

A wide-angle photograph of a bustling outdoor market in Uganda. The ground is covered with large piles of colorful clothing, including shirts, dresses, and fabrics, laid out for sale. Numerous people, mostly women, are seen throughout the scene. Some are standing and browsing, while others are sitting on the ground. Large, makeshift umbrellas made of various materials (plastic, cloth) are used for shade. In the background, there are simple wooden structures and a clear blue sky. The overall atmosphere is one of active commerce and community.

# **The Communal-Individual**

*The Story of Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Small-Town Uganda*

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Master Thesis Cultural Anthropology

Multiculturalism in Comparative Perspective

Faculty of Social Sciences

Utrecht University

Supervised by Lotje Brouwer

June 2014, Utrecht

**~ This is their story, told by me ~**

## Acknowledgement

To all the people who made this possible, thank you!

My gratitude goes to all my research participants, for your time and willingness to let me come along your paths in daily life. I especially thank William, for your enthusiasm with which you have told your life stories and expressed trust, so central to my research. You made me experience 'African solidarity'. I would like to thank Lotje Brouwer for your elaborate feedback on my drafts and your words of encouragement while drifting on the flows of the field. Thank you Joost Beuving, for your sometimes provoking questions and knowledge about Uganda's entrepreneurial fields. I would like to thank my family and friends, for your listening ears and recognition of the toughness of writing a thesis. Thank you Jeroen, for your patience and for being there when I was away. Thank you Arnold, Jelle, Rob and Auke for the critical reflection on my work and the debates about the science of anthropology. And last, but absolutely not least, thank you Kim and Michael, for your enormous hospitality. I could not have imagined a better home to return to.



## Field Map



Political map of Uganda, with emphasis on fieldwork location. (Image based upon map of Nations Online © 2013: <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/uganda-map.htm> (accessed 28 May 2014). Adjustments and emphasis on Kyotera by the author.)

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## How it all began...

The European economic crisis of the 21st century is persistent. After six years of crisis and insecure economic conditions, a growing number of people question the ‘all liberating’ fundamental principles of the economy and the self-regulating power of the market. The hunger for progression, for individual liberation and independency, has brought us high standards of welfare. However, now the system is quaking, the singular hunger for progress, the unvaried diet we stilled our hunger with, has brought instability.

Aspects that we have considered as backwarded and hampering progression, aspects of our society that have been overshadowed by individual growth and labelled as old and ‘traditional’, are increasingly considered to be of great importance to bring societal stability. Based upon this idea a new transformation movement is rising (*cf* Bauwens *et al* 2012) that searches for ways to get sharing back into our system. The initiatives pop up like mushrooms in humid weather, facilitated by new communication technologies developed by the immense power of capitalist progression. The search for new business strategies arises. Strategies based upon principles like community building and sharing (*cf* Jonker 2013). The popularity of this movement is nourished by emotions of loneliness and insecurity, emerged from the focus on the individual in ‘modern’ times. Globalisation – characterised by high levels of interconnectedness and rapid exchange – has made the social world more complex. The feeling of safety, security and belonging, once assured by family and later by the well-fare state, is ready for a new content (Bauman 2011). By bringing large-scale back to local and human standards, this transformation movement negotiates a new design of solidarity.

For a long time the modern, developed world has looked down upon those regions where kinship and strong community ties would play a structuring role in economic decisions. It was believed that these regions still had a long way to go to reach the welfare standards of the Western world (Ferguson 2006; Geschiere *et al* 2008). This linear way of progression dominates the modernisation discourse. However, as Jan Leyers questions in his documentary *De Weg naar het Avondland* (The



Way to the Occident), one could ask what we have lost on our road to progression (Leyers 2011). The road to individual growth and liberation. After all these years of economic crisis we question the values that have been of central importance to the development of the society as we know it nowadays. Are these values in current turbulent times still solidifying our society, or are there other values that suit our needs better?

In Uganda, similar revalidations of value principles and trust relations take place (Beuving 2003). Since the turmoil of the regime led by Idi Amin in the early eighties and the dramatic effects of his 'Economic War', Uganda's economy imploded. An economic recovery program was implemented, facilitated intensively by foreign assistance. Foreign investment in economic stability, market liberation and admission to the IMF and World Bank, has influenced economic and therefore societal structures in Uganda considerably (Migadde 2013; Kuteesa *et al* 2010; Beuving 2013). Through the influx of new market principles, are societal values that have organised solidarity for a long time, confronted with conflicting values. In these zones where values engage, the idea of uniformity of economic principles collide with cultural specificities concerning trust relations and solidarity principles (*cf* Boellstorff 2008; *cf* Tsing 2005). This engagement results in the negotiation with, and evaluation of values fundamental for the construction of solidarity.

My interest the search for new economic principles in north-western Europe, has brought me to the faraway lands of Uganda. I wondered how entrepreneurs involved in economic activities in a small town in Uganda, navigate between several distinct value systems that determine societal unity. What I found is inspiring and stimulating in my search for alternative approaches of the value system fundamental for the current economic instability in Europe.

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Field of Interactions

It might be surprising that I end up in the faraway hinterlands of Uganda, to find an explanation for the movements happening in north-western Europe. It might be less surprising when I tell you the following.

After the 150 years of British colonial dominance came to an end in 1962, Uganda had one of the most vibrant economies of Sub-Sahara Africa. However, the years following independency marked by severe conflicts and a lengthy civil war against Lord's Resistance Army, resulted in major economic fluctuations. The good economic weather between the sixties and seventies, was blown away by severe political imbalances in the seventies and eighties. The 'Economic War', led by 'Field Marshall' Idi Amin, expelled all Asians who were brought by the British and cared for the majority of Uganda's entrepreneurial force. The prosperity of the sixties fell apart. Due to the disruption of the industrial sector, Ugandans got back to old survival mechanisms: petty trade, subsistence agriculture and informal trade (Migadde 2013). The insecurity as a result of the rude manners by which the Asian enterprises were dismantled, hindered national and international investment and therefore economic recovery.

The new regime in 1979, led by Obote, sought for help at the IMF and the World Bank. This introduced Structural Adjustment Program packages to reform the national economy and recover from the deep economic crisis. These packages limited governmental interference in market structures, rationalisation of the tax system and facilitation of export (Migadde 2013:5). In spite of its apparent success, the economy collapsed into a new crisis in 1984. The insecurity and unsafety in the country destabilised the economic climate again. The current president, Yoweri Museveni, got to power by a rebellion revolt in 1986. He took over a torn apart country and once more requested financial assistance from the IMF and the World Bank. The 1987's liberalisation packages and the early 2000s reforms, have attracted more foreign investors which contribute to the country's hesitant economic growth (Kuteesa 2010; Beuving 2010; Migadde 2013).

The opening up of Uganda's exchange market, facilitated its global interconnectedness. What is the effect of the increased connectedness of Uganda's exchange market on the daily lives of entrepreneurs in a small town in Uganda? What is the local response to the global connectedness of exchange markets? These questions are leading in the unravelling of the relation between the social and economic aspects of entrepreneurial practices in global movement. They structure the answer to my research question: *How is solidarity in times of abundant global economic interconnectedness understood, experienced and acted upon by entrepreneurs in small-town Uganda?*

### **Globally Interconnected**

The increased global interconnectedness has led to a growing relevance and interest in the study of globalisation. Globalisation's complexity results in a cacophonic discussion of its meaning and subsequent effects. Following the ideas of Anna Tsing (2000 and 2005) and Tim Ingold (2011), I believe that the (global) field consists of a multiplicity of flows which move from and towards intersections. Like rain clouds flow from high to low pressure zones in the atmosphere, I believe that social and cultural flows move to sites that are most advantageous and attractive to flow to. On these cross-roads of interaction friction arises from encounters of (cultural) differences, which characterises the local field. The interconnectedness of global flows becomes most apparent in these meeting zones, in the so called zones of 'awkward engagement' (Tsing 2005).

Due to its strategic geographical location Kyotera (see field map), the most important town in Rakai District in the south west of Uganda's Central Region<sup>1</sup>, can be considered as a zone of 'awkward engagement'. Although Rakai hosts the administrative headquarter of the district, Kyotera's location offers the town more economic opportunities than Rakai. This attracts many people who seek their fortune in town's various business opportunities, which results in a strong human diversification. People from different clans, different Ugandan Kingdoms and even from other East African countries are attracted. This, in addition to the national and

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<sup>1</sup> Central Region was Buganda Kingdom before the colonisation of the British.

international export and the connectedness to the Tanzanian border, leads to a great influx of distinct values and strategies concerning trade and solidarity.

The engagement and emerging friction between (cultural) differences occurs in all aspect of life. One aspect is the exchange market, on which I focus in my story about small-scale entrepreneurs. Kyotera's diversifying market, is characterised by the interaction of different market principles. The human diversification creates a fertile ground for market principles based upon short and concise social contact. The concise trade practices flow into town by national and international trade and are based upon capitalist principles and international trade agreements. These market principles are considerably different from the traditional trading practices in the region. Structured majorly by strong and long term trust relations, traditional practices exceed the temporality of the capitalist practices. The two distinct economic models and subsequent social structures, meet and interact in Kyotera's town centre, where most trade is practiced. As a result of the increased interconnected conditions, entrepreneurs using historically embedded trading practices are exposed to the new influx of capitalist practices. The motion in the field caused by this interaction leads to the (conscious and unconscious) navigation between distinct trading practices, objectives and strategies (Vigh 2009). This navigation and succeeding integration of various trading practices results in the emergence of a new set of trade customs that characterises the specific trading zone (Boellstorff 2008). Here, at the cross-road of the negotiation of exchange and solidarity, the navigation between cultural specificity and global flows is vital in the real understanding of this 'local' phenomenon.

Although anthropology historically concentrates on the cultural and local specificities as a result of movement (Tsing 2000), nowadays, the anthropological researches are tempted by the Eurocentric idea of a homogeneous and universal global (Ho 2005:71). The homogenising charisma of modernity as a "common program for social betterment" (Tsing 2000:328), hides the impact of the social and situational meaning of this 'program', which is fundamental for the understanding of the local reality. This charismatic idea is recognised in the linear understanding in the discourse on modernisation in Africa: the idea of an evolutionary progression from traditional to

modern. However, because of the embeddedness in contexts and situations, modernity cannot be recognised as a ‘package deal’ that suits to any situation in any given place in the world, replacing specific local characteristics. Considering that, Kyotera cannot be classified as either a traditional or modern society (*cf* Piot 1999; *cf* Knauft 2002; Geschiere *et al* 2008). I cannot do any predictions about Kyotera’s evolution, I can only tell the story about its here and now. By studying this particular moment and place, the integration of modernity as well as tradition in the everyday life of small-scale entrepreneurs becomes apparent. The outcome of the negotiation of tensions in integration between historically founded beliefs and customs, and those practices perceived as progressive (Knauft 2002) characterises the local modernity.

The modernity discourse is closely related to discourses within economic anthropology. The singular understanding of economy as a means to obtain financial growth does not include local specificities. The embeddedness of economic activities in social environment is of major importance in this sub-discipline of anthropology (Wilk 1996; Hann & Hart 2011). Kyotera provided me with a perfect site to study local responses on global economic interaction. It strengthened my belief in the ineffectiveness of a dualistic world view and emphasised the importance to focus on integration instead of separation. It brought me to the heart of what I believe (economic) anthropology is: the study of nuanced field studies, to contextualise local phenomena in global perspective.

This is the story of local entrepreneurs in a highly dynamic field and their response to the existence of interacting economic flows in a small town in Africa. A story of their life, encompassing a daily negotiation between their life in villages characterised by communal cooperation and tight solidarity nets, and the life in town which is marked by human diversity and individual independency. It is their story, told by me. The story is based upon the field findings I gained during three months of ethnographic fieldwork in Kyotera and surrounding villages (see field map), which I conducted in close cooperation with my field population (*cf* Ingold 2011:238). I will therefore not talk about my research informants, but my research participants<sup>2</sup>. They have taken me

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<sup>2</sup> Illustrative is the e-mail I received some weeks ago from one of my main participants: 1 May 2014: “How is your research, did we moving in a right truck?” (did we move in the right track?).



along their paths in daily life and by doing so taught me the ins and outs of life in the small-town's vibrancy. Their knowledge and experiences have astonished me and gave me a comprehensive view on the field.

### **Gaining Knowledge**

The story is based upon knowledge which is far from neutral, as I believe that knowledge is coloured and inseparable from the vision of its carrier (Tsing 2005; Leibing & McLean 2007; Nordstrom 2007; Hollan 2008; Ingold 2011). This vision, the autobiographical aspects of the carrier, is a product of continuous negotiation with its cultural, natural and social surroundings. Knowledge, in that sense is highly unique. Sciences are aiming to gain knowledge and spread it globally to understand global processes to a greater extend. In order to meet universal applicability, scientific knowledge is sterilised from vision. It is singular, as Anna Tsing (2005) states, skinned from contradicting influences of the cacophonous existence of visions. It is kept in categorical packages in order to prevent reformation through human interpretation. At least, that is the scientists' attempt (Nordstrom 2007). But, knowledge and vision are a unified pair and do not exist in isolation (Tsing 2005; Ingold 2011). Knowledge can only exist in co-existence with its surroundings. It can therefore not be understood as universal. Universal knowledge would in its essence mean knowledge that is carried by the entire global population. This is impossible when considering the autobiographic aspects of every living being (vision, in short) as the foundation of knowledge.

Emphasising the impossibility to generalise knowledge to an extent to which it is applicable to different settings, would hammer the entire social sciences down to a level of meaninglessness. This is not what I attempt to do with this thesis. I criticise the ease by which knowledge is generalised and the Eurocentric perspective by which many situations are observed and explained. I argue for a recognition of the uniqueness of situations, as they are part of a web of interacting 'impactors' (any aspect of the field with a certain impact) which form and structure influencing surroundings. By taking that as the point of departure we could open our gaze to collect inspirations. Inspirations to shed light and clarify local specific dynamisms. I therefore argue for an open attitude in the field. Open for influential surroundings which contextualise our

knowledge. Outside categorical packages and fixed concepts that make us blind for the appearance of valuable insights and information from unexpected sites, moments and people (Nordstrom 2007). When we do not reflect or move to see the 'beyondness' and see what frames our sight (Leibing *et al* 2007; Hollan 2008), we will miss out on valuable information as we are looking for the expected and prepared for.

Despite all these critical words on language and knowledge, I cannot disregard it. Doing research and ethnographic fieldwork is about communication, which is, at least partly, conducted verbally through (formal and informal) interviews and conversations. When I conducted my fieldwork and while writing my thesis, I chose words for the phenomena and concepts central to my research to explain the social world. I am, thereby, aware that my understanding of the concepts is coloured by my vision. I have been confronted with the biased view I am warning for in this thesis. I found myself taking the capitalist exchange practices for granted, focussing on and sometimes even romanticising the 'other', 'communal' system. By the continuous reflection on my vision through the dialogue with my research participants, by adopting their words and not holding on to my own descriptive vocabulary *per se*, I have tried to connect myself and my data to a maximum extent to the flows of the field. Movement and reflection on my own vision has revealed valuable information that would have remained covered without my dialogical relation with the field. It would have resulted in a story of the social reality in Uganda which would not have met the reality of the field (Ho 2005; Tsing 2005; Nordstrom 2007; Leibing & McLean 2007; Hollan 2008; Ingold 2011).

As I just said, words only partly cover the communication in the field. Therefore my by far most important method of collecting data was participant-observation while wayfaring along the flows of the field. This wayfaring as method of data collection "yields an alongly integrated, practical understanding of the life world", (Ingold 2011:154). It provided me with the opportunity for physical as well as emotional engagement with the people in the field. The dialogical engagement offered reflection on the field and was it a vital condition to reach understanding in the process of knowledge production (Hollan 2008). During my stay in Uganda I lived in a small

village 15 kilometres away from Kyotera. Digging in gardens, communicating with neighbours and experiencing village life provided me with the opportunity to engage and gain valuable information. It supplemented my view on town life which I gained through the participation in the activities of my participants. I spent hours in front of shops, on the back of *boda-bodas* (motorcycle taxis) and drinking tea in town and village homes. Through the participation in daily activities, I have been able to experience and reflect on my own knowledge, thereby creating understanding and connection with local flows. By conducting social mapping exercises in which I led my participants draw their own map of social relations, I got alternative insights in why they felt related with whom (*cf* Rabinow 2007). This provided me with the understanding of differences between reciprocal relations in town and village. To sustain my practical field findings, I searched for facts and figures. This brought me to dusty offices and yellowed stencilled reports in huge piles of documents. I realised that facts and documentation play a minor role in a largely illiterate society and that knowledge is alternatively transferred and conducted. Majorly by storytelling, which is therefore an important aspect of this thesis. Upon arrival back home I needed a necessary (emotional) distance from my field findings in order to write this story. Therefore I used the qualitative data analyses software Nvivo, with which I analysed and generalised my findings. The use of distinct research methods, each with their strengths and weaknesses, has cross validated my field data and fortified succeeding conclusions. It challenged knowledge boxes and categorical packages and forced me to conclude otherwise at times I was tempted to follow attractive outcomes.

With the guidance of my participants I have been able to observe the field from their point of view. Only through that I have been able to engage emotionally and reflect on my understandings of the field in an on-going dialogue (Scheper-Hughes 1995:418; Halpern in Hollan 2008:476). At the same time I am aware that the field is inevitably affected by my presence. Like every field aspect, my presence has influenced the synergy of flows in the field. Yet I believe that my research topic about the everyday of my research participants limited my impact on the field. For them my questions were ordinary and sometimes senseless. I did not need to question ethical principles or

sensitive aspects of the society. My presence has nevertheless affected knowledge production and therefore coloured the story I am about to tell.

### **Research Participants**

To get a clear view on the response of local entrepreneurs on the existence of distinct knowledge packages of trade and solidarity, I conducted my study amongst small-scale entrepreneurs. This particular group participates both in town and village exchange. In their daily activities I expected to find the most friction and therefore insights in the local situation. Although the exchange systems in both localities cannot be understood as separated bodies, a strong difference between village and town mentality concerning exchange is recognised. By me, as well as by my research participants and scholars (Geschiere & Gugler 1998; Andersson 2001; Neves & Du Toit 2012).

The terms trader and entrepreneur are used in an interchangeable manner by anthropologists studying similar topics (van Grijp 2003; Ogawa 2006; Beuving 2010 and 2013). However, my research participants understood ‘trader’ differently from ‘entrepreneur’. A trader or vendor, is understood as someone who accumulates his or her capital by the sale of products he purchased from others. An entrepreneur is understood as a more general term for someone who accumulates capital – financial or social – by his or her activities. These activities centre around exchange and transaction of services or the production, transport or sale of products. I will use the terms entrepreneur, trader and vendor based upon the knowledge packages in the field.

The small-scale businesses of my research participants are part of the informal sector of Uganda’s economy. The original description of the difference between formal and informal comes from Keith Hart (1973) who drew the base for the study of these sectors. He states that the distinction is essentially based upon wage-labour or self-employment. “The key variable is the degree of rationalisation of the work – that is to say, whether or not labour is recruited on a permanent and regular basis for fixed rewards”, (Hart 1973:68). Although the division between formal and informal is not all that clear, one finds elements in the scholar description of these two sectors that shed

light on present day Africa. This is marked by the strong entwinement of town and village, public and private life. To meet the multiplicity of objectives that satisfy the entrepreneurs, those in the informal sector rely upon various aspects of the market. The entrepreneurs in my research are all self-employed and their activities are characterised by a multiplicity of income generating activities. For instance, in addition to their town jobs they run their gardens which supplies them with vegetables for their daily nutritious needs. According to the study of Hart, individuals and families only occasionally depend on a single source of income. This form of risk alleviation is based upon the extreme uncertainty in peasant societies in the past, and is practiced as well in uncertain and complex urban life nowadays (Hart 1973:78). Insecurity is an essential condition that organises economic activities and strategies collectively as well as individually (Van Donge 1992:185). The various activities conducted by the small-scale entrepreneurs characterise their daily life and facilitate in the achievement of a wide range of objectives. Apart from immediate survival their entrepreneurial activities also provide fulfilment of other longer term financial objectives, like the education of their children, the construction of a house and the expansion of family land. In addition to financial gain, their activities maintain their social respectability in the community (Neve & Du Toit 2012).

All my key-research participants are well-educated, ranging between the completion of Senior 4 and university, as this assured their knowledge of the English language. They come from families that have been able to send their children to school, which means that their upbringing has been fortunate. A strong cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) has formed my participants in the field. Although English is the official and administrative language of Uganda, a majority of the people speak a local language. Luganda, spoken in the Buganda Kingdom of which Kyotera is part, is the most common language spoken in the field. To overcome the language barrier I could have worked with a translator. It would have provided me with access to those I could not reach through English. However, I believe that the close cooperation with my research participants would have been hindered by the interference of a translator. First this would have created a distance between me and the participants which would limit the trust relation upon which we build our knowledge sharing. And second the translation



would have been influenced by the vision of my translator. This would result in the loss of control over certain details and therefore my connection to movement of the field.

Before I proceed, I want to mention that due to my continual emphasis on my role as a researcher all my participants have been aware of it. Repeatedly they have agreed upon the use of their contribution in the writing of my thesis and their stories have been anonymised for privacy reasons. Their daily life and all its encompassing activities and strategies have provided me with insights in the interaction of distinct flows in a site of engagement. By telling their stories based upon the experience of a specific place and moment, my insights and knowledge about the engaging flows is contextually integrated. By that integration, knowledge gets its meaning. The description of the particular moment loosens the stagnancy of classifications and brings the knowledge to life. From here, knowledge can inspire and enrich us, and help to explain the fluidity of the social world; the heart of what I believe anthropology is about.

### **Structure**

This thesis is an account for a dialectic world view captured in the story of the motion of a small town in Africa. It takes the reader along the site of 'awkward engagement' and the daily navigation of entrepreneurs in economic activities. It disproves the reality of universalistic explanations of economy and positions the construction of solidarity at the heart of the entrepreneurial daily life. The active navigation of the entrepreneurs between the accumulation of financial and social capital (money and trust relations) illustrates the hybridity of presupposed incompatible economic systems. By taking the reader to various commercial sites of Kyotera in chapter 2, the diversity and complexity of the town becomes visible. At that cross-road the interaction and subsequent integration of distinct values in daily life of urban dwellers is found. However, this integration does not come without a shrug. The friction that emerges out of the tensions between expectations from distinct exchange practices and values are addressed in chapter 3. To cope with these frictions, entrepreneurs strategically navigate and balance their hybrid daily life. In that way they succeed in the fusion of assumed opposites: the investment in the strong social ties with the

home-community and the desire for individual independency and entrepreneurial success in town. From a neoliberal perspective the investment in communal membership seems irrational. However, as chapter 4 unravels, economic action is not explicable without the social aspects of life. The home-community in the village fulfils a crucial aspect in the construction of solidarity upon which the entrepreneurs in the complex society of a town can rely. Through the investment of time and money, entrepreneurs invest in their position within the home-community based upon long term trust relations. This facilitates the entrepreneur's individual independency in town, and thereby the construction of the communal-individual.

## Chapter 2: Connected Values

The *boda* (motorcycle taxi)<sup>3</sup>-driver stops at the side of the road and parks his bike next to the neighbour's goat. I get my bag, wave goodbye to my housemates and after I have greeted the driver elaborately, I jump on the back of his *boda*. The ten kilometres on the stain red dirt road lead me through tiny villages, hundreds of small plantations, a big swamp and herds of children calling me *Mzungu* (white)<sup>4</sup>. At the junction, the dust road hits the 'outside world': the electricity network and a tarmac road connecting me to the rest of the country. On this hilltop I can choose to turn right towards Masaka (40 kilometres) and Kampala (175 kilometres) or turn left a steep hill down toward Kyotera (three kilometres) on which I have a fuzzy view from this hilltop. The 30 minute drive from my home-village to Kyotera is exemplary for the journey many entrepreneurs and traders undertake to get to the sites where they participate in the town's exchange market. Commuting from their home-village and plantations to town.

Although Kyotera is not that big, for this remote area it has the charisma of a town. This is due to its strategic location on the highway between major trading centres in Uganda and the Tanzanian border just 60 kilometres from here. The Town Council of Kyotera states in its Development Plan that due to Kyotera's focal point of trade and commerce and the big transient population<sup>5</sup>, the day population of the town is subsequently higher than the residence population. The estimated day population was 30,000 people in 2008. This is indeed a much higher number than the average population. According to the last official census, conducted by the World Bank in 2002, Kyotera had a population of 7,709 people<sup>6</sup>. A mid-year estimation of the Ugandan Bureau Of Statistics conducted in 2013, shows an estimation of 9,300 inhabitants (UBOS 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> Motorcycles used as taxi.

<sup>4</sup> Swahili for someone who wanders around, without a purpose. Someone who is constantly on the move. The word originates from Colonial times when traders and travellers from Europe visited their officials. Used for 'whites'.

<sup>5</sup> Approved 5 Year Development Plan, 2010/11 – 2014/15.

<sup>6</sup> Idem.

The *boda*-driver turns left, puts his motorcycle in neutral and turns his motor off. With a terrifying speed we drive downhill towards town. *Polan polan!* (dive carefully!) I demand the driver. When the wind would not have rattled in my ears, I could have heard the driver's disappointed sigh. The faster he drives, the more customers he can transport, the higher the chance he earns enough to buy food for his family. The free ride down the hill is our last view on some village life. Children bathing in basins in front of small mud-houses, men and women digging their land and selling their just harvested goods in improvised market stalls at the side of the road.

### **Betherem Stage – Global Entwinement, Local Motion**

As soon as downhill turns into uphill, Kyotera's town life begins. This valley is the imagined turning point between village and town. Here, one can observe first signs of interacting differences between rural and urban life (Van Velsen 1960; Geschiere & Gugler 1998; Andersson 2001). This is Betherem Stage.

The infrastructural convenience of a good tarmac road, facilitates the flow of 'impactors'. It leads to increased enclosure of traditional societies that are characterised by high levels of solidarity, sharing and support, offering social and subsistence security to the relatively closed community (Gellner 2008). As a crucial site for transport and trade in Kyotera, Betherem Stage attracts many people, both travellers and traders. The interaction of different views on values carried by people, confronts entrepreneurs with (moral) tensions (Tsing 2005). Values that structure rural exchange are different from the values structuring urban exchange. Whereas rural exchange demands for investment in strong solidarity lines and trust relations, the town market is based upon capitalist principles freed from social obligations, which demands for a more concise and independent attitude (Wilk 1996; Knauf 2002).

Betherem Stage is approached by speeding vehicles driving downhill on either side of the road, those approaching and those leaving town. Speed bumps try to limit the speed and reduce the risk of terrible accidents, as many people and vehicles come together at this stage narrowing the road considerably. Although the bustle at Betherem Stage depends upon the hour, I have never seen it in quiet peace. While there is an official taxi-stand a few hundred meters to the right, dozens of mini-busses

wait until they are fully packed to continue their journey. Parked at the side of the road the busses are filled up by their conductors. They attract their customers by calling their final destination: *Kampala, Kampala, Kampala!* or at the other side of the road: *Mutukula!* the Ugandan-Tanzanian border crossing. Between those mini-busses, Saloon cars made for a maximum of 5 people, are filled up to a new maximum of 10 people. Even the driver shares his seat. The last three bunches of bananas stuffed on top of bags and suitcases, tied by ropes from towing hitch to back-cover – satisfy the driver. He is ready for the steep climb uphill. Passing big lorries filled with bananas, he disappears in the black exhaust fumes.

Betherem Stage not only attracts travellers. It also attracts many vendors who seek their fortune in those who travel. Amongst those traders are those involved in transport, as well as those who supply the travellers with food and snacks (chapatti, *rolex* (rolled eggs), pineapples). Amongst these vendors is a fixed group of bicycle vendors who sell their bananas from the back of their bicycles. To get to their site I dodge the luring conductors and cross the drainage via a wobbly bridge made of a few wooden beams.

After some laughter and curious gazes, they welcome me and make me understand what is going on in their business these days. One of them explains the impact of exporters on the organisation of the local market. Exporters have a lot of money and are willing to pay high prices (25% higher than local prices). They buy their bunches of bananas straight from the farmers, at a price for which the bunches cannot even be sold at the local market. The rising prices disorganise the local market. The vendor leans against his bicycle with two banana-bunches on either side. *‘That’s why I choose to sell here. The general market in the centre of town is too small. As many sell there, the prices are low. Here, outside the market, we have the chance to sell it to travellers. The prices are higher for those who travel, as they don’t know the local prices’*<sup>7</sup>. Another vendor specifies: *“Although I pay market taxes, I don’t want to use the facilities of the general market. The market is hidden behind buildings. To my fixed customers I sell my bunches at fair prices, but here in town many strangers pass as well*

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<sup>7</sup> Interview Steven, 11 December 2013, Betherem Stage.



*whom I can charge more. And I can even sell to those who did not even intent to buy bananas, who I seduce with my presence at the road side.*<sup>8</sup>

The bunches of bananas the vendors sell come from their home-villages, where they buy the bunches from their relatives or others they know. Farmers in the villages sell their products mostly to people in their network. Usually they don't sell to strangers. Selling to strangers is good for financial growth, but reduces trust relations (Graeber 2011). Sometimes the farmers even send strangers away as they know their friends will come to purchase the bunches. This network of support backs the business of farmers



Image 1: Banana-vendor at Betherem Stage, 11 December 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Interview Denis, 11 December 2013, Betherem Stage.

and vendors. Vendors can rely upon their network for their market goods, the producers can be sure of their demand. This is explained by the Africanist Göran Hydén (1983) by the introduction of the term ‘economy of affection’. This concept refers to the networks that are constructed along communal ties of affection. Like Hydén (1983:11) I argue that these networks are not necessary based upon lines of emotional affection with blood relatives. I will therefore not use the term kinship, as this term suggests strong sentiments between members of elementary families (Cohen 1969:209). It would exclude other forms of relations and would not meet the reality I observed. The networks are based upon those who live near, in both village and town. These neighbours are frequently blood related, however, they can come from other families, clans and Kingdoms as well. For entrepreneurs the networks are essential in contemporary daily life as it enables them to participate in the monetary exchange market as well as in the the economy of affection (Waters 1992). The social networks of trustees of the banana-vendors at Betherem Stage support vendors’ participation in the turbulent and frictious market of town.

The hinder the vendors experience of exporters influencing their local markets, is enlarged by the rising fuel prices. The market woman who sells her bananas by using the general market facilities explains that she is forced to travel long distances to buy her bananas. *“Exporters buy their goods from those farmers who are nearby and accessible with big lorries. These farmers know they can sell their bunches for high prices. I have to travel far to get the bunches for an affordable price. The fuel is very expensive that is why the transport has made the prices high, indirectly caused by the export.”*<sup>9</sup> To cut the high transport costs she shares the lorry with other vendors. The overloaded lorries drive at night, to avoid confrontation with the traffic police.

High fuel prices, exporters and local markets; these aspects illustrate the interaction of flows and the connectedness of a small-town’s exchange market to global networks of mutual influence. Economic anthropologists try to explain the impact of this interconnection by the ‘formalist-substantivist’ discourse on the impact of social

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<sup>9</sup> Interview Regina, 11 December 2013, Kyotera Market.

relations on economic action. As I stated above, international regulation programs run by the IMF and World Bank, attempt to organise the interaction of exchange markets, like the one in Uganda, by universal standardisation of exchange. These standards are based upon formal and neoclassical ideas of economy, which is disembedded from its social surrounding to stimulate ‘perfect competition’<sup>10</sup>. Liberated from state interference, all individuals should have equal access to the market. According to neoclassical thinkers, economic is crucially founded in the universal principle of human thought. Therefore, the analysis of economic activities should be studied with rational decision-making as a basis, not by focussing on the context. Standardisation of market interventions and stimulation of export can only be achieved by the sterilisation of autobiographical elements. Liberated from normative aspects, this neutral system of rationality is believed to be applicable all over the globe, regardless of the context of its integration. Substantivists disagree upon this neutrality. They state that economic behaviour is based upon the cultural interpretation of exchange and the occupation of this phenomenon in daily life. Economic behaviour is therefore fundamentally embedded in social relations (Wilk 1996; Narotzky 1997; Gudeman 2001; Hann & Hart 2011).

At first sight, when analysing the situation of these banana-vendors at Betherem Stage, their acts seem to be motivated by rational calculation of their positioning in the market. Their decision to not use of general market facilities as they will catch better customers at the side of the road, might be a rational decision. However, their acts can impossibly be understood when ignoring the social context in which the vendors behave. The farmers from whom they buy their products, the relations the vendors have with other vendors and the customers they sell their ware to influence the vendors’ market behaviour as well. Their practices, in short, are related to entrepreneurs’ agreements with their social networks in the villages and town, as well as to the concise requirements of town’s exchange market.

In my analyses of this situation I follow the critique of Mark Granovetter (1985) and Stephen Gudeman (1986) on the rigidity of the formalist-substantivist discourse. Mark

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<sup>10</sup> Competition without human interference (Granovetter 1986:484; Van Donge 1992:184).

Granovetter vividly points out that “actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations,” (1985:487). Agreeing with him, the focus on either embeddedness or disembeddedness is not so relevant. When one wants to understand the behaviour of small-scale entrepreneurs in Kyotera, one cannot ignore the social context of their behaviour. I believe that, no matter the degree of integration, market practices are based upon human action and decision making (Granovetter 1985:485-487). Vendors at Betherem Stage act upon the market conditions that are formed by the great impact of exporters in the region, as well as upon the expectation of home based networks. Different market conditions require different behavioural patterns and different degrees of integration of social relations in economic practices (Polanyi 1944). Not ignoring the impact of rational decision making that have been emphasised by the neo-classical thinkers, I believe that economic practices are embedded in social relations and cultural practices. Embedded not in a static way, but in a fluid manner as culture is continuously constructed in the interaction in social, environmental and economic conditions (*cf* Ingold 2011). It is therefore incorrect to state that economic behaviour is minimally affected by its social and cultural environment. I thus follow Stephen Gudeman’s statement that people construct their own economies (1986:1). As well influenced by the flow of global ‘impactors’, economic behaviour and trading culture are continuously negotiated and emerge in renewing cultural constructions, which affects the construction of solidarity.

Let us jump on again the back of the *boda* and continue our ride towards the centre of town, to see what the interaction of different market principles mean for small-scale entrepreneurs. This will show us how they understand profit and cooperation within social networks.

### **‘Hardware Street’ – (Perfect) Competition**

From Betherem Stage to the central crossing in town is just one kilometre uphill. Another kilometre and you have passed Kyotera, hitting the road to the hinterland. We climb the first kilometre uphill. This short ride, leads me through the daily hustle of town. Under a big mango tree on my left, a group of five *boda*-drivers wait for their next customer. They have their fixed spot, their *stage*, where others – apart from this group – are not allowed to pick customers. One has laid himself down on top of his bike, dangling his legs and arms. Another inspects his cheek in one of his side-mirrors.

At the other side of the road a few vendors have spread out their sheets, covered with large heaps of second-hand clothes. The heaps are inspected by several customers who look for something ‘new’. The second-hand cloth business is a vivid business. Here, in the hinterland of Uganda, people rarely buy new cloths. The second-hand clothes are collected in textile containers in Europe and imported in large quantities. The huge bunches of clothes are brought to the Owino market in Kampala. One of the vendors tells me that every once in a while she travels the 175 km to Kampala to visit the market where she selects her clothes, bags and shoes. Packed in big cartons, stuffed under chairs of a jam-packed mini-bus, the hand-down European clothes are transported to the hinterlands of Uganda.

Instead of driving straight to the main crossing where I will meet Samuel Kimbowa (who I will introduce later), we turn left and shortly pass ‘hardware street’ to shed light upon the bustle of hundreds of shops in the heart of the commercial area of Kyotera. What is happening here can generally be described as ‘capital accumulation’. To understand this process of accumulation, one should look at the multiplicity of market principles and social practices in a diverse market environment. The multiplicity of entrepreneurial practices and field flows that construct the process of accumulation, move the field socially as well as economically. This motion is caused by the constant interaction between actors, social forces and the field, so called social navigation (Vigh 2009), and is applicable to the practices in the lives of small-scale entrepreneurs in Kyotera. Especially entrepreneurs in the informal sector navigate along the motion of the field, as the urge to navigate depends upon the level of protection that one’s social position and capital provides (Vigh 2009:430).

When waiting in front of a hardware store, surrounded by dozens of other hardware stores, I wonder why shops selling similar products are located next to one another. “*Then you know where to go to when you need metal ware, for instance. You go to this street. And when you need clothes you go there and big quantities of rice and sugar you go to whole-sale street which is located down there*”,<sup>11</sup> the *boda*-driver looks at me as if I have asked him a meaningless question. Maybe it is because of my upbringing in a capitalist society where freedom of competitiveness is strongly validated, but I cannot avoid to ask: “As they all sell nails, screws, wire and *bangas* (machetes), is there no competition amongst these vendors?”

Analysing ‘hardware street’ through an neoliberal perspective, would only highlight the accumulation of financial capital. Financial capital, money in short, is a calculative asset freed from contextual or moral meaning to measure wealth and is therefore central to the universal understanding of the economic order. Considering economy as capital accumulation liberated from contextual and social constraints, the competition amongst the hardware vendors would be ‘perfect’<sup>12</sup>. However, according to the critiques of Pierre Bourdieu, understanding the socioeconomic world order only in terms of one type of capital would outshine the other forms of capital as non-economic and therefore not of any interest (Bourdieu 1986). This is underlined by a former vendor, who tells me that the competition is not so ‘perfect’. It is true that all entrepreneurs attempt to gain future profits by their practices (Hann & Hart 2011), and that selling similar products leads to competition. However, the uncertainty and risks of the market are backed by a variety of strategies, which cannot only be addressed by capitalist principles of rational calculations and the mere focus on financial capital.

The vendor explains that by always visiting the same shop the customer and vendor build a trust relation that goes beyond a one-time transaction. The shop keepers have their own clientele of which they know they will not go to the shop next door, and the customer can count on favourable services. The social capital of the vendors accumulates by their investment in the trust relations with the customers.

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<sup>11</sup> Informal conversation Frank, 9 December 2013, Kyotera’s town centre.

<sup>12</sup> I refer here to ‘perfect competition’.

Additionally to price competition, customers are attracted by ‘covert competitiveness’ which favours the customers with other benefits like special services (buying on credit) and good relationships (Neves & Du Toit 2012:139). Trust and debt, maintained by reciprocal exchange, back long term relationships and therefore create a strong social network (Ewart 2013). The outcome of these practices of the hardware entrepreneurs are influenced by the trust, which is fundamental for these networks.

At the same time, this clientelism is in town not as crucial for business success as it is in villages. Because the town is more populated and diverse than the village, the shop keeper has the freedom to deny a credit request from the customer. The vendor would not have to fear bankruptcy when he does not invest in trust relations with all his customers, as there are many others who will come to his shop instead. He could focus on the accumulation of money and the fulfilment of other objectives instead of the mere maintenance of social relations. Vendors in town can balance the investment in social and financial purposes.

To understand the competition in ‘hardware street’ one should look at the interaction between the social and the economic realm. This relation is especially prevalent in informal trade and is constituted in the sociocultural environment of economic practices. This is exactly what David Neves and Andries du Toit (2012) conclude in their study about informal trade in South Africa. They state that “practices of accumulation are shaped by people’s experiences and interpretations of social behaviour, rather than impersonal market logic,” (Neves & Du Toit 2012:132; cf Van Donge 1992). Since everyone runs businesses, they are all customers of each other’s, and therefore a mutual dependency of services and favours exists. This mutual reliance constitutes the market of exchange by stabilising the social in exchange, which facilitates the monetary turnover of the enterprises. The point of trade therefore is the accumulation of money as well as the accumulation of trust relations. By focussing on this multiplicity, the patterns of accumulation contradict a linear progression of economic development (Neve & Du Toit 2012:136). In other words, the entrepreneurial activities are more than merely productive and income generating. The activities are reproductive as well. So when looking from a singular perspective, one would miss out

the impact of social capital on the function and accumulation of financial capital and vice versa (Bourdieu 1986:46-48).

This short visit to 'hardware street' gives a brief impression of the interaction of different entrepreneurial profits. To deal with the complexity of the informal exchange market and town's population, money as well as trust are fundamental for small-scale entrepreneurs (Hart 1973). The competition amongst the vendors shows the multiplicity of objectives influencing entrepreneurial behaviour. To get a better idea about the role of the social in economic activities in this small-town, and the benefit of money and social relations, I exchanged thoughts with two of my main informants.

### **Diversification and Social Networks**

The interaction of different 'values', as we saw at 'hardware street', is increased by the diversification of the town. During my meetings with Samuel Kimbowa, the impact of this diversification due to increased global interaction of exchange markets became clearer. Migration and subsequent influx of exchange principles, diversifies the town population and develops the so called modern aspects of life: individual independency, rationality and efficiency. In a diversified environment, economic relations are more disembedded from the community of strong social ties, and provides the entrepreneur with more freedom to act independently. This disembeddedness favours the position of the entrepreneurs in market-competition, as the competition is less tight to social expectations which provides more business opportunities.

### *Dependency in Town*

I have left the *boda*-driver in the centre of town and I walk the last hundred of metres to the main crossing. When I pass a few grocery shops, a *boda* stops next to me. I wonder what this man wants from me. Covered and packed in a thick coat and old helmet, I hardly recognise him. But then I recognise the small motorcycle packed with pasture for his cows; it is Kimbowa who just returned from the land at his home-village. I follow him to his house behind the small shops.



The welcome in his living room is exemplary. The small room is filled with three massive velvet sofas, small tables covered with white crocheted table cloths and a big cupboard at the end of the room. A small TV with antenna plays an American film. *"We appreciate visitors so much. We want to welcome them in our house, we want them to be comfortable. Would you like a soda or tea?"*<sup>13</sup> His son (last born, 11 years old) and daughter (19 years old) come to me with a thermos filled with hot water, a pot with tea leafs, a big metal plate with sugar and a table spoon. *"Please take!"* To introduce me to his life, he shows me an album with photos of important moments in the life of his family. Ceremonial portraits fill the walls above the sofas, most of them are photos of the graduations of his children.

Kimbowa is about to turn 60 and has been a teacher for 29 years. He values education very much as it provides better (job) opportunities in the future. To educate his children and pay for their university fees he had to supplement his teachers' income with additional businesses: digging, cattle keeping and growing eucalyptus trees. He took a loan at the bank to pay for everything. Now four of his six children have graduated from the university. He links education to the changing climate in towns. *"Here in town, people live more independently than in villages. People come from different places and we don't know each other. We don't have to. People are attracted by the business opportunities of town. This is especially true for the educated people. People invest in education as they hope to increase the chance to find a good job and improve their lives. Instead of relying on their social ties, they rely upon their education. They even work for people they don't know. Those who are not so much educated think in neighbours, not in money. They are dependent upon the help of others. They work together and invest in the trust relation that binds them. After the work is done, they will not ask for money as that would break the trust relation and would show money-mindedness. If they want to keep the friendship, they have to be patient. Those who are educated don't want this dependency. That is why they leave their villages and go to town, where they don't know a lot of people. The chance to work for someone or sell products to someone they don't know is bigger. They can think in money instead of friendship."*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Informal conversation Samuel Kimbowa, 10 December 2013, House Kimbowa, Kyotera.

<sup>14</sup> Interview Samuel Kimbowa, 21 January 2014, Kyotera.

Based upon monetary exchange – for which minimal trust is needed – exchange in town requires only short term relations (Wilk 1996). The process of independency is stimulated by the education and the increased opening up of the society, which affects the cohesion of the collective consciousness and the structure of solidarity (Van der Loo & Van Reijen 1997:107). This does, however, not mean that the entrepreneur works individually. In Kyotera I have seen a strong cooperation between entrepreneurs in town, forming networks of loose relations with limited dependency.

### *The Profit of Social Ties*

Someone who can give me more insights in the social relations of town trade is one of my main participants who became my good friend: James Mugisha. We meet in Motel Highway. A small parallel road behind one of the two fuel stations at the main cross-road leads me there. The building is white as snow and with its three stories is one of the two multi-storied building in Kyotera. The fence on its left leads to the garden: several plastic chairs and tables covered with Pepsi-cola sheets, stand at the grass in the shadow of trees. A lawn like this is very rare; grass is normally kept high and eaten by cows. I expected Mugisha to sit here, at one of the tables. Except for the two waitresses, who get their nails painted in the shadow of one of the trees, no one is around. I open the front door of blinded glass, leading to the restaurant where I find Mugisha. At the far end of the restaurant, two soda-fridges are working hard to keep the drinks cold. Their engines compete with the sound of the TV hanging above one of them, playing a Nigerian film. All the guests (+/- 20) are positioned towards the TV, their attention absorbed by the actors. More than half of the customers do not consume anything but the film.

Mugisha and I move to a table a bit further from the TV, at the socket where Mugisha charges his phone. At home he cannot charge, as they are not connected to the electricity network. Normally he charges in his car, but the new Samsung smart phone he got from a Dutch client cannot be charged from the car. He does not have the right cable.

Mugisha is in his early thirties and a private taxi driver. He grew up in a village a 45 minute drive from Kyotera. He always wanted to become a driver and when he moved to town to find a job, his landlord gave him his first job as a taxi driver. The first car Mugisha drove was a car of his landlord's. Mugisha started saving for his own car and when he achieved that he kept investing in better cars. Currently, he drives his seventh car: a grey Saloon car, with fake-leather stuffing. He started as a normal taxi driver, at the side of the road luring for those who wanted to catch a ride. Currently he only works on appointment and frequently operates between Kyotera and Entebbe airport. I wonder how he meets these upper class clients. *"I know many people in Motel. They refer to me when someone needs a 'special hire'. Every hotel supposes to have a 'special'. Although not officially, I am theirs. Most of my clients I get to know through the workers. Through Motel I met a UN engineer. I brought him to the airport. He has given me many of his contacts. As he worked in an international setting he also knew some NGO people and wazungu (whites)."*<sup>15</sup> So in return of his availability as 'special hire' at Motel Highway, he gets the clients from the Motel. Additionally he can park his car there, as he cannot safely park his car at home. By the support network (Hydén 1983) of Motel Highway, Mugisha expands his clientele. The network consists of loose contacts each moving within different networks. It provides him with new information, contacts and business opportunities (Granovetter 2005). This is in accordance with what I previously stated about the role of social relations (social capital) on the outcome of the entrepreneurial practices. The individuals in the wide range of Mugisha's social relations fulfil their particular role in the life of Muhisha. The friends in town are strategically selected. The contact is beneficiary. It is a functional network of loose contacts. As he knows them through work and as everyone comes from different places no one is related, the relation remains single-stranded. The only connection they have is based upon transactional involvement (Beuving 2013:512), and are therefore short-term and based upon individual growth and independency.

While sitting in the restaurant I see how Mugisha keeps an eye on the Motel manager who sits at one of the tables facing the TV. As soon as he gets up, Mugisha tries to

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<sup>15</sup> Informal interview James Mugisha, 27 December 2013, Motel Highway, Kyotera.

catch his eyes and greets him respectfully. To sustain his strategic network of town friends, Mugisha's entrepreneurial activities include the investment in his social capital. Therefore, it is "not just about making economic profit. It is also about serving and managing social relationships without turning them into a fixed community," (Ogawa 2006:34). The loose character of the network diminishes the expectations to share profit from business activities. As a small-scale entrepreneur, Mugisha attempts to balance self-reliance and sustenance of his strategically selected social relations. To do so, there is an exchange of 'free'<sup>16</sup> services. The reciprocal services sustain trust, and expand the network of singular transactional relations. The moral principles of reciprocity are therefore not incompatible with economic rationality (Ogawa 2006:34), they interact and sustain mutually. The manager of the Motel, for example, gives Mugisha a lot of work. They met one and a half year ago and since then they became friends. Mugisha can call him anytime. Last year he had some financial problems, the manager assisted him by paying the school fees of his daughters. In return Mugisha gives him free rides whenever he asks for it. By doing so, he sustains his relation with the Motel manager, securing his clientele from Motel Highway, securing the income of money.

These two cases illustrate that trade cannot only be structured by rational decision-making. Social connectivity has a structuring impact as well. The interaction of loose networks and concise clientele structures business outcomes in an increasingly diversifying society. In such an environment the accumulated money can be invested in personal objectives: the construction of a permanent house, the education of children, or, in case of James Mugisha, investment in improved business equipment.

## **Conclusion**

Kyotera's exchange market, as a zone of 'awkward engagement' can be recognised as an interesting site to study the interaction of global flows. So local, and yet, so globally connected. The increased complexity of town has implications for various aspects of trade as well for solidarity construction. When looking at the local movement, one can

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<sup>16</sup> I put 'free' between quotation marks as these services are not really free of charge, but reciprocal services for which is not immediately being paid.

see a strong interaction of various aspects that together construct the social reality of Kyotera. To participate in the contemporary exchange market of Kyotera, small-scale entrepreneurs move within the motion of the field and practice various exchange forms. Entrepreneurial practices are influenced by, and based upon, both the liberated market logic dominating international exchange, and more traditional forms of exchange based upon trust. To alleviate entrepreneurial risks, they have integrated both long term social ties and concise loose networks in their activities. A singular perspective on movement would have missed the reality of the field which is constructed out of the interaction of various flows. As I stated in the introduction, I believe that everything is connected and in constant movement and therefore under constant construction. By studying this movement with an open gaze, one can understand the local specificity and response on global connectedness.

This chapter has illustrated the multiplicity of flows in the field. However, what remains unclear, is the consequence of the interconnectedness and changing trade practices on the daily lives of small-scale entrepreneurs in Kyotera. Especially this group of individual entrepreneurs who rely upon their networks of affection to be able to act within a more concise exchange environment. Do these differences unite without a shrug, or are there frictions that have to be coped with by entrepreneurs? And how does solidarity get its form when the importance of individual independency in a small town like Kyotera is increasingly emphasised? In the following chapter I will shed light on the entrepreneurial strategies to cope with the multiplicity of values and the seemingly incompatible characters of exchange markets that are prevalent in traditional and modern societies.

## Chapter 3: Balancing Distance and Proximity

The more I get involved in the daily activities of my participants, the more I am aware of their connectedness to the multiple flows in the field. And become aware of their navigation between individual independency and communal membership, expressed in distinct trade practices. Although the navigation within the field in motion is not so tangible, I see it as a crucial element of their everyday lives, with substantial consequences for the design of solidarity in society. To illustrate entrepreneur's daily navigation, I follow two of my participants in their daily activities. Through the contextualisation of behaviour, differences that are influenced by societal and economic structures become apparent. It visualises the tangible as well as intangible navigation between communal and individual expectations and captures the interaction of different capitals and the position of solidarity.

### **James Mugisha – Creating Physical Distance<sup>17</sup>**

The trip to the home-village of James Mugisha, the private taxi-driver in Kyotera, highlights the different kind of capital accumulated in everyday life. Trader's strategies to cope with tensions between accumulation of different capitals, is analysed by Hans-Dieter Evers and Heiko Schrader in their coedited volume *The Moral Economy of Trade* (1994). They focus on "agents of trade during the process of transformation of an indigenous rural subsistence economy to a cash-crop-producing market economy and an integrated contemporary market system," (1994:5). This would lead to the so called 'traders' dilemma'. Their embedded approach of economy highlights the role of social trust relations in economic practices. In a way I have studied the same phenomenon in Kyotera, and I follow their approach of economic embeddedness and their observed dilemma. However, when they elaborate on this dilemma, their statement about different economic structures becomes a little too rigid. They follow the same instrumentalist approach as Göran Hydén. According to Hydén (1983) the communities of affection serve as a base for basic survival, social maintenance and development (1983:11). Based upon my field findings I agree with his statement about

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<sup>17</sup> Vignette based upon observations when visiting James home-village on 19 November 2013 and informal conversations on 27, 28 December 2013 and 14 January 2014, Kyotera.

the safeguarding character of social networks of affection. These networks back the entrepreneur in his or her activities in a situation characterised by human diversity and market complexity. However, Hydén's instrumentalist approach of the economy of affection suggests a high incompatibility of economic structures.

Considering the critique of Bourdieu on studies of social orders, the high entwinement of distinct values and practices in James Mugisha's entrepreneurial activities would not get unravelled when I would merely look at either one of the economic systems and subsequent capital profits (Bourdieu 1986). The rigid separation would therefore not be accurate. I would therefore argue against the use of the word dilemma. A dilemma suggests a choice between two unfavourable outcomes, which I have not observed and is not described as such by my research participants. I prefer the word friction, as that suggests the tension between differences in interaction and not necessarily a choice between either one of them. In my focus on the entwinement and interaction I focus on AND instead of OR.

I meet Mugisha in front of Motel Highway, we go by car. I arrive too late and kept him waiting for 20 minutes. I feel a bit sorry, I had not expected punctuality. He doesn't want to stay long in the village, he wants to be back before lunch time. We have to wait for two others who want to join the ride to neighbouring villages. Mugisha looks at his dashboard clock, which is set to universal time, a 6-hour difference to Buganda time. *"I don't want to be late, but I cannot leave now. They will not look good at me when I would leave without them. They have been waiting for me as well, now I have to be patient."* Mugisha services the ones he knows by a 'free' ride to their villages. If he would have left without them, they could have accused him of selfishness. This would harm his prestige and would mean a loss of social capital. However, waiting for others to join his ride, means that he is longer away from town, not able to be there when his clients call him. This would mean a loss of taxi-jobs and a loss of financial capital.

On our way to the village, heavy raindrops slam against the front window. Mugisha hopes his village has received some rains as well. The lands are dry and the crops thirsty. But when his phone rings and he sees who calls he sighs regretfully. *"No rain*

*over there, it is my mum who's phoning. She never uses the phone when it rains, she is scared it attracts lightning.*" We branch off the tarmac road to a dirt road, proceeding on even tinier trails. The closer we get, the more frequently James honks the horn. We pass a neighbouring village, half a kilometre before reaching home. On both sides of the road there is lots of activity. Many small shops selling the basic goods for home consumption, attract many customers. They all meet up in front of the shops, discussing the daily pursuit. A woman with a small table and a wooden bench sells them tea, freshly made at her charcoal stove at the side of her table. As this village hosts the market and the commercial centre of a few surrounding villages, Mugisha's family always goes to this village. That is why Mugisha knows so many people here. He honks his horn and waves to those he passes by. *"I should have stopped and greeted them, but I don't have enough money. You need to buy something, you have to share. Those who move away from the village, are believed to look for money. Since you are still a part of the village community, you have to share what you've earned. However, they will not ask for the money. It is not a must to share, it is people's own wish to give. I heard them calling me, I just waved and proceeded. I know they expected me to stop. Now you were sitting next to me, they might have thought that I was on program. But if I were alone, they could have stopped me."* He says that next time he has to stop and greet and sit together, to repair the damage that could be done by this action. The accuse of greediness and money-mindedness is a serious assault.

Upon arrival, Mugisha's mother and two neighbours stand in front of the house. We greet elaborately and 20 minutes later, we get in the car, together with the two neighbours and two workers from Tanzania. The boot of the car is filled with palm leafs. When the trail becomes too narrow and steep to proceed, we stop. *"Welcome to my plantation"*, says Mugisha proudly. This plantation is mainly for cash crops, Mugisha's food crops grow in the garden at his house in Kyotera. The greater part of the land is occupied by banana-trees, but in five years, Mugisha hopes to have shifted to a coffee plantation. Like all banana-plantations in the village, his plantation suffers from *wilt*, a disease affecting the ripening of the fruits. As a village whole, the villagers have decided to shift to coffee, thereby wiping out the destructive banana-disease and



saving the income of farmers. The collective character of the decision enables the farmers to sell their ware and compete with prices at the market sites in town.

The neighbours and workers get the leafs from the boot of the car and start covering the vulnerable plants that need protection against the scorching sun. The neighbours knew Mugisha was coming, they offered their help without invitation. This shows affection and support and eases the work on the plantation. Mugisha can return to town sooner, where he can continue his taxi-service. It also creates expectancies to do something in return, sooner or later, as Mugisha is indebted to his neighbours. The workers are paid some money, the neighbour are not. *"Sometimes I give my neighbours some money, sometimes a bottle of beer or a bread. I don't have to pay them, as I will help them when they need it, and they know that."* I wonder why one of the neighbours gets a bunch of bananas and the other one, who has been working for Mugisha as well, gets nothing. *"I know he is in need. And as I know the neighbours in the village, I also know when one can possibly become needy, for example when the weather becomes dry. Others who are not needy don't come to request a bunch, since I know them and their family, and I know they are not in need."* Although the plantation is owned by Mugisha, he says the fruits are communal. The neighbours know that it will sustain them as well when needed. This 'communal ownership' protects the plantations against thieves. *"Thieves know they will be seen. Even when I am not around, there is the watchful eye of the neighbours."*

After a few of hours in the village and when the work on his land is done, Mugisha prepares himself to leave. He greets his mother and leaves her a bunch of bananas. We drive down the trail. When the road curves, he stops. Mugisha gets out of his car and walks towards a clay-brown house at a little distance from the road towards the bushes. I follow him. A young woman comes to us, greeting enthusiastically. After having greeted one another, she asks us to follow her to the back of her house. There she offers us a seat and a glass of water. She sits squatted in front of her separated kitchen, chasing a kitten trying to sneak in. She is the wife of Mugisha's cousin, who is not around at the moment. She informs him about the wellbeing of the family and village life, Mugisha tells her about his life in Kyotera. A few minutes later, Mugisha gets up. She thanks him genuinely for his visit, Mugisha promises to be back

soon. *“Even if you don’t have anything to share, it is a must to come and greet,”* he says when we get back into the car. *“Your presence shows your connection to the community. If you never show your face, they will think you have forgotten about them. You can also share a little. You can buy them a bottle of beer, for example. They will say: ‘this bottle is bought by our son, we made our son to grow big like this’. It does not matter to whom you give. I can give it to anyone I find. They will spread the word of my sharing, my visit or my gift to the community. Sometimes they share the beer with everyone, so everyone gets one sip, to ‘enjoy the sweat’ of the one who worked for it and shared it.”*

In the boot, two bunches of bananas. One to take to Kyotera to share with the neighbours there, the other for home consumption. On our way back, we follow the narrow and muddy trails back to the tarmac road. Perhaps I look a bit nervous, because James smiles and says: *“No worries, the neighbours will help when our car gets stuck”*.

During this visit to Mugisha’s home-village I observed tensions between the investment in communal membership and entrepreneurial activities to accumulate money. Mugisha navigates between social redistributive claims from his relatives and sustenance of his membership in the community (Neves & Du Toit 2012:139). He says, for instance, that he would have feared the credit system if he would not have moved to town. *“If I would not operate in the credit system in the village, people would think I don’t trust them. They would look bad at me and say I work only for myself.”*<sup>8</sup> Especially in off-season, when villagers have not so much to sell, and therefore no money to pay for services. To show trust in the community, entrepreneurs have to accept customers to pay later. Requesting for loan repayment would break trust and esteem (Van der Grijp 2003). However, by creating a physical distance between himself and the village community, Mugisha manages claims of redistribution and positions himself between the expectations from village and town life. Short visits to his village offer him the opportunity to show his affection to the community, and at the same time, lead his

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<sup>18</sup> Informal conversation James Mugisha, 28 December 2013, Kyotera.

own life in town without informing his community too much about it. The distance enables him to invest his money in his personal growth, without fearing to be accused of greediness when not redistributing his money to his community members (Evers & Schrader 1994; Van der Grijp 2003).

At the same time, Mugisha is involved in the construction and maintenance of strong solidarity ties with the community members. By accepting 'free' rides and sharing his wealth by the redistribution of his vegetables and small amounts of money, Mugisha invests in long term trust relations. Reciprocity and redistribution of wealth sustain Mugisha's prestige in the community. The solidarity bonds he creates by these reciprocal activities offer him a position within his home-community and a net of social security that backs him in his participation in an uncertain market (Van Donge 1992:203). Through this strategic movement between town and village he accumulates social capital as well as financial capital. Exactly this entwinement, despite of the frictions it causes, provides Mugisha with the freedom to move independently from redistributive claims of his family and, equally important, with a strong solidarity network in the village and a position within his community. The navigation between town and village is therefore not a matter of choice, it is a matter of strategically managing the equilibrium.

### **Maureen Suubi – Managing Savings and Credit<sup>19</sup>**

Someone who clearly showed me the strategic management of social and economic activities in her entrepreneurial practises is Maureen Suubi. Like Mugisha she distances herself physically from her relatives, to navigate between the demands from the distinct exchange markets. Although she does not move as frequently between town and her home-village, her investments in her social network are crucial aspects of her entrepreneurial activities as well.

To reach her shop, I follow the road leading to Rakai, the capital of this district. I pass some improvised market stalls, a chapatti vendor, a site where pigs are collected to be transported to slaughterhouses elsewhere in the country. In these few hundred metres,

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<sup>19</sup> Vignette based upon several field observations and interviews, 28 December 2013; 6, 16, 20 and 23 January 2014, Kyotera.

bustling town life seems to diminish, a small maize field has filled empty plots. Appearances are deceiving, new plots of houses and a new fuel station appears.

Suubi's eyes have caught mine and her bright smiling face greets me from a distance. I tell the *boda* to drop me in front of her shop. I avoid confrontation with her just washed bed sheets that hang out to dry between her shop and the tree at the road side. Only a few weeks ago I found out that the woman I frequently visit to buy water from, speaks good English. Since then, I have spent many hours at the wooden bench in front of her shop. The iron door I lean against gives me support while observing what is happening in and around Suubi's small shop.

In 2009 Suubi moved to Kyotera to start her own business. Before that she had always lived in her home-village. She is 31, the eighth born in a family of 15 children. They all went to school, some even to university. *"My father was a farmer, an architect and a constructor. He had big plantations, growing coffee, bananas and our daily food. Doing all these businesses, he earned enough to send us to school."* Suubi dropped out of school when she was in Senior 4, to go to college to be trained as a teacher. When she found out she could not earn good money as a teacher she stopped her studies. At that time, a shop keeper in her village approached her, offering Suubi to work in her shop. *"She was a very good boss. Because I could sleep in her shop I could save a lot during that time. I earned 80,000 Shillings per months of which I could save 50,000 which I put straight on my bank account. After 2,5 years, I saved 10,5 million Shillings. Enough to start my own business and to work for myself. I didn't tell my family about my savings. They would have asked me why I didn't give them some money. They think that my husband has provided the start capital. I only asked him to assist me with the last bit of the capital, therefore he was the only one who knew about my savings."*

According to Suubi, Kyotera is more business-like compared to her village that is located at the main road towards Kampala as well. Kyotera is bigger, with more and different people, which creates a better business environment. After some time, when she sits next to me on the bench, she says she has not only moved away for business reasons. She has also moved to escape from her demanding family (cf Evers & Schrader 1994; cf Neves & Du Toit 2012). *"When I worked in the village, my family used to come*

*and ask me to help them with all kinds of items from the shop. I could not refuse, I had to help them at my own expenses.”* Now she is too far to fear the effects of the credit-system. She does not visit her home-village regularly. Her shop is opened seven days a week, from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm. Her first born is seven and lives with Suubi’s parents in her home-village where he goes to school. Suubi provides in his school fees.

In all these hours on the wooden bench, many people come to her shop, mostly neighbours. To change money, to buy an egg, a chapatti or cooking oil. The 1 year old Zziwa is always with her, tight at her back, or wandering around the counter. Suubi fluently alternates running her shop with her normal household activities: washing Zziwa and the dishes, peeling beans, hanging cloths to dry. Suubi laughs nearly all the time. She cheerfully greets and chats with everyone who passes by. A woman arrives and puts a bucket full of potatoes at the doorstep of Suubi’s shop. She has just harvested and as Suubi’s potatoes are not ready yet, she can have these one’s. When Suubi’s potatoes are ready to be harvested, she will return the bucket. *“By this, you will never be hungry!”*<sup>20</sup>

Instead of locating her shop at the main road, she decided to move a bit away from the centre, to serve the people here. During the past four years, her shop has expanded from a shop selling soap and sugar, to selling any household related item. The growth has to do with her credit-management as well as her saving capacity. *“I only give my products on credit to those I know where to find. If I don’t know where they live, I can never visit them to claim my debt in case they don’t repay in time. I will never give anything on credit to strangers. They can disappear without paying. I would go bankrupt soon!”* But according to her, her shop does not expand fast enough. She wants more, and therefore her saving continues. *“I like the system of saving! After I ran my shop for 2 years, I saved enough to buy myself a plot of land in 2011. Two years later I saved enough to start the construction of a house at the land. Without saving you will get nowhere. I taught myself how to save. I asked myself: who do I want to be in the future, how will it be? I still ask myself these questions, every day. I hope to have a big house that is*

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<sup>20</sup> Rosemary, informal interview 27 January 2014, Kyotera.

*finished, a big business and that my children will go to good schools. Only God knows whether I will make it.”*



Image 2: Suubi in front of her shop, 23 January 2014.

Spending hours in front of her shop showed me Maureen Suubi's subtle navigation between the distance and proximity of her social ties, in order to manage tensions between generosity and individual independency. Like James Mugisha, she has distanced herself physically from her family. Her shop is located in another town and therefore, her family would not demand 'free' services. Her family in law lives in Kyotera, not so far from her shop. However, as they are all in business, they know the effects of the credit system and do not burden one another with their needs. Additionally to the physical distance between her and her community, Suubi makes sure they do not know about her possessions either. She would have had to share her savings, not allowing her to act independently.

Suubi majorly invests in her weak ties; in the single-stranded relations with her neighbours (Beuving 2013). The neighbours play a crucial role in her business.

Although she is not blood related to them, she introduces them to me as brothers, as they are all *Buganda*<sup>21</sup>. Without their clientele, she would not have been able to accumulate capital. To do so, she has to except credits as to favour them and build trust relations. Her strategic selection of those she in- and excludes in this system, limits the indebtedness and regulates her income. The few strong social ties she has in town sustain her in a complex society. The sharing of harvest shows social affection and the indebtedness creates a web of long term social relations that assure social security and solidarity (Van der Grijp 2003; Ogawa 2006). By doing so, she can save money and invest in her business and individual wellbeing. In addition to the community in town is Suubi's position in her home-community represented by the physical presence of her first born in the village. His presence assures Suubi, in spite of her absence, of the communal backing upon which she can rely in uncertain times (Van Velsen 1960).

## Conclusion

Based upon my field findings, I am hesitant to follow statements of Hydén (1983), and Evers and Schrader (1994) concerning tensions between different economic structures. Their studies suggest a linearity in progression, from a traditional and moral economy to a capitalist, rational economy. In a world which is increasingly interrelated and in constant interaction, holding on to the opposing character of the modern and the traditional does not make sense any longer (Ogawa 2005). Facilitated by the participation of exchange agents (entrepreneurs) in both 'localities', the local and the global are in interaction and exchange values. I argue that studies following the incompatibility-model of world economies and the linear way of development would not see the interaction and intertwinement of seemingly distinct economic value systems that emerge in a small town in Uganda.

Owners of an enterprise or those economically well off "walk a social tight road between engaging with new opportunities of accumulation and remaining committed to a communalistic range of social meanings and obligations. In this way they seek to

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<sup>21</sup> Someone from Buganda Kingdom.

ensure that short-term fiscal gains will not come at the cost of disrupting their moral and social underpinnings of longer-term ‘transactional orders,’” (Neves & Du Toit 2012:142). These cases illustrate that entrepreneurs search for personal means to overcome the friction between social demands and business growth; to escape the so called ‘traders’ dilemma’ (Neves & Schrader 1994). Although these strategies vary in practice, the entrepreneurs try to manage money and debt (fundamental for trust) as a key-task in their small-scale economic activities. Significant in the cases is the combined economy: a combination of monetary exchange and gift exchange, which are understood to be at odds with each other (*cf* Van der Grijp 2003). Personal goals determine the way small-town entrepreneurs value social and financial capital. As Maureen Suubi values her individual independency most, she saves and invests her money. Thereby she needs her loyal neighbours who return to her shop. She needs to cut her own financial capital, by accepting credits to show trust in her neighbours. This provides her with social security and solidarity upon which she can rely in case of emergency.

James Mugisha values his prestige in his home community as much as his individual independency in town and therefore invests in both. The weekly trips ‘home’ and subsequent sharing of his capital and time, is an investment in his social capital and prestige in his community. This community provides him with social security and assistance, upon which he cannot rely amongst his loose social ties in town. His short visits also mark the importance of his presence in town. Town offers him business opportunities, which generate financial capital. By being present, mostly in Motel Highway, he shows his dedication and trustworthiness to the staff there. In return he gets clients who he drives long distances and who pay him well. Not disturbed by community members in town, he is able to dedicate himself to his work without having to consider his community and his prestige.

In Evers and Schrader’s (1994) evaluation of the ‘traders’ dilemma’, the social and cultural differentiation from the sociocultural context, is the main strategy to escape the dilemma. They state that the entrepreneurs adopt a new cultural scheme, withdrawing themselves from their cultural roots in order to participate in business. Cultural differentiation, according to Evers and Schrader the key- strategy to escape



the dilemma, suggests the emergence of a plural society. However, the above mentioned cases show differently. Traditional cultures can adjust to environmental changes, without ignoring cultural features fundamental for the identity of the entrepreneur's society. Or in other words "one of the big surprises of 'late capitalism' is that 'traditional' cultures are not inevitably incompatible with it [late capitalism] nor vulnerable to it", (Sahlins 2000:520). Entrepreneurs strategically navigate between 'the modern' and 'the traditional' to participate in both.

This chapter has shown entrepreneurs' navigation between strong and weak social ties in relation to their economic activities. The various navigation strategies can simultaneously be implemented and contribute to the careful maintenance of individual independency and social trust relations, which results in a hybrid union of presupposed incompatible values. However, what has not yet been unravelled is why the position within these home-communities are being kept and secured. Everyone I met in town maintains a garden or plantation in their home-village. Frictions between individual independency and community expectations are emerging there. Why do the entrepreneurs return home? And why do they call home where their community is, not mentioning town?

## Chapter 4: Investment in the Communal-Individual

Clouds of morning dew cover the papyrus in white veils. Zigzagging, to avoid the water pools at the dirt road, Samuel Kimbowa crosses the swamp on his old *boda*. His thick jacket and gloves protect him against the cold and humidity. In an hour, the sun will take up its position in the sky, turning the cold and humidity into their opposites. Right after the swamp Kimbowa turns right, climbing the final small trails to his home-village. Although he lives in Kyotera, he goes there every morning to take care of his crops. He is not the only one. All the entrepreneurs I spoke with during my fieldwork, including those successfully profiting from town's business environment; and those gaining sufficiently to provide in their daily needs, invest time and money in their home-village gardens. While they said to have moved to town to enjoy business opportunities and live independently, their gardens connect them to the demands and expectations of their home-community, as described in the previous chapter. All these investments in the village seem senseless when merely looking at the calculative benefits of economic practices. However, it is less so when one considers the significance of the community and the importance of belonging to a (rural) home area (Andersson 2001:100).

### Solidarity

In Kyotera, the human diversity and the business orientation of many urban dwellers, seem to be a good breeding ground for individual independency. The individual agendas lead to increased complexity of Kyotera's town life. The complexity hinders strong trust relations in town and networks therefore are mostly based upon short term concise relations. Through this movement of diversification, solidarity, society's solidifier, is hindered and transformed. One of the leading scholars in the understanding of solidarity, Emile Durkheim, studied social cohesion in transforming societies. In his book *The Division of Labour in Society* (1984), he opposes against the liberal idea of individualism based upon self-interest. Human beings are naturally social beings and cannot be understood as independent individuals away from any



Image 3: Kimbowa on his daily return to his home-village, 13 December 2013.

sociocultural context, and therefore, self-interest could never be a strong fundament for society (Van der Loo & Van Reijen 1997:103-107). The negotiation between self-interest and solidarity is exactly what I observed amongst the urban dwellers in Kyotera. They balance individual independency and the contribution to social cohesion. The society, according to Durkheim, should be understood as a super-individual organ which binds and embeds people in a collective consciousness: the set of shared (social) values and rules that are followed by its members, either consciously or unconsciously (Van der Loo & Van Reijen 1997:103-107). The more complex and diverse the society, the weaker the collective consciousness and succeeding social cohesion, and the more individualised and institutionalised (e.g. the welfare state) the solidarity bonds become (Bauman 2011). The home-community characterised by strong social cohesion differs therefore considerably from the networks based upon concise and individual ties amongst urban dwellers.

The land to which urban dwellers return provides the entrepreneur, in addition to the provision of food crops, access to the historical foundation of the home-community. It provides access to long term solidary relations that have been maintained throughout generations, by active involvement with the land and the community. In his classical work about labour migration Van Velsen (1960) states that “people depend on one another’s help in daily life and in emergencies. Therefore people want more than just land; they want a position in the society which gives them security in all the ways (...) society can offer it,” (Van Velsen 1960:275). The tensions in the daily lives of entrepreneurs described in the previous chapter are therefore an indisputable part of the investment in community membership. Those who have moved away to benefit from town’s business opportunities have to manage the demands as a result of social claims of redistribution, while valuing the engagement in that same community (Neves & Du Toit 2012:139). Various scholars have studied solidarity by focussing on the link between the urban and the rural, by studying the relation of urban dwellers and their rural home-villages (Van Velsen 1960; Van Donge 1992; Geschiere & Gugler 1998; Andersson 2001). They all state that, similar to the modernity discourse, linear and uniform ideas are recognised in the understanding of the connection between the rural and the urban. The conventional understanding distinguishes the urban and rural as two distinct social worlds and tells little about their specific way in which they are socially organised and connected (Andersson 2001:89-90). The linearity would not explain why James Mugisha, for instance, structurally talks about his home-village: *“Although I am in town, I live there in my home-village. I will eventually return to my village.”*<sup>22</sup> It reminds me of what Geschiere and Gugler wrote about the unifying effect of burials on urbanites and their village-communities. “In many parts of Africa the moral necessity of being buried in the home villages – a burial in the city being the ultimate sign of social failure – forms one of the most potent factors that tie city people to their rural home,” (Geschiere & Gugler 1998:311). The burial ceremonies and care for graves expresses the collective connection to the past and to the long term social relations with the community. *“If I would not be there at ceremonies they would think I am not attending because I prefer working. That I would value money more than my*

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<sup>22</sup> Informal interview James Mugisha, 15 January 2014, Kyotera.

*family. This would damage my status in the community,”*<sup>23</sup> explains Kimbowa when I asked him about the importance of ceremonies to him. Not attending would express individualism and disrespect for the historical communal support.

Studying movement, instead of standards, in societies sheds light on the local response to the global interconnectedness. It reveals that urbanites in Kyotera carefully maintain the solidarity bonds with their home community while actively participating in town. This can only be understood when we step away from the conventional ideas of separated entities and linearity.

### **The Communal-Individual**

Like many gardens in this region, crops grow criss-crossed on Kimbowa's land. A colourful mixture of bananas, maize, cassava, coffee and beans. This palette of vegetables is surrounded by 80 ficus-trees. They give good shade for the plants and their leaves are fertilising the soil. If he would have had a bigger land, he would have planted the crops nicely in rows, but Kimbowa admits that this mixture is not all that bad either. The plants fertilise and support one another in their growth. This mutual support and dependency amongst the plants in Kimbowa's garden, makes me think of the mutual support within social networks (cf Hydén 1983) and the role urbanites play in the social cohesion of the community in home-villages.

As I mentioned before, the connection between the urban dwellers and their rural homes is the result of the entwinement of the economic and social realm. The involvement of urbanites in the home-community exceeds mere economic interests and is an involvement in the total life of the community (Van Velsen 1960:275), and thereby of the individual. Entrepreneurs do not merely focus on the accumulation of financial capital and individual growth as that would not encompass all aspects of life. In order to mitigate social and economic risks in life, the entrepreneur balances multiple objectives to secure resource flows by making social and material investments (Neves & Du Toit 2012:145). In other words, the investment in social networks

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<sup>23</sup> Informal conversation Samuel Kimbowa, 7 January 2014, Kyotera.

contributes to the governance of economic activities and the profits from economic activities contribute to the social cohesion in the networks.

The individual entrepreneur in town, is not accurately understood by the Western, neoliberal idea of the individual as disengaged and essentially independent from the community (Nwoye 2006:120). In her study of the African self, Augustine Nwoye argues for an alternative understanding of the individual. Characterised by a blend of invisible dimensions, she recognises the individual as a 'relational agent' (Nwoye 2006). Although her approach is somewhat dualistic – West (they) versus (us) Africa, traditional versus modern – I recognise some of her dimensions amongst the entrepreneurs in Kyotera. Especially the communal aspect of the self is helpful to understand why entrepreneurs invest in their connection with their home-villages and communities. Like the crops in Kimbowa's garden, I observed a cross fertilisation of the independent individual and the individual as a member of the community. The community membership and the particular position within the social network strengthens the individual in its being. The individual who participates in an insecure and temporary environment is backed by the surety of the community: one's value within the community and reliance upon other members in the immediate present and in the uncertain future. Surety which cannot be provided by the single-stranded ties out of which town's society is constructed (Bauman 2011).

It is the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, the day before Christmas. I join James Mugisha on his short visit to his home-village. The streets of the villages we pass are very busy, people do their last shopping for the festive family dinner the following day. On nearly every street corner, one can find a temporary butcher selling his or her ware. Remarkable and normally rarely seen, as meat is unaffordable for the vast majority. Tight onto the wooden frame eight cow carcasses hang upside down, each taken care of by its own butcher. Their intestines and heads at a separate table at the side of the temporary construction. The customers, grouped in a patient crowd, waiting to get their share of the cow. A large weighing scale in the middle serves all of them.

Christmas is that day of the year that reunites families. Those members who moved away, mostly due to job opportunities, come back to their home-villages. This

movement starts about one or two weeks prior to Christmas. Bus' rates rise, and fully packed, driving from main towns towards the hinterland, busses speed up to get everyone home before Christmas. Including themselves. The traffic increases considerably, also contributed to by the transport of cows to be slaughtered and bananas for the famous *matooke* (traditional dish of mashed bananas). As a result the number of sometimes deadly car crashes and bus-accidents rise subsequently. A great risk to get home and join the community reunion.

There are many expenses during Christmas time, especially on food and transport. Mugisha pays his visit to the home-village the day before Christmas and will therefore not join his family reunion. When I wonder why, he says he wants to lighten the work for his mother who has to cook for many. He rather stays at home with his own family: his wife and three daughters. I wonder if this is the only reason. Although he does not say so, I can imagine that all the expenses might create big expectations from Mugisha. His family could expect him to contribute with large amounts, as he is a successful urban entrepreneur.

Before branching of the main road to the dirt road leading to his home-village, Mugisha makes sure he has changed a 50,000-Shillings note into small notes of 5,000 Shillings. In his boot he carries a big plastic bag with 10 breads. He does not want to arrive empty handed. People have saved a lot to buy food for these festive-meals. During Christmas time, people expect town dwellers to come and greet and share something. This gives a sense of their presence in the community.

The tam-tam has spread the message, and upon arrival at his home, a couple of neighbours are waiting for him. They offer their help, as they know Mugisha has come to work on his plantation as well. They offer their help, especially during Christmas, expecting to get something in return to reduce their Christmas expenses. *"That's why I brought the breads,"*<sup>24</sup> Mugisha comments amused.

In what I observed in Kyotera and its surrounding villages, sharing wealth and wellbeing with community members is a key-aspect of the active maintenance of one's membership. This reciprocal act of sharing is an investment in social security and the

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<sup>24</sup> Vignette based observations and conversation during fieldtrip to James Mugisha's home-village, 24 December 2014.

sense of belonging to a supportive community, solidified by a collective consciousness. The rural community provides social security for the urbanites, whereas the urbanites provides the village with a link to the outside world (Geschiere & Gugler 1998:310). It is in both their interest to invest in the relation.

Observing the field, I understand sharing as a way to navigate between individual independency and social cohesion, which requires strategic balancing (Evers & Schrader 1994; Van der Grijp 2003; Ogawa 2006; Beuving 2013). By means of sharing, people move between the privately earned income and communal solidarity. It is a moral and evidential obligation to the community (Woodburn 1998), which contributes to the status of the member. It expresses close social relationship and a lack of attachment to objects [or money] (Ewart 2013). In societies in which generosity is the highest social principle, sharing expresses the care for others and the investment in long term trust relations. Reciprocity creates enduring debt relations, not in a calculative way, but in a sense of strong mutual dependency for now and the far future.

The entrepreneurial activities in town, are entwined with the preoccupation with achievement and improvement of one's status in the community. The identity of the entrepreneur is shaped by who he or she is, as well as by what he or she has achieved in life; the growth from subsistence farmer to entrepreneur in town means a growth in status within the community (Nwoye 2006:125), as long as wealth is redistributed. The success of community members affects the status of the entire community, which encourages the support of the community of successful and prestigious individual members (Nwoye 2006:131). Accepting the entrepreneur to move back to town to accumulate capital and status is therefore of communal interest.

Diminishing status would harm the communal aspect of the individual, and therefore, status and prestige within the community is cautiously taken care of. Paying a visit the day before Christmas and bringing breads and money to his community shows Mugisha's affection to his community and sustains his status as a successful community member. *"For me, sharing is not a problem. I like it so much to give and share and I feel blessed to make money. Sharing makes me feel at home. I know that I could stay in Kyotera for a whole year, without visiting my home-village. I know the people there in the village would take care of my parents. I would not have to ask anyone*



*to look after them, they would go themselves. For that, you need to show your communal affection with them. They need to know you have not forgotten about them. So when I am free, I come to the village and sit down with the people there. I will find them offering their drinks. Although I don't like beer, I accept, because I want to break the distance and be with them, on the ground".*<sup>25</sup> The reciprocal acts and, in spite of the dispersal of the community, the self-evidence of moral obligations connects members to the historically based collective consciousness of the community (Geschiere & Gugler 1998:311).

## Conclusion

From a neoliberal perspective it might seem irrational to hold on to roots and home-villages and to invest in the community as it would hinder individual independency and the accumulation of money. However, the community and belonging to a rural home area are essential for small-scale entrepreneurs. The long term social ties are carefully maintained in order to secure one's social security in a complex and moving society. As long as those who have moved away show their affection and contribute to the community, they can rely upon the social security web. Reciprocal activities construct the trust relations upon which the members can rely. These trust relations cross time and space and connect members of communities in the past, present and future. The security of the network which cannot easily be renounced, backs the entrepreneur in town, which is in itself too diverse to build long term trust relations. Independent from reciprocal obligations, the entrepreneur can participate relatively freely in the uncertain market. However, this satisfies only one part of the needs of the individual. Like Samuel Kimbowa firmly stated: *"You can never live as an individual. Never!"*<sup>26</sup> Belonging to a community and the prestige and position one occupies within the community completes the individual in its being. A dualistic perspective on this socioeconomic situation would not give a grip on the strong connectedness of individual independency and communal aspects of life. It would not capture that the fulfilment of only individual independency is, at least in small-town Africa, unsatisfactory.

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<sup>25</sup> Informal conversation James Mugisha, 27 December 2013, Motel Highway, Kyotera.

<sup>26</sup> Informal conversation Samuel Kimbowa, 7 January 2014, Kyotera.

## Conclusion: Managing the Equilibrium.

My favourite *boda*-driver, who I have supplied with so many rides and who has given me his punctuality and trustworthiness in return, meets me in town. I get up, squeezing a pineapple and four chapattis in a flour bag between us. For the last time we drive with a staggering speed down the hill. No longer terrified, as I know he is a careful driver. We pass 'hardware street' and Betherem Stage and for the last time I drive to my faraway village, leaving town behind. At the top of the hill, just before we branch off, I have a last view on Kyotera. The view is clear, however, just three kilometres away from town I hardly see a sign of its vibrancies.

This thesis sought to shed light on the vibrancies as a result of the global (economic) connectedness of a small town in Uganda and the effect of these vibrancies on the construction of solidarity. Small-scale entrepreneurs have taken me along their roads of daily life and guided me through the tightly woven meshwork of flows. They showed me that they balance profits and expectancies from their town and village lives through careful navigation. Through this navigation they achieve their multiple objectives and position solidarity in their daily lives. Most of the daily practices of entrepreneurs take place in town, where solidarity is captured by the networks of weak ties. As these ties are mostly single-stranded, the need for social security and the sense of belonging is taken care of by another social network, the home-community. This community backs entrepreneurs in their participation in the uncertainty of town's exchange market, where the need for individual independency can be fulfilled. At the same time it provides the entrepreneur with a sense of belonging to a community so central to the completion of the self as a historically 'related individual'.

At the same time the story of my research participants illustrates the impossibility to describe and understand daily reality by a dichotomised view. Daily life of the entrepreneurs is characterised by navigation and hybridisation of presupposed differences. The story shows a strategic implementation of hybridity as a crucial part of social reality. Hybridity is therefore not only an ideal to be achieved by strategic practices, likewise hybridity is a means to achieve fulfilment of personal necessities. Hybridity as dialectic strategy is a crucial insight for economic

anthropologists who study the all-encompassing impact of globalisation and international exchange. In the major discourse amongst economic anthropologists about the impact of social relations on economic practices, I argue for an understanding of economic practices as a hybrid entwinement of rational and social aspects. Based upon my field findings I reject the dualism by which the discourses about economy and modernity are frequently led. The dualistic view and standardisation of aspects of life, like exchange systems, do not capture local reality (Granovetter 1985; Gudeman 1986; Tsing 2000; Ho 2005). It misses out the constructive potential of people, that is rightly formulated by Marshall Sahlins: “people all around the world ... recycle elements of their traditional existence in the construction of their own indigenous versions of modernity,” (Sahlins in Knauff 2002:105) and economy. The dynamic and hybrid relation between modern and traditional, between rationality and trust, constitute the uniqueness of the field.

To catch field's dynamism, I argue for a storied ethnography by which knowledge is contextualised. This specifies language and concepts used in sciences. As “stories always, and inevitably, draw together what classifications split apart”, (Ingold 2011:160), the contextualisation of language illustrates the dialectic relation of concepts, carrier and field. By telling the story of the field I have been able to find the local specificities of the meaning of solidarity. It provided the access to the intersection of differences and an understanding of their interaction. This anthropological method provided me a clear view on field's reality. To understand the social order in specific regions or localities, researchers should therefore be aware of their own vision on the field. Awareness of and reflection on the personal vision as well as the vision of participants in the field, reduces the biased interpretation of local situations. In a more and more complex society, a continuous reflection on one's personal view is needed to avoid the impact of standardised presumptions. The contextualisation of knowledge captured by storied ethnography, sustains the knowledge about local phenomena in global perspective. Not in a universalistic way, but by a specificity that characterises localities. It sustains anthropologists in the essence of their profession; the contextualisation of knowledge to understand the fluidity of the social world order. The essence of anthropology provided me with a profound understanding of the daily reality of small-scale entrepreneurs in Kyotera.

## Story In Comparative Perspective

Back to how it all began. The crisis of the European exchange market is still persistent. As well as the search for alternative exchange practices. The so called 'share economy' is celebrated and various businesses in the public and private sector experiment with new business models (cf Jonker 2013; eg. Our Common Future 2.0 2014).

My ethnographic field study in Uganda has given me insights in the human necessity of communal belonging as supplementary to individual independency. I have observed and interpreted Kyotera as a small town which is experimenting with accumulation of money in a diversifying environment and the investment of that money in individual growth. This process is founded by a strong solidarity net of home based communities, in which is carefully invested too. Members of these communities fly out to try their luck in an additional environment. Right there, at this cross-road of two necessities, is where I got inspired. The incompatibility of the individual and the community seems not as true as the neoliberals make us believe.

Is this hybridity just as realistic in an institutionalised society as The Netherlands? In The Netherlands, solidarity is nationwide organised, planned and standardised to suit all. It structures health care and education and facilitates a concise and efficient solidarity amongst the Dutch people. However, the concise system does not fulfil the personal need for security and belonging. It is a rational idea of being backed by a system. The solidarity amongst individuals in small communities is far more than a system. The personal involvement and the human standard expands solidarity to an emotion of belonging which complements the rationality of the capitalist system. This hybridity is the essence of socioeconomic life.

The search for other forms of exchange in current times of economic crisis in Europe, should be founded in the dialectic understanding of economy. The peace and security of The Netherlands that facilitated individual independency and a reduction of communal dependency, is no longer certain. The old structure of solidarity does not 'suit' the new situation and does no longer fulfil its securing task. The increased self-

employment and contract flexibility of this century requires an alternative construction of solidarity. It fertilises the necessity to seek for personal security in small-scale communities.

Where the institutionalisation of solidarity hindered the hybridity, I believe that the movement to personal, small-scale exchange facilitates the hybridity that I have observed as daily reality in Uganda. The hybridity of concise business relations and personal trust provides us with necessary sense of security and belonging. Not by choosing between them, but like Kyotera has shown, by combining both in an encompassing whole. Small-scale economic activities whereby interpersonal contact is of key importance in the transaction, would back people with an idea of community. When trust is one of the capitals to accumulate, the loneliness and fear for the unknown would be decreased and replaced by the surety of a community. It is not without reason that we start looking for ways to revalidate solidarity in current times of unrest!

The 10,000 kilometres that separate The Netherlands from Uganda, do not make all that of a difference. There are many aspects of Ugandan reality that relate intensively with social reality of The Netherlands. Also the north-western European individual independency needs to be supplemented with communality. In this thesis I have sought to illustrate how connected the world is and at the same time, how unique people react upon the relation of flows. Only with an open gaze, aware of our own vision and subsequent consequences, we can facilitate inspiration from local phenomena in abundant global interconnection.

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