of a free SHS. It resonated better with what many Ghanaians saw as the key problem with development, which was the lack of jobs. The new message seemed to have been successful, as NPP won the 2016 elections.

The government bases much of its politics on youth and employment on the statistics provided by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS). The GSS has two censuses that are particularly useful for this purpose, the Population and Housing Census (PHC) and the Integrated Business Establishment Survey (IBES). The PHC data, which counts every person present in Ghana on a specific date, goes back to 1960 and is based on the principles and recommendations of the United Nations. The latest data

172
is from 2010 (GSS 2014) and is available as different reports at the national, regional and district levels.

The PHC 2010 establishes that the Tamale Metropolis, like most African cities, is a young district; 36 percent of the population are below the age of 15 years, and 60 percent of the remaining 64 percent are between 15 and 35 years of age, which is the age span the government defines as youth. Out of the economically active population above 15 years of age in Tamale, 33 percent (45 percent of the women, and 22 percent of the men) work within the industry sector defined, and oddly composited, as wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, which is by far the largest sub-sector. Also, 70 percent of the economically active women above 15 years of age are self-employed without employees. For men, the number is 51 percent (GSS 2014). The PHC 2010, for the Tamale Metropolis, also categorizes the working population in employment sectors, and accordingly 83 percent work within the Private Informal Sector (90 percent of the women and 77 percent of the men) (GSS 2014 p 45).

The IBES provides us with data of where the jobs are created. Different industrial censuses have been conducted in Ghana since 1962, but the IBES 2014 was the first time a census on all economic units in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy was conducted. Phase 1 of the IBES is a census covering all non-household establishments, economic and non-profit, given that they are considered a legal unit. For the retail sector this involves all stores/containers that are not primarily used for households, all shops adjacent to houses, given they have a special entry for customers, and all shops and stalls in the marketplaces. However, the IBES data excludes traders in open spaces, temporary traders with sheds and shops, and hawkers. The National Employment Report (GSS 2015a) and the Job Creation Report (2015b) is based on the IBES data set.

From the Job Creation Report (GSS 2015b) we learn that during 2014, almost nine out of ten jobs (87.5 percent) were created in the service sector, and 46.5 percent of those were in the wholesale and retail trade sub-sector. Eight out of ten (79.6 percent) of jobs created during 2014 in the service sector were categorized as informal. The IBES distinguishes the formal from the informal on whether it has professionals managing the accounting records. Also, out of the total 207,000 jobs created during 2014, more than a third (75,000) were micro establishments within the wholesale and retail trade sub-sector. Furthermore, as said, these figures exclude all traders in open spaces, and hawkers. Also, it is estimated that only 2 percent of the 250,000 young people who enter the labor market nationwide yearly are formally employed (Gyampo 2012 p 14). In the National Employment Report (GSS 2015a) the large wholesale and retail sub-sector is explained by the lack of job opportunities in other sectors, and that this

Note that the employment sectors, that clarify forms of employment, is a different classification system than the industry sectors. The other sectors are Public (Government) (11 percent of the total, 7 percent of the women and 16 percent of the men); Private Formal (5 percent of total, 3 percent of the women and 7 percent of the men); Semi-Public/Parastatal, NGO (Local and International), Other International Organization.
furthermore has great macroeconomic consequences. This points to what Dolan and Rajak (2016) argues, that if we look beyond the allure of entrepreneurial possibility we find a model of economic development that depends almost entirely on consumption – or more specifically retail – as the engine of a jobless growth offering contingent opportunity in place of secure employment (Dolan and Rajak 2016 p 515)

In a sense, these numbers tell a calculated story of the expanding marketspace and the challenges for young individuals in the labor market. For the Ghanaian government, this form of knowledge was important for how they formulated problems and solutions. From this perspective, small-scale trade emerged from actors’ passive choices. These actors would rather do something else but were not given the opportunity. Street traders and some market vendors (those who have no legitimate store) sometimes became categorized as unemployed, sometimes as underemployed, and sometimes as self-employed. It of course had political consequences when the entrepreneurial aspect of the self-employed was emphasized instead of the passive state of the under- and unemployed due to lack of opportunity. Still, these numbers show how a very large group of young people competed for few formal employments and were pushed and pulled into an economy made up of predominately small-scale trade.

When connected to a discourse of empowerment and self-fulfillment, this group of young traders were for the government both the problem of and solution for development. Although these traders were viewed as immoral and ignorant youngsters in the National Youth Policy, they were encouraged to acquire skills and knowledge through education that would make them attractive to prospective employers.

Trading Youth

There were also many young actors who imagined their future in trade. A new generation of traders, predominantly young women, were taking over their mothers’ stores. As an inalienable possession, the stall or store was passed on to children and younger relatives. Members of the new generation were already experienced traders, through years of practice in the family business. Though marketing was an individual business, everybody was dependent on family and market neighbors to maintain their business. Young traders were torn between the option of staying in the market or finding ways to do something else. Some had the option of taking over their parents’ store, and the daughters especially felt those responsibilities toward their families.

But the situation was complicated by other factors. The government’s ambition to decongest the streets and rehabilitate the marketplaces threatened the traders’ access to urban space, and its ambition to promote development through education also encouraged young traders to leave trading for schooling. These factors, together with increased competition within the marketspace and a constraining moral economy, caused young traders to constantly consider their possibilities in and outside of the
marketspace. In this section we will meet several young women and men who were trying to make a future for themselves.

In 2012 and 2013, Fatima, Rose, and Fortune were three young women who worked for their mothers in the Central Market. Fatima was Dagbamba, Rose was Asante, and Fortune was Ewe. While Fatima wanted to take over her mother’s shop and was preparing herself to do so, Rose and Fortune searched for ways to leave the market. All of them, however, saw the possibilities with continued education, yet in 2016 none of them worked in line with what they had studied.

I was introduced to Fatima through Aziz, my assistant at the beginning of the fieldwork. They grew up in the same neighborhood and used to play together as kids. Aziz explained that Fatima’s mother, Hajia Mariam, who we met in Chapters One, Three and Six, was rich. Her store had always been successful, and she had been able to send her kids to senior secondary school and had also traveled to Mecca.

Fatima loved the market and doing business but was also keeping her options open. I met her one day, sitting on the floor behind the counter. She was about to go through the last preparations for her upcoming trip to Lomé. She had gradually begun taking over the business altogether and traveling to buy goods was one task she really enjoyed. On the floor, she went through lists, and counted money. She was laughing and excused herself because that day she was very busy, but she enjoyed it. Their store was mostly for women. They sold dresses, fabrics to make dresses, necklaces, and women’s watches. Her younger sister sat in one of the plastic chairs at the veranda in front of me. She was going to take care of the store while Fatima was away. She was holding a wrinkled piece of lined paper in her hand, transferring its information over to a notebook. The information consisted of orders of bales of dresses and fabrics that Fatima had been requested to buy in Togo from trading “sisters” around Tamale.

Fatima was confident, charming, and resourceful, and as such she resembled her mother. Though Fatima wanted to take over the business, she was also studying to become a teacher. Three months a year she traveled south for intensive courses in pedagogy. Within a year or so she would have a degree. It could be difficult to get a job, but Fatima was ambitious and a good English speaker. Speaking about teaching, however, did not bring as much enthusiasm as trading. She saw teaching as something to do on the side, because it could be convenient to have a salaried employment of some sort. For instance, it simplified the process of obtaining loans, which then could be invested into the business. Fatima believed that in the future she would be teaching in the mornings, perhaps in an Islamic school, and then she would return to the market during the afternoons.

When Fatima came back from Togo a week later, she was even busier, and even more joyful. Customers and clients were standing in line at their small shop. She had bought many dresses that she had hung up on the walls. They had replaced the fan in the ceiling with a smaller one, making room for more garments without risking them being hit by the blades. Most of the clothes were youthful and in bright colors. I noticed a blouse in turquoise chiffon. It had a golden buckle round the neck with two golden skulls hanging from a chain. I liked it. On the top shelf on the back wall were
some tin buckets. They did not fit in with the other commodities they sold. Fatima explained that one of ideas behind the store had been for a groom to be able to buy all the things he needed for his future marriage. He could give dresses and the jewelry as gifts to the bride together with the bucket. In what else could the wife fetch the water for his bath? Fatima smiled.

Fatima was married and had a two-year-old son. Her husband was unemployed and was not doing anything useful, in Fatima’s mind. He was just at home, while she was working, studying, cooking, and taking care of their son. Fatima was notably disappointed by her husband’s inactivity, but when Aziz was with us, he made sure she did not insult him too much in front of me.

Hajia Mariam, Fatima’s mother, was an important figure at the market. She had managed the store for decades and had become quite successful. She also used to be member of the Central Market Traders Association (CMTA) and the Progressive Traders Association (PTA), but not anymore. She was well known, and traders came to her for advice. She listened to them and they listened to her. Being a successful trader, Hajia created respect and influence. She also used to be very politically involved. Aziz explained that when he and Fatima were kids, her mother was a strong NDC supporter. However, she did it silently, so it would not affect the business too much. Joining a party could be very important for climbing the social ladder; however, it could also backfire against the business if one did not take care. The parties also financed many of the Hajj travelers. Many traders’ only chance to travel to Mecca was through joining a party. Recently, Hajia’s son, Fatima’s brother, traveled to Mecca on a journey paid by NDC.

When the violence in 2002 started between the Abudus and Andanis, Hajia withdrew from politics. When I tried to talk to Hajia about party politics she was very reluctant to discuss it. Maybe she was still silently working in support of the NDC, but my impression was that she no longer wanted to be involved in it. She seemed to have become apolitical. Fatima also claimed to take no interest in politics.

In 2016, I met Fatima again. She had by that time completely abandoned the idea of teaching. The market kept her busy. She had chosen to follow her mother and was now practically controlling the store. Most of the goods they were selling were hers. She had also conducted her own Hajj, and she and her mother now referred to each other as Hajia.

Fatima’s story illustrates how the social reproduction of the market is situated in space by depending on the inalienable possession of the shop. Their shop provided possibilities for Fatima to both leave and stay within the market. Its success, and their Hajj journeys, gave the women authority and influence.

In their small but filled shop, Rose and her mother Linda sold towels, belts, underwear, and colorful square nets used as dish brushes and bath sponges, among other things. Their customers were primarily people who “buy to sell.” In Chapter Five, I discussed Linda’s emancipating ambitions, of how she wanted to free herself from the constraints of the moral economy and obligations to one another. Early morning was the busiest time of the day. Sometimes it was so crowded with people and goods that
it felt impossible to find a place to be without being in the way. For Linda this did not seem to be a problem, she always found the right spot to stand. The customers, both men and women and of different ages, came to buy things to resell from a market, the streets or in a nearby village. They would buy for the amount they sold the day before. They hoped they could expand a little each day. Linda bought her goods in boxes from Accra and sold them primarily in bulk. Financially she was doing very well. Still, Rose and Linda found it difficult to hire someone to do the job for them. Linda believed the surplus on each item was so small and an employee might not be clever enough to make the same kind of profit.

Rose wanted to be a teacher, and during 2012 and 2013 she was constantly applying for work. She already had a degree from a good university and she had done her national service. She wanted a change of environment, so she would not mind moving to another part of the country, but only for a shorter time. Besides, being Asante, the north was not her home territory anyway. But it was difficult to leave her mother alone with the shop. Rose was the only daughter, and her brothers were busy doing something else. But, both Rose and her mother said it was important that she got an employment with a “proper salary.”

One day, when the shop was not so crowded, Linda offered me the chair while finding herself a place by the pile of towels next to the counter. She told me that Rose was ill and at home, but at the moment she was also on the radio. I got quiet and listened as carefully as Linda. From the radio on the wooden box next to me, I heard Rose’s familiar and convincing voice. It was a talk show to which listeners called in to say something about the topic of the day. This time, the talk-show hosts had asked its listeners if it was right or wrong for a man who had fought with his wife to choose to go to his mother’s place to eat instead of eating his wife’s food. It was a classic problem of having to share one’s husband with his mother. And of course, it concerned much more than food. Rose was firm in her opinion, far too stubborn and energetic to simply lie home in bed. Of course it was no solution to go home to one’s mother to eat, just because of a fight with one’s wife, she argued. Instead he must tell her in what way she has offended him, so that she can ask for forgiveness. After Rose’s contribution to the radio show, Linda stood up, asking me if I did not agree. She held out her arms, showing the palms of her hands, as if the answer was obvious. She looked proud in the way only mothers can, when they realize their children have grown up.

Rose later got a position working in the hospital. She worked for free, just to get the experience. She was still looking for options on what to do, but teaching was still the ambition. In 2013 she got an opportunity to travel to the Netherlands, to study at a university. She was invited by a relative who explained she could stay with them. The university fees worried her, but that was not the main issue, and Linda was convinced they would be able to afford it. Rose considered a move, but decided against it, however, because it would have been too far away from her family. In 2016, she was no longer working in the market. Through connections and personal skills, she had obtained a job in a bank, and was very satisfied with that.
There are strong expectations on daughters to assist their mothers in their store, and to eventually take over. Small-small is thus gendered in this way. However, for Rose this was a self-imposed task. It was no surprise that Rose was one of the few young traders in the market able to leave it. As discussed in Chapter Five, Linda’s actions represented a market strategy that differed from the others. To some extent, she broke the norms of small-small. That Rose were able to get an employment in a bank, confirmed that.

On the opposite side of the narrow alley from Rose and Linda, Fortune was helping her mother Mary (see also Chapter Three), selling fermented cassava and corn dough. They also sold the starch that was produced by the cassava leftovers. The fermented dough is used for banku, a common dish from southern Ghana preferably eaten with soup or a sauce made of hot peppers, onions, and tomatoes. In the nicer restaurants, you may get it with grilled tilapia, but along the street with a much smaller fish, if a fish at all. Their biggest customers were restaurants and schools. Also, many chop stall vendors (street food sellers) bought their banku ingredients from Fortune and her mother.

Just like Fatima and Rose, Fortune grew up in the Central Market. She started coming to the market when she was around six or seven, which was around the same time her mother got the store. At that time, Fortune came before and after school and on weekends. Mostly, she was playing in their store, but she also learned the job. When she turned fifteen, she began taking over her mother’s chores and at sixteen she took care of the store herself, when her mother traveled or was unable to work. When I met Fortune in 2012, she was spending half the day in the store. The other half she was going to school, studying to become a secretary.

After lunch one day, I passed Fatima and greeted her quickly. Her shop was crowded, so I continued to Fortune’s place. Her mother Mary was there, as well as Linda, Rose’s mother, but Rose herself was having her hair done in the salon. Next to Mary on the wooden bench, a man sat reading the Bible, explaining and talking to her about its content. I asked Fortune if that was their pastor, and Fortune explained that he was an elder from her mother’s church who comes around to preach to church members in the market. Meanwhile, two younger Baptist girls, who were shopping at Linda’s, overheard our conversation and asked if I was with him, preaching in the market. They got provoked and worried, when I told them I did not believe in God. Also, Fortune got worried, and told me she would try to convert me. Fortune was a devoted Christian. She followed the incredibly popular and charismatic Nigerian Pastor Chris and his wife, Pastor Anita. She gave me their Bible study guide, Rhapsody. The guide was published every month in a convenient A5 format, and Fortune used to sell copies in the market.

“It is better to sell, than to give them away,” she said, “because then you know it will be read.” It was her last copy and it had her notes in it. The first page advertised the pastors’ book/CD/e-book: How to pray effectively: Volume One. It was followed by some short texts on how to let God work through you, and how one should act as a good Christian. The guide finished with some shorter prayers.
I changed the subject and asked her how she saw her future; if she wanted to stay in the market. She explained that she liked trade and money, but after graduation and her national service, she would like to have a job that matched her training, like a government secretary, for instance; at least it should be something engaging, and something in an office with a computer. She knew that when the time came for her mother to stop selling the cassava and corn dough, either Fortune or one of her sisters would take over the business. She was prepared to do so if she was asked. It was not a sacrifice.

“If you are offered a perfect secretary job, or a store in the market, what would you choose?” I asked her.

“I would choose the secretary job for some time, but then maybe later I would take the store. I would sell, tinned tomatoes, Maggi [bouillon cubes] in bulk, and rice. Nothing fresh. I would make sure the prices would be low. Then business would be moving fast.” Then Fortune changed the subject, and explained that no matter what she did, the church was everything. “And you know, Pastor Chris, he is like a teacher.”

Fortune’s devotion to Christianity did not stop her from falling in love with my Muslim friend and assistant Aziz. It was not an unthinkable relationship, but it was challenging. To take the next step they would have to be sure about each other and convincingly explain their love to their families. At the marketplace, at least, they could meet. They looked at each other, awaiting and considering their options. Sometimes, they teased and smiled shyly.

In 2016, Fortune had finished her schooling to become a secretary, but she could not find a job. She wished she had done some research before. “Today all bosses have their own laptops, so they do not need secretaries,” she explained. She had brought her cylinder-shaped mobile Bluetooth speaker to the market, and as we listened to Phil Collins’ *One More Night* from her Tecno J8 mobile phone, while pressing down corn dough into plastic bags, she explained she would try to go back to school again. Maybe her chances would increase if she studied education instead. She was thinking of studying at a distance, so she could remain in Tamale, helping her mother in the store. She felt responsible and obliged to assist her mother. But she also enjoyed the market, and she reasoned that if in the future she would work as a teacher, she would also still work in the market somehow.

“I am not used to sitting in the house, every time I need to do something,” she said. Their store had potential, she argued. They could, for instance, add corn flour (which is different from corn dough), or frozen fish.

“The freezer could stand there,” she said pointing at the place they kept the large bags of fermented cassava dough. However, as explained in previous chapters, the fact that they merely rented the store from the previous owner stopped any investments like building walls or installing electricity.

The examples of Fatima, Rose and Fortune show how the daughters of the market carry responsibilities not only to their mothers but to a potential husband and family. The future they try to make is one of being a daughter, wife, and mother, and they are therefore unwilling to travel too far or take risks that are too big. This (as we shall see
below) differs from the young men of the streets, who in their imagined future, feel they have fewer things holding them in place, yet lack the possibilities of moving. Aziz, for instance, felt he had nothing beside Fortune that made him stay. And to him, Fortune was rather a reason to leave and to make money somehow, so he could become someone worth marrying. He was of Burkinabe descent, and was in 2013 called to Ouagadougou to work for a distant relative. From there he traveled to Abidjan, to work for an importer of secondhand shoes. Higher up in the market chain, he was able to save some money that he wanted to invest in a chicken farm. In 2017, he came back to Tamale, with some money that he thought he could invest in the farm and to start a future with Fortune. But instead he opened a shop for secondhand clothes, in the outskirts of town. The shop was unsuccessful, so he left again for Abidjan. The expectations on young women to be predictable and morally responsible to their parents make them stay in place to a larger degree than young men who are encouraged and almost forced to leave, in order to fulfil their potential and to support a family.

The store as an inalienable possession enables the reproduction of the marketplace. It is handed over through generations, bringing permanence and continuity to a busy field. It is also what gives the female traders authority. But, the reproduction does not occur automatically, but through a dynamic relation of family responsibilities, dreams and situated possibilities.

Waiting in the Street

Along the streets, the sheds, the stalls, and the gutters were also handed over to the next generation. But these places were more exposed to the ambiguous and unreliable politics of the state. The young traders suffered from lack of capital, and thus constantly looked for some kind of lever that could make their capital grow. Small-small was restraining. This lever was perceived to exist outside of the marketspace, and education was the primary way out. Young traders, as well as their parents, considered education as the only real way to become employable, but also as a key strategy to get the capital needed for a successful business. In this way, their strategy for self-progression coincided with the government policies on how to solve youth unemployment and create development. Yet, as the young traders soon realized, higher education only rarely led to employment.

Instead, many traders who did not want to take over their parent’s shop, or whose business did not take them forward, or from which they were unable to build a life for the future with family and a house, were stuck in what Honwana (2012 p 3) and others have described as “waithood”: a “liminal, neither-here-nor-there state; they are no longer children who require care, yet they are not yet considered mature social adults.” Waithood, as a concept, is particularly constructive to the situation for young traders along the street. For many of them, trading was something they did while applying for other forms of work, or to be able to go to school, or during the hours they did not
have classes. It was common to perceive one’s future in another kind of economy, where they would be employed with salary and security. Groups of young, educated, mostly men gathered in the streets, to wait and socialize with their trading friends. They were stuck in time, between childhood and adulthood. But they were also stuck in space. Images of foreign spaces through mobile phones, TV, and the internet motivated them to leave. But the small-small, that had allowed them into the market, simultaneously constrained their possibility of moving.

For Jeffrey (2010), waiting is not merely a liminal position but is also a productive state that opens opportunities and possibilities. The educated unemployed young men in India that he studies referred to their waiting as “timepass.” While that expressed their feeling of disappointment against higher education not leading to salaried work, it also framed the joy and fun of hanging out. Furthermore, waiting together was essential in obtaining information and contacts that might lead to future work. Likewise, the youth of the marketspace were not passively stuck in waiting; they worked in the market, went to school, and wrote applications. Still, the absence of salaried employment and the possibility of making a living in the marketspace held them back.

Seidu, Yussif, and Mohammed’s wooden bench on a gutter in central Tamale was one such place where friends spent their days. The possibilities of the future were a continuous discussion among the young traders and their visiting friends. Mohammed (see Chapters Three and Four) sold sandals which he bought in Nigeria. His business was progressing small-small. He had many returning customers and had been able to buy a plot on which he was to build a house for himself and his newly wedded wife. Still, despite his progress, or perhaps because of that, he often talked about his future and of doing something else. Some of his dreams concerned trade. He had bought a container store in which he planned to sell hardware, but he did not yet have enough money to buy the goods. Another day he explained that he would instead join the military, and another day he wanted to come to Sweden with me to do any kind of work or study on an athletic scholarship. On those occasions, it was as if the only thing he did not perceive himself doing in the future was selling the shoes and sandals he so skillfully was selling.

Yussif also sold sandals from the same corner, but his sandals were locally manufactured, made by car tires and leather. But since Yussif had been accepted to nursing school, he was only rarely in town during the time of my fieldwork in 2012-2013. Meanwhile, Seidu and Mohammed managed the trade for him.

Seidu faced many challenges in his business. His mobile phone credits were often short due to lack of capital, while the competition from other nearby sellers of credits was harsh. There was a credit seller on practically every street corner, and usually one in between as well. Seidu had always been selling the credits as something to do while waiting for something else. His family had not been able to support his continued schooling so far and the job applications he had written did not yield any results.

Seidu did not regard his business as his own. His relation to his “boss” illustrates the relations of dependence that Ferguson (2013) sees as characterizing economic contexts across Africa, where jobs are few and the people are many. Seidu believed
he was employed by him. His boss was the first selling credits from this corner, before he handed it over to Rashid, who later handed it over to Seidu when he went back to school. Seidu took over a business that already contained some amount of credits. Therefore, his boss was to have a cut of the profit. However, the value of the credits diminished, since Seidu’s expenses were larger than his earnings. Therefore, he invested his own profit into the business, resulting in Seidu paying his boss from his own salary. Seidu did not initially see the relation to his boss in this manner. Rather, he saw a senior “brother” that took him under his wing and provided work and income for him. Seidu also regularly did favors and services for his boss in various ways. For instance, he regularly went to the bank for him.

The friends visiting the corner had often shared school or had grown up in the same neighborhood as either Seidu or Mohammed. Most of their friends had already passed the tertiary education or were in the middle of it. In 2012, I met economists, statisticians, teachers, accountants, and many nurses. Some of them were waiting to do their national service, while others were studying for the exams. Some of them wanted to demarcate themselves from the street traders with a tucked-in shirt, ironed trousers, and a pair of glasses. In 2016, this group of friends had expanded. The same friends who had finished their education were now waiting for employment instead, while many others had joined the group. The wooden bench was never empty, and the discussion never stopped. They were discussing different business opportunities. Though getting formal employment was the main objective for the moment, they also saw that as a market strategy. A job, with a steady income and the opportunity of getting loans, were avenues for expanding or opening a business on the side. All their ideas, however, depended on capital they did not have. One suggestion, frequently discussed in 2016, was to buy four or more of the motor rickshaw-taxis that recently had come to Tamale through Chinese importers. Because of the color of the first imported vehicles, they were along the streets referred to as yellow, even though some later ones were black and green. They cost GH¢ 10,500 (2700 USD). Since they did not require any driving license, drivers could be found anywhere. The driver would rent the vehicle from the owner for GH¢ 50/day. An owner having four rickshaws would earn GH¢ 200/day, seven days a week, which they believed was more money than any government worker made.

In 2012, Seidu himself was trying to find ways to leave the credit business and go back to school. He spoke good English and was very smart. Seeing Yussif and the rest of his friends’ progress, he felt he was falling behind and stuck in a position where he did not want to be. He realized that he probably would not be able to raise the money for school through this business, and therefore he was constantly rethinking his strategic choices. By the end of my fieldwork he had applied for a nursing school. He had borrowed some money from a relative to buy the application forms. He explained that he had not secured the money for the actual school fees yet but asserted that it would

---

46 In 2016, the GH¢ had lost almost half its value against USD since 2012-2013.
be easier to gather the amount from relatives and friends once he received an acceptance letter.

Seidu became a good friend of mine. He assisted me in many ways, in helping me understand the market, driving me across town on his motorbike, and teaching me about Tamale. I began caring for him and felt indebted to him. I also recognized the feeling of waiting (from my own privileged horizon), whilst those close by move on. Before I left, I promised that I would pay half the cost of his nursing school if he got accepted. So, by the end of 2013 he started to attend the School of Hygiene. After school, and on weekends and holidays he still came back to town to sell the credits. I felt happy, thinking that I had helped someone pursue his dreams.

But when Seidu had finished his training in 2015, the employability of his and many others’ education had diminished even further. He had come out to an economic context that was different from what he had expected. He was to wait for the mandatory positioning by the government, but they were unable to position him. Many of their friends were in similar positions. Young teachers, nurses, accountants, and others were stuck on the wooden bench in the gutter, waiting for something.

One major reason was that by April 2015, lower prices for Ghana’s key export commodities—gold, cocoa, and oil—and regular power cuts had created a debt balloon and inflation, causing Ghana to turn to IMF for a bailout plan to a value of almost 1 billion USD (918 million USD) (Dzawu 2016, September 29; IMF 2015, April 3). The three year Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement, as it was called, was to help boost growth, provide financial stability and create jobs, through (i) a fiscal adjustment that was to restore debt sustainability by containing expenditures through retaining wages, limiting the net hiring, and mobilizing revenues; (ii) structural reforms that were to strengthen the public finances and fiscal discipline; (iii) bringing the inflation level down by restoring the effectiveness of the inflation target framework; and (iv) preserve the stability of the financial sector (IMF 2015, April 3). Within the marketspace, this had the effect that traders such as Seidu, who had educated themselves to become employable, were not finding any jobs since the government was unable to hire workers, and they were hence back in place selling things small-small.

In 2016, I asked Seidu how he felt being a certified nurse. He said he did not feel good at all, because he had nothing to do. Every day he still came to the gutter, helping Yussif sell his slippers. Yussif, who had already been a nurse for some time was now working, since before the IMF bailout plan. It was never actually spoken, but it felt as if Yussif’s trajectory was what inspired Seidu to take on nursing from the start. Before going to nursing school, Seidu had handed over the mobile credit business to Rashid, the boy he had once taken it over from. While Seidu was selling the credits, Rashid had studied and was then doing an internship with an NGO. He had raised some money during that time, which he could invest in the credit business, and start selling them from the gutter. Seidu helped Rashid sell the credits while he was at the NGO. Thus Seidu, who had struggled so with his mobile credit business, and who had educated himself to move away from it, was now selling the same credits from the same place, but for someone else.
Seidu’s way forward in life was to study, which was in line with government politics. In fact, the government’s solution to the problem of youth employment and development in general, was through increasing their level of education. For sure, education is important in all regards, for the individual and the society. But in Ghana, it is estimated that the total number of unemployed university graduates is around 700,000. In a sense, the government has developed an education mentality, where the solution is expected to come from equipping young people with skills rather than addressing any structural causes for this situation. Education may be a prerequisite for employment, but it is not enough. That university degrees and diplomas from higher education do not lead to formal employment to the extent it did in the past, resonates with the development all over Africa and in other postcolonial settings (Honwana 2012 p 51ff, Jeffrey 2010).

The Government’s National Youth Policy, NYP (Government of Ghana 2010) is quite revealing in this regard. It states that the “National Youth Policy is intended to provide guidelines and direction . . . for the development of the youth” (p 1). Because the “youth constitute the true wealth and future” of the country, the policy addresses the needs of empowering them, through “equipping [them] with knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and ethics.” It should “involve the process of preparing young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood . . . and motivate them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, economically independent and cognitively competent as well” (p 3).

Equipping, preparing, developing, and empowering are thus key strategies for the government to achieve youth development, and resonates once again with the neoliberal ideal of self-optimization and the “ethos of self-governing” (Ong 2006 p 9). The transformation of the individual into the “entrepreneurial citizen” is, according to Dolan and Rajak (2016 p 514), in turn a “moral mission” in which the youth are supposed to learn how to help themselves in order to help the society. The policy describes a process that can only occur through the individual adhering to certain ideals, but it rarely attempts to understand the economic and political structures underpinning the situation. It valorizes the small-small and the ability of young people to maintain self-control. In this line of thought, Hage (2009) acknowledges a new dimension of governmentality in waiting since good citizens are supposedly able to endure crises.

Some of the major challenges facing the youth are, according to the NYP, “unemployment and underemployment resulting from inadequate and inappropriate training for job the market [sic]”; “Inadequate mentoring opportunities which lead to weak moral, social, cultural and religious values in the youth”; “Streetism”; “Erosion of patriotism”; “Irresponsible parenthood” and a “‘Get rich quick’ attitude” (Government of Ghana 2010 p 6f). The NYP seems to answer the question of how to form or shape a moral, educated, hard-working patriot, who is attractive to the national and global labor market, rather than asking how to shape a labor market that actually gives individuals employment possibilities.
This approach by the Ghanaian government follows the World Bank’s vision of solving youth unemployment. In the *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation* (World Bank 2006) it was argued that a human capital approach, that focused on five transitions—learning, going to work, staying healthy, forming families, and exercise citizenship—would help form productive citizens who could contribute to the development of the country (also see Honwana 2012 p 49). The education mentality is thus shared by the traders themselves, the Ghanaian government, and the World Bank. All players hold education as a primary solution to the situation of waiting. Miller and Rose (2008 p 214) describe this human capital approach as the “rationality of rule” of advanced liberal democracy, in which individuals are shaped through various indirect techniques into “actively responsible selves.”

Within this new regime of the actively responsible self, individuals are to fulfil their national obligations not through their relations of dependency and obligation to one another, but through seeking to fulfil themselves within a variety of micro-moral domains or “communities” – families, workplaces, schools, leisure associations, neighborhoods. . . . It has become possible to actualize this notion of the actively responsible individual because of the development of new apparatuses that integrate subjects into a moral nexus of identifications and allegiances in the very processes in which they appear to act out their most personal choices (Miller and Rose 2008 p 214).

Miller and Rose hence describe a process of governing in which dependencies and obligations toward one another are becoming less important compared to individuals striving for self-fulfillment. However, dependencies and obligations to one another still shape everyday life of the marketspace. The process of citizen-making is not occurring only from above but is redeveloped through traders’ lived experiences. Hughes Rinker (2015 p 228) argues that we should “recognize these on-the-ground practices as producing a particular kind of neoliberalism depending on the context.” Through more or less apparent ways, the Ghanaian government encouraged traders to leave the marketspace, primarily through the means of education. In the Tamale marketspace, the youth saw the benefits of formal employment, and began imagining themselves behind a computer, or in the factories and households of the global north. It was in a sense a liberalism gone perverted, where the main focus had been to construct a particular kind of individual, rather than setting someone free.

But the process of self-fulfillment generates frustration and disappointment. The youth soon realize that the actual possibility of leaving the marketspace is limited. Universities, schools, and other education programs are everywhere, yet formal employment opportunities are scarce, and the political, cultural, and financial thresholds to travel abroad are high. Kleist and Jensen (2016 p 382f, see also Hage 2009) argue that also on global level, “migration—or the desire to migrate—is one response to such existential immobility in an attempt to move forward in life, physically and socially.” In Tamale, hope, ambition, resignation, and despair were built into the situated possibilities of the marketspace and constructed the emotional dimension of waiting.
The process of self-fulfillment occurred within the micro-moral community of the marketspace.

One way the challenges of youth unemployment and underemployment had been practically approached was through installing the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) in 2006 by the NPP government and president J.A. Kufuor. The objective was to reduce unemployment and under-employment, to improve food security and equip the youth with experiences that would make them more easily employable, to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty. The NYEP was divided into ten modules: Agri-Business, Trade and Vocation, Waste and Sanitation, Teaching, and others. According to Gyampo (2012), the youth who entered the program were to exit after two years to search for permanent jobs or to further their education. But the program was unsuccessful as only a few registered. Due to lack of funds, their allowances were defaulted or delayed, causing many of the registered youth to leave the program. Furthermore, 90 percent of those exiting the program after two years reverted to unemployment. An overall problem, to Gyampo, was also the lack of participation of the youth themselves in the development and implementation of the NYEP.

In the NDC manifesto for the elections of 2008 (which they won) they promised to transform the NYEP for the better, and before the elections in 2012, the NYEP was replaced with the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA) that, with a World Bank grant of 65 million USD, was to address the youth unemployment in a more systematic way (News Ghana, 2012, oct 23). However, the life of GYEEDA was very short. Fraught with corruption (YEA 2016), by 2015 it had already been replaced with the Youth Employment Agency (YEA), established under the Youth Employment Act 2015 (Act 887). The Act recognized the agency in the constitution and it gave it a much-needed permanence. Speaking in Tamale in November 2015, President Mahama announced that the new YEA was to employ 100,000 youth in 2016 (Ghana News Agency 2016, Nov 16). Quoted on the YEA website he stated that “The Youth cannot only be an inspiration and hope to our nation, but can also take their rightful places in business by creating jobs when given the opportunity.” After the elections in 2016, his quote was replaced by the new president Nana Akufo-Addo, stating “I will choose to invest in the future of our youth and of our country.”

The applicant was supposed to first register online to one of the modules, and then hand in a hard copy of the application to the YEA office. In Tamale, the office was a three-room bungalow located in the cornfields and tomato farms in the vicinity of GRIDCo (the national company for the transmission of electricity). In 2016, the rooms were packed with piles of applications. The zone director informed me they were still going through the applications. The security module had already begun, and young people were, after one or two months of training, placed in the fire service, prisons, and in the police authority. For the teaching module (Community Teaching Assistants) they had received more than 7000 applicants in Tamale alone. For the nursing module (Youth in Community and Health Assistants) there were 9000 applicants, out
of which they claimed 730 had been positioned somewhere. The beneficiaries were at that time given GH¢ 300/month. From that, GH¢ 50 were placed in a bank account in their name, which they would be granted access to after the two-year program. Among the youth in town, however, it was a general view that these payments were very unreliable.

The frustration among the youth in regard to the situation of being encouraged to leave trading, given the possibility to educate themselves, but denied the opportunity of self-fulfillment, became very clear, in another conversation at Mohammed and Seidu’s gutter. Rafiq, an unemployed yet educated teacher and accountant, came holding printouts of his YEA application. He said he had received confirmation from YEA that he would get a position if he changed his application from the ordinary section of Community Teaching Assistants module to the Arabic Teachers section. So, he had been reregistering himself. Yet, he seemed irritated.

“Aren’t you happy?” I asked.

“No, I am not happy. This is just politics. They can appoint anyone, just because they know someone, even if they don’t have a certificate. They appoint me now but after the elections they will say there is no more money and stop paying us. I’m not happy. I want a proper job. Even self-employed is better. Selling building materials, cement, and then after some time go back to school before becoming a contractor. It’s not like in Sweden or US, African leaders are more greedy. At least that’s how we the youth have been thinking.”

The others agreed while Rafiq continued, “We even have more natural resources than many western countries but as Obama said when he was here, they [in the west] have the human resources and strong institutions. That’s why I won’t vote for any government that is not making any jobs and make people suffer. And NPP has a bad candidate, all have bad incidents in their records. People may be suffering but still be happy because they like the NDC colors.” Rafiq explained that out of all the nurses and teachers maybe 10 percent were employed. Semi, another boy who frequented the corner, interfered and argued that the number was closer to 2 percent.

“Why does everybody want to become teachers, nurses, and accountants, then?” I asked. “I meet many of them who have no job.”

“Because that will give you job.” Mohammed, who had not been listening to the conversations, stepped in, retelling the old “truth.”

“But they just said only 2 to 10 percent of them will get job, why not study something else?” I asked again.

“At first,” Rafiq replied. “It used to be like that. When you had the certificate, the government would absorb you and position you somewhere. But for two budgets now, they have not employed. . . . We all prefer the private sector. But that is very small, the government jobs are like stepping stones to get to the private sector.”

This group of young men illustrates a political failure, as these were individuals who in every way followed the ideal trajectory encouraged by the government. The education they had been advised and pushed to obtain had not led to the employment they thought it would. They placed a lot of hope in the government to solve their
situation but were frustrated at the unreliability of politics. They tried to make themselves employable, and they adhered to the moral values set out to be important in the NYP and the general moral economy of the marketspace, but they were still stuck in the liminal stage of waithood.

One early program at the time of NYEP was within sanitation. The waste management company, Zoomlion Ghana, had won the contract of cleaning the Ghanaian cities and had through NYEP hired unemployed youth to clean the major streets of the bigger cities. These workers became known in the country as Zoom workers and NYEP became strongly associated with Zoomlion. For that reason, the youth within the security module who were placed under the police authority, and who were officially called Community Police became known in town as Zoom police.

In 2012 and 2013, the Zoom police were gradually becoming a part of the Tamale cityscape. They were hired to assist in enforcing traffic regulations and helping the city in the decongestion exercise. They had come across the old light blue shirts of the Swedish police force and formed their uniform from that. The Swedish police’s coat of arms was still decorating their shoulders. In 2016, they had gotten their own uniforms, but they were still light blue, as opposed to the black uniforms of the regular police. They were now even more visible in the streets than in 2013. At the crossroads directly south of the Central Market the Zoom police had the task of making sure that no one violated the traffic regulations. They especially targeted other young people riding their motorcycles without a helmet or going through a red light. They stopped the riders in sometimes violent and dangerous ways. They were supposed to take them to the police station, but mostly, they accepted a small bribe and let the rider pass with a warning.

The challenges for the government becomes clear when considering the small YEA office of Tamale. Many thousands of applications and only a few employees made it almost impossible to position the youth in a legally secure way. Furthermore, the financial challenges in paying the beneficiaries in time drove the Zoom police and others to take small bribes. Though some got training and experiences that made them employable, they simultaneously got an efficient crash course in nepotism and corruption.

Waiting for things to change was a state filled with emotions. During a conversation with Yasir, he left to help his market neighbor, an elderly woman, with her mobile phone, to text someone for her. When he came back I asked him what it was like to be a young man selling women’s clothing for his mother. I regretted my question, or at least I should have phrased it more delicately. Yasir started crying. His tears rolled down his cheek.

“I rather want to go to school” he said. “And when you say it like that, it feels stupid being twenty-seven, and selling women’s clothing.”

I felt ashamed and asked for forgiveness. I asked him what stopped him from going back to school.

“I want to do Diploma for Business Studies, but I am not sure about my grades and if we have the money. Even the application forms are expensive, maybe GH¢ 50 (25
USD), so I can’t apply to many at the same time.” We talked some more. When his mood got better I left him to go home. The frustration and despair of waithood appeared through Yasir’s tears.

Honwana (2012) argues that young Africans in waithood are pushed into finding means of survival in the informal economy. For her, this process results from the structural adjustment policies driven by the World Bank and IMF. The policies failed to promote economic growth and create jobs, and rather “exacerbated poverty and unemployment” (p 58).

The majority of young people in waithood are pushed out of the system and forced to survive on the margins of society. Rejected by the state and the formal sector of the economy, they create new spaces and mechanisms for survival and operate in subcultures outside hegemonic structures. Their relationship with the state and the formal sector is marked by tension and mutual distrust. The state enforces laws that delimit and control the space of legitimate activity and mark them as outsiders. Police and municipal officers harass and chase vendors off the streets. Employers often refuse to sign contracts, making young people into informal workers in the formal sectors who are subject to their superiors’ whims and who fear instant dismissal. Educated youths find themselves without jobs or relegated to the low end of the professional scale. Other expedients are seen as dangerous or outside the law (Honwana 2012 p 62).

While Honwana sees this as a process in which young people in waithood are being pushed out to the margins of the society, and though much of what she describes could occur also in a Ghanaian context, I see this as a process turned the other way around. Young Ghanaians are rather pulled into the center, symbolically, politically and spatially. They are perceived as holding the key to development, as entrepreneurs, as citizens as future parents. They are in the center of political debates and decision-making, and it is because they occupy the central spaces of the city that makes their presence contested. Instead of becoming marginal they are critically interior to the city, the state, and the development. It is a position that interweaves hope, expectations, investments, trust, with disappointment, distrust, and dispossession.

Trading Parents

Waithood was not only a problem for the youth, but also for their parents. Education was expensive, and when it did not lead to employment, it affected the economy of the entire family. While the youth were stuck in waithood, their parents were also waiting. They were waiting to leave the primary role of being a parent to be one of a grandparent, to stop being the provider, to instead be taken care of. Many parents in the marketspace adopted the education mentality for the sake of their children to such a degree that it even jeopardized their business.

Alhajj Baba was a senior kola trader in the Tamale Central Market. I interviewed him regarding the history of the market, the associations, and the market’s relation to
the assembly. After the interview, however, he opened up, became more personal and described how the market today could not provide the same opportunities for his family as it did in the past. A problem in “the system” was the cost of education. He explained that he had sent three children to the university, studying teaching and nursing, which cost him GH¢ 4500 a year per child, money he did not really have. He had to sell some assets, a plot and some cattle, to pay the fees, and he was worried they would not find any jobs. His plan was for them to help the others.

The money I had was also not enough, so I attached a paper to it, with someone who could vouch for me, so next year it will be a real challenge. I don’t know how to make it. For eight years, the government has not employed. I also have three children in SSS [senior secondary school, now senior high school] writing this year. I have twelve children with two women. I have been praying that every child I will be able to send to the university, if they want to go. So, I am forcing myself. Now, kola business is down. The kola in Ghana are now only small so unless you go to Abidjan and buy 20-30 bags it will not be good. In Kumasi, the bag (he points to an almost man-high bag standing in the corner) is 1450-1500 Ghana cedi. If you only afford ten bags it is not worth going to Abidjan. Unless you have a lot of money to travel to Abidjan it is not worth it. Buying only little, and the expenses will remain in them.

Alhajj Baba explained the limits of small-small. Before he used to buy between eight and ten bags with his own money, but in 2016 he got only one on credit in Kumasi. “After selling this one, he will give me another one.” The cost of education for his children and hospital bills for one of his wives were the main reasons why the business went down, he argued. He was convinced education was the only way forward for his children. He had seen how that had changed people’s lives in the past and how good things had come out if it. When the business went well, he helped a friend of the family to go to the university. In 2007, the man came back and asked what he could do in return for Baba, who replied that he wanted to go to Mecca. The man who was grateful for what Baba had done for him in his youth, paid for Baba’s pilgrimage. Despite the effect on the business, Alhajj Baba always prioritized his children’s education.

My father was an illiterate and I only went to school for six years until the fourth grade and I have no certificate. But when my children were small I brought a teacher to the house, I also sat down on the bench with them to learn how to read and write.

He did not want his children to take over his business nor start marketing at all. He said for a business to be successful it took a lot of money and that it would be better to use it for someone’s education.

In Chapter Five, I described the challenges for Amira and her mother. Their business was very slow, and Amira’s mother did not have the solid social networks as many others, and it was difficult for her to save money for Amira’s education.

I met Amira through Issa. Issa was a boy in SHS with great plans and dreams of the future. He used to help his mother in her store in the Central Market and at the
Sunday Market on the traffic island, selling jewelry. During one of my meetings with Issa, he had an assignment in school that dealt with outer space and he asked me if I had ever been there. I said no and explained that only very few people had ever been there.

“Hmm, too bad” he said. “I would like to talk to someone who has been there. It seems interesting and it would improve my assignment, maybe you know someone who has been there?” Issa studied hard and wanted to continue to the university. Through his mother’s business, and a reliable extended family, he had every possibility of doing so.

While the small-small for some could be the way to fulfill dreams, and follow plans, it could for others, like Amira, set limitations. I was walking in the narrow lanes of the Central Market to find the store of a friend. I had received instructions that I failed to follow, when I heard my name from the right. It was Issa who sat on a wooden bench outside a shop together with a young woman, Amira. The store that the two friends sat in front of was almost empty. It was used mostly as a storage. Amira and her mother kept their wares inside in the night, and so did the neighboring women. They came with pails and bags of goods in the evening to store it behind the locked doors.

Amira and her mother sold sponges, both synthetic and natural. The natural ones were made from the threads of the coconut tree. They also sold metal brushes, plastic bags, and ginger. Their piles on the table were small. The purchasing cost for each item was low, and so was the profit. But sellers of similar things across the market space were many.

Amira and Issa knew each other after having grown up in the same neighborhood. At first Issa was doing the talking. He asked if I wanted to play football on Sunday, and if there were any football academies in Sweden, and how he should proceed to go there and play. Amira’s mother arrived, and greeted me in Dagbani, though her native language was Hausa. Her father came to Tamale from Togo and got himself a store in the market. Issa left us for a while, which gave me the chance to talk to Amira and her mother. Amira said she wanted to become a nurse, but she had not started senior high school. After having paid the schooling for the older sister, Amira’s mother was trying to find means to let Amira finish her schooling. She had been the sole provider of her three children. Amira’s mother always had to balance her expenses such as school fees with the buying of new goods in the business. And the business was slow. The time was almost 11 a.m., and Amira had not sold anything, though while we spoke she sold some metal brushes and some ginger.

“There is no money,” Amira’s mother explained. “The market is slow, if there was money I would have gone to Kumasi or Accra to buy the things instead.” But she had to buy them in town instead. Traveling to Kumasi or Accra would have cut some steps in the market chain and she would have increased the profit, but that would require more money, to make it worthwhile. Most of her goods were bought on credit. She considered taking a loan to expand her business, but she was afraid. The annual microcredit interest could be up to 50 percent in Tamale and if something went wrong,
they would be worse off. When Amira was young, their store was burnt down in a fire. The family lost almost everything, and they still had not recovered fully. Doing business small-small like this seemed a better option. At the same time, several of the market neighbors had taken loans, and expanded their business with new goods. This illustrates what Roy (2010 p 109f) sees as a paradox of microfinance in that it may empower women and alleviate them from poverty, but only with the risk of entrapping them in ever-expanding debts.

Issa came back, asking me if I lent out money. He had overheard my questions about loans. He said that he had continued with his homework about outer space and kept asking people if they knew someone who had been there. He had even asked his mother.

Amira was a bit older than Issa. Amira did not actually know her age, because her mother simply could not remember what year she was born. But Amira started school the year before Issa. They lived in the same neighborhood, sustaining on the same small-small economy. Issa grew up helping his mother selling things on market days out in the villages. Amira grew up inside the Central Market. Yet, their possibilities and ways of life differed substantially. Issa saw options and opportunities. He had a family of uncles and aunts who worked together, helping each other. SHS was a matter of course and the ambition was to continue to university. Outer space might still have been out of reach, but his relatives in America might take him across the ocean. They could afford to have their market store closed for some time. Amira, on the other hand, had to wait for her chances. Money must come first, but from where?

By the end of my fieldwork, some six months after this episode, Amira’s mother had, through saving one or two cedi a day with a susu, gradually gathered the amount necessary to pay the fees for the first year of Amira’s SHS.

**Outside of Africa**

Discouraged by the precarity of the marketspace, and by the government’s failure in its ambition to empower the youth, many young traders wished their future was outside the marketspace, and even outside of the country. Young men stuck in waithood tried to find ways to come to Europe or North America, or actually anywhere outside of Africa. The outside emerged as a solution, a hope for these young men. It represented a shortcut to progress, a space where money could be made quickly and where the possibilities were unlimited. But this striving was not only a matter of capital, it was also of having the ability and right to see the world. While stuck, waiting in the marketspace, visitors such as myself, or tourists, volunteers, NGO-workers, investors, and others passed by. For these young traders, mobility became a class denominator. The journey to the outside of Africa always involved a return to Ghana, like the migrants in Lindquist’s (2009) study in the Indonesian borderlands. They travel on a circular migration with the ambition to come back home. However, the migrants often
find themselves in an emotional temporal existence of “not yet” successful enough to return home. Similarly, for the Ghanaian traders and plausible migrants, returning made no sense unless one could come back big.

Matlon (2015) argues that within the informal economy, which has generally been associated with women’s labor, it has been difficult for men to support a wife and family. Working along the street is thus an “emasculating experience” (p 149). The outside of Africa thus becomes an “elsewhere,” in her and Simone’s (2010) phrasing, that is bound together with the everyday through black popular culture. Simone (2010) defines these connections of different spaces between Africans and their diaspora as a “black urbanism” (Simone 2010 ch 6). While “elsewhere” refers to a place anywhere but where they were, I find it more relevant to address these spaces of perceived prosperity as an outside. The outside puts emphasis on the border, that separates the in from what is out. This border is real; it is a political, economic, cultural, and racial barrier, that hinders these people from crossing it. Ferguson (2006 ch 6) argues this is matter of rights. Young men adopt images of the outside into the everyday. Recognizing the inequalities of the world, their aspirations to move to the outside is about the claim to become a member and a citizen of the world.

A reflexive note of my own position in the marketspace as a potential intermediary between these spaces, and one who had the ability and right to define the world, illustrates the power of this border that allowed the privileged to pass but forces others to remain. Convinced they would have a prosperous life, young traders sought opportunities in the foreigners they met. They questioned me on the possibilities of coming to Sweden. They wanted to work, and work hard, earn some money and then return. They were willing to take any job, work in the house for someone, be a builder, repair cars, or wash them. As Hakeem put it:

We the youth, we want to know outside, travel outside, work hard and come back. That is why we find outside country interesting. Outside Ghana. . . . My favorite countries are Sweden, Switzerland, U.S., Canada, and what is yours, Sweden.

They wondered if I had sisters or friends available for marriages, assuring simultaneously they would provide me with a wife of their kin. As a white man, I become associated with connections, capital, and possibilities. Through humor blended with a deep sincerity, many approached me to seek the opportunity of accompanying me to Sweden. Having connections on the other side is the only legal way to go outside, they argued.

There were of course illegal ways of going outside, but for my informants that was not an option. Going back to what Honwana argues about youth as an indicator of the state of the nation, Ghana seemed to be doing something right, as that is where most young people still perceived their future—after they had some prosperous years in the outside, that is. They were not willing to risk that on endeavors that were too dangerous.

It was the claimed place that enabled these young men to consider moving abroad and was also the reason why they stayed. Access to a claimed place separated them
from traders who were forced to move, roaming the streets, selling their wares from a wheelbarrow or from a pail they carried on their head. Placed further down in the socioeconomic hierarchy, those traders rarely even considered such a move to the outside. As Bauman (1998) argues, mobility is a stratifying factor. Like in the rest of the world, mobility in the marketspace of Tamale did not only separate those with the possibility of moving from those who could not, but those able to stay from those forced to leave.

Hussein, who sold trousers and shirts along High Street in the middle of town, and who was severely affected by the decongestion exercise, was constantly seeking ways to leave the business. His preference was to get a driver’s license and from that work for a company or government office. He was confident that if he had the license, he would get that kind of job, because he would not give up applying. He would go to the offices regularly asking for them to employ him. Hussein’s business was not going very well, as we saw in Chapter Five, which was the main reason he wanted to do something else.

In the decongestion exercise, Hussein was evicted from his place along one of the major streets in town. As it was challenging to maintain his business, his plans of doing something else intensified. He was thinking of traveling to Dubai as a security worker. He had heard on the radio that through paying 60 million (GH₵ 6000, 3000 USD) one would be able to go. There one would work twelve hours a day. But beyond the salary, he would be provided food and accommodation. Hussein believed he would be able to send money to his mother and his family and still come back with “plenty money” after a couple of years. But he was not able to raise the money to go to Dubai. Instead, he was forced to begin roaming the streets, selling the clothes he could carry.

One of the boys hanging around Mohammed and Seidu’s corner explained that it was because work was so difficult to get, that they all wanted to go to the western countries. There they would get money, somehow, and return home. They were filled with questions about work permits, working illegally, and the level of costs, salaries, and the possibilities of working as a cleaner or housekeeper. The boy said he wanted to “go there” to learn how to “manufacture things.” “What things?” I asked. “Any things,” he said while assembling and screwing something with his hands. Muntari, who worked for his grandmother selling vegetables across the street, exemplified with the Vodafone-umbrella above us.

We want to learn how to do these things, and then come back and make them here. The family depends on you. You can’t come back small but have to come back big. People will be asking for things. That is why so many stay. The only reason why I will go outside of Ghana is to play ball. I’m a striker. As soon as you go abroad people will call you, they think you have made it.

The prosperity of the west and the simplicity of making money was always exaggerated in their views of the outside. They talked about salaries in the US that were at least 10,000 USD a month, and an abundance of work opportunities. The only reason for someone not coming back was that they were making so much money, or they had
found a local wife. They ignored any reference to the difficulties that many immigrants in the western countries face, as it conflicted the images of success. Based on that logic, those coming back were obliged to help the others.

Sharing the wooden bench with Seidu, an old friend of his came by, wearing a thick winter jacket with a raised hood under which he wore a black top cap and those eye covers used in airplanes to cover his mouth from dust. I asked him if he was cold. He replied that he did not want to be recognized, as others could then approach him demanding his assistance. “I don’t want to spend too much,” he said. He had just come back from Turkey, to spend the holidays with his family. He looked Seidu in his eyes and said, “Follow your dream!”; a phrase of an individualized western life philosophy, foreign to the young men of the street who struggled with daily incomes, praying and hoping for any form of change, and which was probably meant to position himself as a role model to Seidu. After the man left, Seidu quietly responded, “I don’t admire anyone.”

The youth perceived the outside to be a powerful lever to make the small big. But the possibility did not open itself for everyone. Only few had the chance to go. It is telling, that the only one of my informants who had the opportunity to travel outside was Rose. But given her family’s position in the market hierarchy, she also had the option to prioritize the closeness to her family and especially her mother. In comparison to many young street traders, she saw a prosperous future with opportunities and possibilities inside Ghana.

**Joining a Political Party**

I have in several sections (see Chapters Four and Six) discussed how joining a political party can be a strategy for some traders. Among them, political parties were associated with divisions, corruption, disappointment, and conflict, but also with money and possibilities. Within the party structure, connections and relations could be made with influential resourceful people who promised prosperity and a future. In the short run, loyalties to a party could give you petrol coupons and in the long run a pilgrimage. It was a “truth” among traders that joining a party was a quick solution to one’s problem, but as such it was also morally problematic. For some, like the lady cleaning the streets for Zoomlion and who I greeted every morning, the political parties were entities for free t-shirts.

While the political parties opened some doors, they could simultaneously close others. Above, I discussed how Hajia Mariam was able to travel to Mecca through her commitment to the NDC party, and her pilgrimage in turn was important in the market, as it generated respect and recognition. But as Mohammed argued in Chapter Four, joining a party would make his friends disassociate themselves from him. The parties were simply too associated with violence and morally condemned behavior.
Paul was about thirty and sold mobile phones and computer accessories such as flash memories, headphones, etc. He was a joker, constantly playing with Cynthia, who sold mobile phone credits on the street next to him. He was vulgar, he called her fat, joked about how much she could eat, or that she did not know her husband’s age. One time he asked her if she wanted a piece of chewing gum, and when she said yes, he gave her a condom. For more than eight years, he had been selling his things from the street in the center of town where Kwame and Stephen were also selling theirs. All of them were Asantes. At first, some eight years ago, he was selling mobile phone cases and covers but he had expanded his business since then. He was able to buy three plots for him and his junior brothers. While his two-year-old daughter was playing around on the street together with Cynthia’s children, he explained that here in the north there was too much “tribalism,” and that this was due the influence of the political parties. He argued that if the big store they were selling outside of would have been owned by a northerner, only northerners would have been allowed to sell from there. But in Kumasi, that was not so; outside every store there were traders who sold the things they had bought inside the store. In that way, everybody could earn something, he claimed.

“That tribalism is big here, and in the rest of Africa, is because of our corrupt leaders, who only care about themselves. They are not like you the white who give food to those who have nothing. Our leaders keep everything themselves, no matter how rich they are.” At the same time, he did believe Ghana was slowly improving. The last elections were peaceful, and it was not like before, when the rich politicians armed their supporters and told them to fight.

“Small-small, things improve. But, both parties are equally bad. There is a song, ‘Our money, chop chop, fast fast something’ that describes how politicians absorb all the money for themselves. ‘You have to become a member before you chop,’ they sing.” Becoming a member of a party is the quickest way to become rich, Paul argued. “The money will come to you, and soon you have both a house and a car.”

“So, why don’t you join one?” I asked.

“Then you will be risking your life. You’ll be the first to die,” he replied. “Everything is politicized and a while ago, someone died over here.” He was referring to the butcher incident described earlier. “All the politicians were involved, trying to free the accused. We on the street, we suffer. They use us for campaigning, but then not mind us until the next election.”

Within the constraints of the small-small economy of the marketspace, young traders find it difficult to make it big. It is from this perspective we should see traders’ way of thinking about joining political parties or traveling outside. With capital, the marketspace can be lucrative. But gaining capital is hard work through small-small.
Conclusions

The stories in this chapter are illustrations of a changed economic and geo-political environment. The young traders’ dreams, ambitions, and goals show the possibilities and limitations that this transformation has brought. They employ various strategies to improve their business in the marketspace, such as increasing turnover through loans, or finding a shop or store that the trader may be able to appropriate in the future. The formalization, as described in this chapter, takes the shape of morally underpinned policies directed toward the young unemployed people of the marketspace. The government defines an immoral and irresponsible youth, that, on the one hand, needs to be equipped with skills and knowledge to be productive, but on the other hand, also must be taught to follow the norms of small-small and bide their time.

What emerges from young traders’ outlook on the future in relation to the formalization and the government’s idea of development, is a temporal tension between the inertia of the small-small and the state’s aim to rapidly and structurally transform the urban economy. In contrast to the moral economy of obligations, dependencies, and gradual progress, the state often wants to work at a different pace toward a different future. A consequence of this tension is the inability of the state to make use of the power and potentials within small-small, specifically the fact that people with only little means are able to survive, make a living, and grow.

The young traders who are stuck in waithood illustrate how this is not only a tension between the state and the moral economy, but also an emotional condition within the young traders themselves. To expand beyond the speed of small-small requires a spatial movement to other economic domains. Young traders thus consider options outside of the market: schooling, formal employment, obtaining a driver’s license, moving out of town, and joining a party, for instance. These situated possibilities—these choices and strategies—are morally configured by religious beliefs, values on how to do business correctly, and dignity and pride. They also must be understood in a context of responsibilities and obligations to one’s present and future family. Young women especially are bound to these obligations and take a greater responsibility in keeping up the family store or stall. But a reason for young men to instead leave the marketspace is similarly to be able to form and support a future family. Many of the young traders also look at the possibility of going abroad. They perceive the “outside of Africa” as a place for a complete transformation of the self, a place where success is almost inevitable, a place from where one can proudly return. Young traders bring images of the outside, possible imagined futures, and the limits of formal education into the making of the marketspace. In this, we can see an emerging global citizenship in which the youth assert the right to experience and define the world.
Conclusion: Small-Small in Time and Space

This book began with Mohammed describing how he did business and how business ought to be done; small-small.

Small-small, as a practice and moral economy, situated in the dynamics of the marketspace, has enabled an approach for understanding the relation between small-scale trade and the state in urban Ghana. Small-small has constructively guided us through the relational practices of claiming a place, the moral positionings of the traders and the state, the grounded solidarities and trust emerging within the marketspace, into more abstract discussions on the disparate views on development, on formalization and citizenship, on possibilities of the future and of permanence and change.

As a result, a description beyond what it is like to work in the marketspace appears. It is a description of a country in the middle of its national project, creating a welfare state through processes of formalization and citizen-making, while adhering to norms of the global economy. Small-small has taken us to discussions on democracy, liberalism, and the free market, as well as discussions of the ongoing socio-political transformations in which the market becomes a prism through which notions of citizenship, solidarity, and the ever-changing relations of the informal and formal may be grasped. Small-small as a practice is set within those processes, and as a moral economy it is an outlook from which those processes can be understood.

The purpose of this thesis has been to study the relation between small-scale trade and the state. I have encouraged us to think about the spatial dimension of that relation. A trader who sets a table on the street to sell shoes or clothes claims that place in the moment, and in relation and negotiation with other traders and public officers. She or he needs to continuously claim that place; otherwise it will be taken over by someone else or remade into something else. This brings permanence to the streets of Tamale. The traders are always in place. In the Central Market, traders also claim their places, in the shape of shops or of tables in sheds in the alleys. The claiming in the Central Market also involves connections. It is not by formal rules that traders get access to a shop; rather, it is through family relations and previous storekeepers, and through negotiations with authorities.

Based on Weiner’s perspective (1992), I have described places like street corners and shops as inalienable possessions that are kept while other things exchanged, and that have symbolic value that goes beyond their mere economic value. They are the “representation of how social identities are reconstituted through time” (p 9). More than just enabling economic transactions and expansions, they are important for traders’ construction of identity, across time and space. They are extensions of the family
and household, transferred between generations. For the local government, the marketplaces and especially the Central Market symbolize the future of the city, and their renovations are the perceived realization of development. Also, the Dakpema draws his entire power as chief of Tamale from his claim to the market, as the market elder (da kpema). The contestations against his authority from other chiefs further strengthen this argument. What these possessions accomplish, according to Weiner “is to bring a vision of permanence into a social world that is always in the process of change.” Traders’ claiming of place brings this vision of permanence, acting as a “stabilizing force against change” (p 8, 9) to an otherwise dynamic and flexible economy. To repeat, small-small cements itself in the material and social city.

In this moment of claiming, the character of the street or shop changes into a market. I have argued we should see this evolving space as a marketspace. According to Massey (2005), space is the simultaneity of stories, things, and processes. The marketspace then is that indistinct and expanding space that follows the act of small-scale trade. It is produced in the moment by the various processes, materialities, actors, their histories and their interrelations that are involved when traders sell their goods. Through studying the collision or “throwntogetherness” (Massey 2005 ch 13) of these trajectories a broad form of morally configured politics emerges that centers on exclusions and inclusion to this space, in the sense of what and who is allowed to be a part of its making. This politics is morally configured. Therefore, I believe the marketspace and the moral economy can shed new light on the relation between state and small-scale trade, by emphasizing their different parts in making the marketspace, and how that relates to other economic and political processes.

The remaining part of this concluding chapter attempts to bring that politics to light. It is a politics that involves numerous actors, traders, authorities, chiefs, development agencies, etc., and has a moral register. Traders, but at times also the authorities, lean on small-small in this regard. First, I will bring together my arguments on morality and the practice of small-small and how that allows traders to both include and exclude people and practices. Second, I will discuss the formalization of the marketspace. I suggest that it is a citizen-making set in space that involves a moral engagement with everyday life of traders. I will argue that the marketspace is not a liminal space, located between different categories, like the formal and informal, or predestined to turn into something else. It is stable, persistent, and difficult to change. In connection to this, I end the thesis with some reflections about permanence, change and the future.

The Morality and Practice of Small-Small

In the introduction I posed three sets of questions. The first set asked what it means to be trader in the marketspace in a time of polarization and conflict, but also formaliza-
tion and inclusion. In pursuing this, I have stressed the importance of the moral economy that forms and is formed by trustworthy relations, solidarity, and obligations, and how these are enacted in relation to the Ghanaian state and a global economy.

Small-small is the moral economy of the marketspace. It frames how traders for the most part practice their business, the gradual progress of reinvesting the small profits while saving small amounts in susu schemes. During the gradual growth traders change their business strategy, shifting to wholesale or buying the goods earlier in the distribution chain. The gradual growth is set in social relations, obligations, and responsibilities to others, to friends, and to family, both near and distant. Traders often buy and sell on credits, forming networks of trust and solidarity.

As a moral economy, small-small is built on two sets of norms, the ideal economic trajectory of slow but steady gradual progress, and the obligation to let others in. The practice of small-small is thus not merely grown out of necessity, of lack of funds, but is the morally righteous way of doing business. Searching quick profits, chasing money, and obstructing and outcompeting others are condemned activities.

Still, or because of that, traders always balance between what is socially legitimate with what is not. While small-small enables newcomers and actors who lack financial capital to start a business, it is simultaneously restrictive. Obligations and responsibilities to others limit the possibilities of real expansion. Far from everyone succeeds. Hussein and Salim (Chapter Five), for instance, were unable to sustain their businesses due to family obligations, misplaced trust, and the decongestion. Therefore, traders struggle with remaining virtuous while simultaneously finding ways to increase profits. Claiming to trade “small-small” is thus a means of protection against social exposure.

Small-small as a moral outlook, a view from a specific place, makes political judgments and statements possible. Based on the values of small-small, traders criticize politicians, public officers, and foreign capitalists, for instance. Morality, then, intermediates between the small and an undefined big. The smallness of traders’ everyday—the commodities, tables, benches, and relations—and the big politics of development, neoliberalism, and the global economy, exist on a scale that allows for moral positionings. Small-small politics, traders’ productive moral engagement with national politics, builds on this moral position. Traders often emphasize the greed, the corruption, and the polarizing behavior of the political elite. They are disappointed with the unreliable government, for how it obstructs their work, through decongestions and not letting money flow through government contracts efficiently enough. That the marketspace economy suffers from the fact that “there is no money in the system,” is a direct critique against the obstructive state.

Drawing on Zigon (2007) and Bloch and Parry (1989) I have argued how both sakawa and the foreign influx are breakdowns of the moral economy and accentuate the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. These breakdowns risk and threaten the reproduction of the community. The foreign influx refers to the group of foreign capitalists who have opened stores in and around the city center but practice their trade in a manner that departs from the small-small. Their way of doing business through
large amounts of capital, cutting out middlemen, and ignoring the important division of roles between wholesaler and retailer, hampers the possibility for others to make a living on their business. On the other hand, other (foreign or non-foreign) capitalists, who allow for further trade and employ people, are viewed as the positive and necessary engine for development. The sakawa boys, the tricksters who by turning to the occult and who greedily rush after quick money through cheating foreigners online and in the streets, embody small-small traders’ complete immoral other. Sakawa, which is merged with some of the political parties’ youth wings, adds to the skepticism and distrust of the already largely immoral sphere of party politics. By distancing themselves from the sakawa, traders form and confirm a community. Bloch and Parry (1989) argue that when the short-term transactional order of individual appropriation and competition is perceived to dominate over the long-term distributive aspect of economy, such as the small-small, actors will react on moral grounds. The individual and the community is bound together in a moral relation, which views individual greed as endangering the foundation of the community.

Small-small is not only situated in relations that in the moment make up the marketspace, but also produces space. This groundedness is evident in the way trust and solidarity is formed within the marketspace. While claiming place enables capital to be accumulated, although slowly, it simultaneously forms relations of trust. It is more difficult to claim the debt of those who lack a place. Also, sharing experiences on the street corners and in market aisles builds trust and a sense of community. While small-small allows for new actors to enter, it simultaneously restrains growth beyond small-small. Young actors especially, who lack capital, are frustrated at the limited possibilities within the market, and thus try to find ways to leave the marketspace.

The solidarities formed on the moral economy interact with a politics of belonging that in Tamale have a history of causing violence and dissent. Although traders share places and trade with another across divisions, there are different potential belongings at play here; gates, ethnicity, religion, etc. My argument is not that these belongings are rendered meaningless due to a morality that defies division. As everywhere else, shared commonalities help form relationships. It was evident for Kwame, the young Asante who we met in Chapter Three for instance, that the reason he found a place among fellow Asantes was due to their welcoming nature as opposed to that of the Dagbamba. My point is that these reasons for exclusion are always frowned upon, and delegitimized. Kwame himself even condemned such practices. Once again, the moral economy emerges as a code of conduct that guides action but that does not always define them. By emphasizing their distance to these tensions, and by accentuating norms of inclusion and demanding depolarization, traders make use of the moral economy to form small-small politics in relation to the polarizing state.

Traders avoid elements that break or invalidate the moral economy. Instead, they emphasize unity and cohesion. For example, trader associations, during the violence in the beginning of the millennium, became associated with the political parties. To join an association was thus a political statement for traders and might affiliate him or her to one of the other sides. The Progressive Traders Association (PTA), formed after
the killing of Ya Na, built their legitimacy on being nonpartisan. However, their close cooperation with the assembly, and the fact that its founders were larger store keepers unaffected by the assembly’s spatial politics caused problems. The distrust toward the assembly also infected the PTA.

Formalization and Citizen-Making

The events and episodes of this thesis unfold in a time of increased government attention to the expanding economy of urban space. In this regard, the second set of questions posed in the introduction concerned how solidarity, community, and competition are reconfigured by political and economic processes of urbanization and formalization. What effect can state interventions have on social and economic relations and trust in the marketspace, and what form of citizenship emerges when the government simultaneously strives to take control and formalize the local economy while opening it up to the global economy?

The formalization has in this thesis been described as the Ghanaian government’s efforts to take control over small-scale trade and the marketspace. It is in line with a global development discourse and draws on the idea of an “informal sector” that should be increasingly regulated by the state apparatus. It thus rests on a politics of informality, meaning that the state utilizes informality as a category that can be specifically targeted by political actions. This brings us to the third of set of questions that concerned the theoretical value of moral economy in studying this process. The moral economy contributes by working as a lens through which the struggles and tensions involved in the formalization come forth as morally charged. My arguments regarding the formalization are fourfold and respond to the second and third set of questions.

First, the formalization is largely a citizen-making project by including those previously excluded into a governable polity. There are numerous examples of this throughout the text. The welfare schemes, for instance, are formed in such a way that informal workers are allowed access to tax-based services. The National Urban Policy as it is written and implemented centers on inclusivity and on supporting informal activities. Furthermore, we have seen how the government attempts to regulate the rotating saving schemes, called sukusus, and promote their transformation from being collectively and socially organized by traders themselves into individually designed contracts with microfinance institutes and banks.

This politics must be understood in a global political context of neoliberal solutions, international organizations and development agencies that help form and fund these interventions. The formalization, the inclusive state, the welfare schemes, and the economic policies are ways for the state to address the needs of the traders. However, implementing the politics is difficult because any change to traders’ ability to
trade and sustain have political repercussions, which in turn, strengthens the view of the state as obstructive and unreliable.

In this process, traders are not passive recipients of this politics. Although they do not resist, protest or refuse, they pose themselves in a mode of disappointment and distrust. The disappointment is directed against the state for obstructing their businesses and for causing polarization. The distrust is based on the ambiguous, contingent, and unreliable ways the state implements political decisions. In this mode of disappointment and distrust, and on the solidary community formed on the basis of the small-small, traders enact a small-small politics and consequently another form of citizenship. Central for this citizenship is the right to trade and the right to make a living through, among other things, claiming a place. It emphasizes inclusion and trust.

Second, in response to the final set of research questions that concerned the theoretical possibilities of the moral economy for exploring state–market relations and encapsulating the tensions involved in the politics of informality, the moral economy enables us to see how the formalization involves a moral engagement with the everyday lives of traders. To Fassin (2009), the moral economy is about the production, distribution, and use of norms values, and obligations in social space. In the process of formalization, it is evident how the values and norms of small-small are used by different actors in different ways. For the government these are sometimes invalidated, and sometimes adopted, appreciated, and promoted. Formalization, although uncompleted, affects the core of what it means to be a trader, changing moral relations in the marketspace by stressing values of optimization, atomization, and entrepreneurship. The moral economy can thus address the ongoing struggle entailed in the formalization and economic regeneration. It is, in the words of Bloch and Parry (1989), the struggle between the short-term and the long-term, and pitting self-interest, maximization, and profitmaking against communal norms, mutuality, and gradual progress.

The Ghana Investment Promotion Center Act, examined in Chapter Four, was designed to protect the small-small from foreign investors to capitalize on “petty trade.” By law, this institutionalizes the norms of small-small, by disallowing actors who disregarded the moral economy from taking part in small-scale trade. In regulating the susus the government has established and legitimized the slow gradual progress as a way for traders and others to grow. At the same time, regulating susus also involves a reconfiguration of how traders act socially and collectively. It breaks the economic interrelations of the marketspace, redefining traders into separate entities who individually can be governed through contracts to state-regulated businesses.

While this occurs, the government often views the vendors occupying public space as ignorant and dirty. The decongestion was intended to cleanse and free the streets from their behavior. In Chapter Seven, the moral is evident in the youth policy which targets specifically the unemployed youth of the marketspace. In the policy they are described as lacking not only knowledge and skills, but the right moral norms—similar to those I have referred to as small-small—for becoming proper citizens.
It is Ghana’s increased engagement in the expanding global economy, the striving to find a place and claim sovereignty at a global level, that has allowed for this moral positioning as well. This to some extent explains why the state is an ambivalent and unreliable guarantor of the moral economy. While the state discursively and by law claims to protect the small-small, it cannot easily enforce this politics, due to international agreements and neoliberal ideals. Meanwhile, the outside of Africa is, in the eyes of young traders, a space of possibilities, of personal growth and self-fulfillment. It is where one is able step out of the restraints of the small-small. Images from abroad, foreigners and foreign capital, add yet another spatial dimension to morality in a wider geopolitical and geocultural sense. Formalization thus generates emotions and affects. Young traders’ feelings and anxieties about the future are shaped by the unfulfilled promises of formal education.

Third, citizen-making and the moral engagement are situated in the spatial dynamics of the market. The marketplaces and the street trade are separated in what they represent to the state. While marketplaces represent both the historical and the future city, street trade is the by-product of the present. The Central Market epitomizes the city center, designed to hold a key function of the city, to supply its citizens with food and necessities, through buying and selling. Although disobeyed, the rules and regulations of the marketplace allow it to represent formality. The street trade, on the other hand, is an inevitable consequence of an inequitable economy.

In reality, however, small-scale trade in Ghana is not analytically separable into distinctive categories such as formal and informal. Marketplace actors are no more likely to follow rules and regulations than street traders, and the government is no more likely to enforce them there. Places are claimed through negotiations and transactions that, both in and outside the marketplace walls, occur beyond the rules. Taxes are collected (and not collected) both inside and outside. The concept of informal economy also cannot encapsulate the overall marketspace (which includes both the defined marketplace and the informally claimed places along the streets). The informal economy construct implies parallel worlds of the formal versus the informal; the core and center versus the periphery and the margins. But this clear dichotomy does not exist in the marketspace, because the informal bleeds into the marketplace itself.

Yet, for the government, the separation of place matters. It is, among other things, through the relocation of street traders into marketplaces, that the government attempts to formalize the city. This politics of space thus establishes who is allowed access to the future Ghana. Mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion draws on the nature of the place that actors claim, rather than on actors’ ability to adhere to rules or forms. In this way, it is different to illegitimately claim a shop than to claim a gutter.

Concerning such struggles of inclusion and exclusion to the public space and the polity, Yiftachel (2009) describe “gray spaces” located between the “‘whiteness’ of legality/approval/safety, and the ‘blackness of eviction/destruction/death.’ They are neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today’s urban regions.” (p 89). Gray spaces are growing all around the world, existing parallel or “in the shadow” (p 89) of the formally planned economy and city, he claims. While
often tolerated, and at times encouraged, these spaces are also contained through discourses of criminality and delegitimization. For Yiftachel, this is a process of “separating incorporation” that “preserve[s] gray spaces, activities and population in the ‘permanent temporariness’—concurrently tolerated and condemned, perpetually waiting ‘to be corrected’” (p 90).

These paradoxes of simultaneous separation and incorporation, and of “permanent temporariness,” also characterizes the marketspace, as this thesis has described. But, the marketspace is still not a gray space in this sense. It is not positioned between the white and the black (in Yiftachel’s terminology), but is (just like the color gray) composed of both black and white simultaneously.

This illuminates a problem with informality, that it automatically becomes associated with the political margins and the spatial fringes of the city. The marketspace of Tamale is neither politically nor spatially marginal; it is in the center of political and development discourses and constitutes the core of the city. Formality and informality, like Hart (2006) reminds us, necessitate each other, and as processes they are part of making the marketspace.

This leads to my fourth argument regarding the formalization. The marketspace is not a liminal space. It is not between something, nor is it predestined to become something else or to return to its entailed original purposes of being merely streets, pavements, and marketplaces. This is important, because it draws us to think about the future and the possibilities. Unless development is to imperil traders’ livelihood and stability, it must be within the space itself, as it is. Through small-small, individuals improve their lives within the marketspace. They gradually progress, expand businesses, and finance their own or their children’s education. It is hard work, but it may be rewarding.

Permanence and Change

While traders’ claiming of place stabilizes the flexible and dynamic economy as described above, control over urban space is simultaneously a core factor for realizing change, both for the trader’s individual progression, but also the state’s development ambitions. As Weiner would argue, this is because places, genealogies, and history are constantly part of struggles in the present. Traders’ ongoing claiming of place through negotiations in which they assert their right to trade and to make a living, as well as their historical claim to the place, is one such example. But the same struggles are vivid in the different claims that different chiefs and the government put forward. TA-Ma and traders have conflicting views on what the build, operate, and transfer (BOT) agreement entailed. They provide different histories on which they claim ownership of the market, the chiefs arguing that the government’s right to the area is on their grace and that ultimately land cannot be owned at all from the beginning. These are further manifestations of the same struggle.
However, the struggles over the history of and the right to urban space can continue without leading to any major change of the marketspace since they are often put forward in separated moral discourses and spaces. Therefore, they are only rarely in conflict with each other. For instance, the state can claim control in government documents, development programs, in applications to donors and in statistics. The struggles of places within the practical realities of the marketspace do not exist in texts and numbers. Traders’ claims, rather, are situated in the social relations with other traders, public officers, chiefs, store owners, and trader associations. Beyond these relations, these claims lack legitimacy, for instance, in the legal context. Depending on space and discourse, inalienable places thus allow for multiple owners.

But at times, these claims are in direct conflict with each other. For example, during the decongestion and the impending risk of fire, traders’ morally defined rights to their places, were delegitimized by TaMA. For a couple of months, security, safety, and ideas of a beautiful and productive city trumped. But as the logic behind the quiet encroachment of the ordinary (Bayat 2004) dictates, traders gradually reclaimed their places, and reinstated permanence.

The informal also connotes discourses of flexibility and it is often allowed to characterize the fluidness of the present global economy. Certainly, the growth of the marketspace to a large extent results from the increased fluidity of our time, in which reliable secure employment is diminishing and people hence are forced into the uncertainties of the streets, fittingly designed for movement. The marketspace expands with newcomers, and new commodities are quickly brought into the flows of the market. But space allows for multiple temporalities. Thus, it is more accurate to describe traders’ practice with the terms persistence, patience, and permanence, than the term flexibility. This temporal dimension of small-small must not be overlooked for at least two reasons. First, it is important for how the city is perceived to evolve. The spatial permanence of urban everyday traders implies that development cannot be achieved beside them. They remain in place, almost no matter what political decision. In terms of development policy, it means that small-scale trade cannot be bypassed.

Second, the spatial permanence of traders further explains how trust and confidence within and to the city is formed. Small-small traders are reliable and present. They become nodes, built into the infrastructure (see Simone 2004). This reliability enables solidarities and credits through actors sharing space and by identifying a place. For instance, during the most intense period of the Abudu–Andani conflict in the beginning of the new millennium, many of the trader associations were torn apart, TaMA was dissolved and replaced by an interim committee, a state of emergency was declared in town, and much of the social life was put on hold following the curfew. The market prevailed, however. In fact, it was the only domain functioning close to normal during the years immediately following the killing of Ya Na. In this process of rebuilding Tamale, as the metropolis of the “underdeveloped North,” the market has been important in reconstructing the social life of Tamale.
Trust is a missing component in discourses of informality. I have described all through the thesis how reliability, persistence, and loyalty constitute the social, economic, and moral life in the marketspace. Meanwhile, state actors and political projects appear unreliable, unstable, and sometimes obstructive and threatening. This sense of trust depends on the persistence of traders since democratic politics is unable to confront it. It is impossible for the government to form politics that permits unregulated use of or even illegal occupation of public space, while politics that does not, is destined to fail. Trust in the marketspace then, is not built through forms, rules, and contracts, but through sharing time, as in the everyday, sharing problems and positions, and through rubbing shoulders on wooden benches.
Sammanfattning på svenska

Small-small: Moralisk ekonomi och marknadsrummet i norra Ghana.

Ghanas regering har under det senaste decenniet försökt inkludera och tillmötesgå de många människor som arbetar inom den så kallade informella ekonomin. Denna formaliseringsprocess går i linje med en global marknadsdriven utvecklingsdiskurs. De småskaliga handlare som säljer sina varor från marknadsplatser och längs gatorna har varit av särskilt intresse för politiska reformer. Samtidigt som den ghananska staten definierar dessa aktörer som verksamma i en “informell sektor” och således bortom det formella politiska och ekonomiska systemet, försöker staten genom riktade välfärdstjänster och olika policies att inkludera just dessa aktörer i skapandet av en modern välfärdssstat och forma dem till självförverkligande och moraliska medborgare.

Denna avhandling syftar till att förstå detta moment i Ghanas politiska och ekonomiska historia genom att studera hur samhällets förändringar och politiska processer påverkar den småskaliga handelns moraliska ekonomi. Small-small är en emisk term som i denna studie utvecklas till ett analytiskt begrepp och tillåts innefatta de normer, värderingar och skyldigheter som den småskaliga handeln i urbana Ghana baseras på. Studien bygger på ett etnografiskt fältarbete bland småskaliga handlare i och omkring Tamale Central Market. Tamale är huvudstad i Ghanas Northern Region. Med ett särskilt intresse för de händelser som sker i skärningspunkten där stat, marknad och medborgaruppgift möts, och med utgångspunkt i handlarnas vardag, arbete och relationer och genom small-small, undersöks formaliseringens underliggande moraliteter.


Studien står på två andra teoretiska ben. Det första utgörs av den moraliska ekonomin (Fassin 2009) som kritiserar föreställningen om att ekonomi enkelt skulle baseras på rationella och pragmatiska regler, och lyfter istället fram de normer, värderingar

I kapitel två ges en bakgrund till de politiska spännings som existerar i Tamale, där våldsamma sammandrabbningar av två rivaliserande förgreningar av den kungliga familjen i den traditionella staten Dagbon, till vilken Tamale tillhör, har skapat en djupt polariserad stad. Denna splittrring har i sin tur förstärkts genom de nationella partiernas politisering av konflikten. Konfliken fungerar som en fond mot vilken den moraliska ekonomins värden av inkludering måste förstås.


En stor del av formaliseringsprocessen handlar om att staten försöker återta kontrollen och makten av det offentliga rummet. En viktig del i detta återtagande har så
kallade avträngsel-övningar (eng: decongestion exercises) varit. Dessa återkommande interventioner avhyser handlare från gator och gränder men får sällan någon verklig effekt eftersom handlarna strax återtar sina platser i staden. Handlarna menar att det är en rättighet att kunna försörja sig själv och sin familj, och upplever i huvudsak statens agerande som opålitligt och obstruerande. Men formaliseringen handlar här också om att på djupet förändra de relationer av skyldigheter som den rumsligt situerade moraliska ekonomin innebär, och skapa självständiga och självförverkligande entreprenörer. Exempelvis driver regeringen en politik där handlare i den informella sektorn uppmuntras att skaffa bankkonton och mikrolån istället för de traditionella, kollektivt baserade sparföreningarna.


I det sjunde kapitlet kompletteras det framåtblickande perspektivet med en analys av unga handlarens situation och ambitioner inför framtid. Genom begreppet ”waithood” (väntande) (Honwana 2012) beskrivs unga handlare befinna sig i ett tillstånd av väntande på att få lämna stadiet som barn till att bli vuxen och kunna skaffa familj. Den moraliska ekonomin upplevs av många som begränsande och de unga handlarna söker därför andra vägar till framgång. Världen ”utanför Afrika”, ett rum för total personlig förändring och oändlig framgång, lockar särskilt. I detta kapitel beskrivs formaliseringen genom de policies och program som riktar sig till unga vuxna och i vilka de beskrivs som moraliskt svaga, ansvarslösa, giriga individer som måste formas till dygdiga medborgare genom utbildningsprogram och lära sig bida tid. Det som framgår av de unga handlarnas framtidsutsikter i förhållande till formaliseringen och regeringens idé om utveckling är en tidsmässig spänning mellan trögheten i small-small och statens mål att snabbt och strukturellt omvandla den urbana ekonomin och marknadsrummet. Till skillnad från den moraliska ekonomin av skyldigheter, beroendens och gradvisa framsteg vill staten ofta arbeta i en annan takt mot en annan framtid. En följd av denna spänning är statens oförmåga att utnyttja kraften och potentialen i
den moraliska ekonomin, särskilt det faktum att människor med endast små medel kan överleva, försöja sig och växa.


Försöken att förändra och omvandla marknadsrummet riskerar många handlares försörjning. Den politiska turbulens som detta skulle leda till gör att sådana ambitioner är svåra att genomdriva i praktiken. På så sätt argumenterar jag för att det finns en spänning mellan small-small och de storskaliga utvecklingsplaner och program som staten genomför. Trögheten som skapas av de moraliska förpliktelserna mellan handlare i marknadsrummet och förändringsambitionerna skapar tillsammans en långsam och haltande rörelse in i framtid.
References


—. (2016) Theory from the South: Or, how Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa. Abingdon: Routledge


leaders-of-the-let-my-votes-count-group-young-democrats-56068 (accessed 2016-08-18).


1. Caymanian Politics: Structure and Style in a Changing Island Society. Ulf Han-
nerz. 1974.
2. Having Herds: Pastoral Herd Growth and Household Economy. Gudrun Dahl och
5. Market, Mosque and Mafraj: Social Inequality in a Yemeni Town. Tomas Ger-
holm. 1977.
6. The Community Apart: A Case Study of a Canadian Indian Reserve Community.
7. Savanna Town: Rural Ties and Urban Opportunities in Northern Kenya. Anders
Hjort. 1979.
1982.
11. The Practice of Underdevelopment: Economic Development Projects in a Cana-
12. Evil Eye or Bacteria: Turkish Migrant Women and Swedish Health Care. Lisbeth
Sachs. 1983.
1984.
15. Change on the Euphrates: Villagers, Townsmen and Employees in Northeast
18. Shepherds, Workers, Intellectuals: Culture and Centre-Periphery Relationships in
45. “The Hospital is a Uterus”: Western Discourses of Childbirth in Late Modernity – A Case Study from Northern Italy. Tove Holmqvist. 2000.
62. From Slaves to princes: The role of NGOs in the contemporary construction of race and ethnicity in Salvador, Brazil. Örjan Bartholdson. 2007.

Published by Stockholm University
Editors: Gudrun Dahl and Christina Garsten
