

'Los Agachaditos'

*Street Food Vendors, Popular Networks and
Food Security in El Alto, Bolivia*



Kimberley Gajraj
MSc International Development Studies
Utrecht University, August 2015

'Los Agachaditos'

Street Food Vendors, Popular Networks and Food Security in El Alto, Bolivia

By: Kim Gajraj (4291646)

Masters Thesis: MSc International Development Studies
Utrecht, The Netherlands, August 2015

Supervisor: Dr. Gery Nijenhuis, Utrecht University



Universiteit Utrecht

International Development Studies
Department of Human Geography
Faculty of Geosciences
Utrecht University
The Netherlands

Copyright Gajraj, K.J., 2015. All rights Reserved.
kim.gajraj@gmail.com

Agradecimientos

Primero, quisiera agradecerles a mis dos asistentes de investigación principales, Richard Canaviri y Carolina Ilaya. Los dos aplicaron sus amplios conocimientos locales y teóricos a la investigación con compromiso y pasión. Proveyeron apoyo esencial al proceso: no solamente facilitaron acceso a los participantes, acompañándome a algunas entrevistas y explicándome aspectos de la cultura y de la vida diaria alteñas que me eran nuevos, sino también compartieron percepciones útiles sobre las economías populares en Bolivia, lo cual contribuyó enormemente a la evolución del estudio. Los conocimientos abundantes de Carolina por lo que se refiere al comercio de la comida callejera fueron invaluable, y su disposición a compartir abiertamente informaciones personales sobre su propia vida ha sido instrumental a un entendimiento del tema. Gracias especiales a ella por esto.

Otros asistentes de investigación efectuaron el sondeo de consumidores eficaz y hábilmente. A Adelia Aruquipa, Elsa (Monica) Limachi, Wilfredo Casablanca y Leonel Mayta, todos sociólogos, les agradezco su participación entusiasmada en la efectuación del sondeo.

Quisiera agradecerle a mi tutora, la Dra. Gery Nijenhuis, quien proveyó apoyo constante a lo largo de la investigación y la redacción de la tesis. Ayudó con preocupaciones enfrentadas durante el trabajo de campo, consultó profundamente conmigo sobre la redacción de la tesis y siempre me motivó a mejorar.

Gracias a mi compañero de clase, Ralf Leonards, quien pasó también su estancia de trabajo de campo en La Paz, y quien siempre estaba dispuesto a discutir teoría metodología y resultados, y compartir informaciones que creía pertinentes a mi investigación. Ha sido un compañero y un amigo maravilloso.

Me ha asombrado la disposición de académicos y profesionales ocupados a tomar el tiempo para encontrarse conmigo, y discutir y comentar sobre mi trabajo. Gracias al Dr. Mauricio Gil de CIDES, y Juan-Pablo Solís de Hivos, quienes me brindaron informaciones y contactos útiles para empezar con la investigación. También a Sjoerd Panhuysen, de la filial holandesa de Hivos, quien se encontró conmigo antes de que partiera a Bolivia y contribuyó ideas útiles y contactos bolivianos, los cuales me prepararon para establecerme en un lugar nuevo. Quisiera agradecerlo también a Diego Muñoz, quien se reunió conmigo a mitad del proceso de la investigación y me dio una crítica honesta de las limitaciones del estudio para que pudiera mejorar mucho la calidad de la investigación. Gracias también a María-Teresa Nogales y a Javier Thellaeche de Fundación Alternativa por la información y los consejos teóricos sobre la seguridad alimentaria en La Paz.

Quiero agradecerle particularmente al Dr. Nico Tassi, quien daba consejos constantemente durante la investigación, me puso en contacto con mis asistentes de investigación, y hizo paseos por la parte central del Alto conmigo para explicarme los procesos del sistema del mercado alimentario. He aprendido mucho de sus libros así como de nuestras conversaciones, y estoy sinceramente agradecida por su generosidad.

Gracias a Jaime Mejía, quien me enseñó el idioma aymara con paciencia y compromiso.

Quisiera agradecerle a Yecid Aliaga por sus consejos y su apoyo, particularmente con temas de la lengua española, tales como ayudarme a entender las respuestas de participantes en la investigación, y aconsejarme con mis dudas lingüísticas mientras redactaba papeles en español.

Sobre todo, estoy rebosante de gratitud para las vendedoras que me acogieron en su confianza, y quienes tuvieron la paciencia y la franqueza para explicar su negocio a una persona ajena. Me han dado no solamente muchas horas de conversación, innumerables platos gratuitos de comida, e invitaciones a pasar tiempo con ellas en sus casas para conocer a sus familias y observarlas ir de compras y cocinar, sino también, espero yo, una amistad duradera. Quisiera prestarle atención especial a la Doña Sandra, quien me dejó trabajar como su asistente durante muchas semanas, me explicó con muchísimo detalle varios temas pertenecientes a su negocio, y con quien compartí una amistad que hizo mi estancia en Bolivia particularmente especial.

Finalmente, por la cálida bienvenida y amistades leales que recibí de tantas personas en La Paz y El Alto, Gracias

Kim Gajraj, 4 agosto 2015

Resumen

Introducción

En un mundo donde a los Estados les cuesta seguir el ritmo de los procesos rápidos de urbanización con su abastecimiento de servicios, el riesgo de inseguridad alimentaria urbana es un problema mundial creciente. La paradigma de desarrollo actual se enfoca en el sector privado, en conectarle al productor de pequeña escala a cadenas de valor globales, como estrategia para fomentar el desarrollo. Sin embargo, esto podría ser incompatible con la manera de que las economías alimentarias de un país aseguran actualmente la provisión de alimentos desde el campo hasta poblaciones urbanas. Los habitantes urbanos suelen ser más dependientes de ingresos en efectivo para su seguridad alimentaria, gastando hasta un 30% más dinero en la comida que sus homólogos rurales (FAO, 2007). Esta presión se convierte también en presión de tiempo, porque los habitantes tienen que trabajar para ganar más dinero (Ruel, Garrett, Hawkes, & Cohen, 2010). Por esto, se ha destacado la comida callejera como una entidad cada vez más perteneciente a temas del acceso alimentario entre poblaciones en vía de expansión rápida, puesto que proveen comida de bajo precio a consumidores urbanos que no tienen tiempo para cocinar, en lugares convenientes. Las vendedoras de comida callejera operan de modo mayoritariamente informal, fuera del ámbito de regulación por el Estado. En El Alto, Bolivia, estas formas de sistema económico popular son particularmente prolíficas y poderosas. Dado que El Alto también está en un estado de expansión rápida, y tiene una historia larga de brechas en la provisión de servicios por el Estado, una raíz clave del nacimiento y crecimiento de economías populares, es pertinente examinar el papel que juegan las vendedoras de comida callejera en la seguridad alimentaria del Alto.

Los sistemas económicos de actores populares tales como las vendedoras de comida callejera se basan en redes personalizadas de actores (Vorley, 2013). Estas redes constituirán el enfoque del estudio, lo cual explorará y explicará el alcance de su contribución a la seguridad alimentaria en El Alto.

Entramado Teórico-Temático

Economías Populares

Una panorámica de la literatura sobre economías populares destaca la necesidad de ir más allá de las caracterizaciones tradicionales de informal en comparación a formal y la percepción de la informalidad como antigualla de atraso y subdesarrollo, y la cual es preciso erradicar. Las economías populares no solamente están parcialmente legitimados al nivel Estatal, sino pueden también ser muy eficientes y dinámicas. Además, se ha sugerido que la escala pequeña de negocios populares, los cuales están conectados mediante redes sociales fuertemente arraigados, resulte en una estructura descentralizada, la cual puede jugar un papel importante en la distribución equitativa de recursos y en “trickle-down”¹ (Tassi, Medeiros, Rodríguez-Carmona, & Ferrufino, 2013). La sugerencia que las economías populares puedan ser eficientes y que responden a la demanda del consumidor, junto al papel que pueden jugar en el bienestar social hace que el tema de economías populares es muy pertinente a discusiones sobre la seguridad alimentaria: para contar con seguridad alimentaria urbana, una ciudad necesita disponer de un sistema eficiente que conecta el campo con la ciudad para hacer que los alimentos lleguen a zonas urbanas, y distribuirlos cuando lleguen. Esto significa que los sistemas alimentarios necesitan las mismas cualidades de eficiencia y la habilidad de responder a la demanda del consumidor, que están presentes en los sistemas de economía popular.

Instituciones Formales e Informales

Enraizadas en interacciones sociales, es probable que las redes de vendedoras de comida callejera sean altamente dependientes de instituciones informales como modo de gobernar el

¹ Término económico inglés que se refiere al efecto de filtración de la riqueza desde las capas sociales más altas hasta las más bajas

comportamiento de los actores económicos que operan dentro de ellas. Estudios pasados han sugerido que, mientras el contrato y el parentesco con modelos viables para proveer una institucionalidad a actividad económica popular, la confianza es un 'último recurso' (Hart, 2000). La importancia en la cultura aymara en El Alto, y la persistencia de valores tales como la reciprocidad, la solidaridad, y la responsabilidad del individuo hacia el grupo (Arbona, 2011; Yampara, 2007) son, en consecuencia, extremadamente pertenecientes a esta idea, ya que si la actividad popular económica fuera arraigada profundamente en la cultura aymara, esta última sería un factor clave en las reglas que regulan el comportamiento del actor popular, y jugaría un papel en la eficiencia de la confianza como base de actividad económica. A su vez, las redes podrían jugar un papel difundiendo y haciendo cumplir estas instituciones (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004), lo cual crea el sentido de una función dual de las redes en las economías populares, ya que estas no solamente se basan en instituciones informales, sino también sirven para difundir estas instituciones.

Las Redes en las Economías Populares

Los actores económicos populares bolivianos emplean relaciones sociales a diversos niveles como fundamento, y como facilitador, de la actividad económica. Los diversos tipos y niveles de interacción social utilizados resulta en un tejido matizado de redes sociales mediante lo cual la actividad económica tiene lugar. El resultado de esto podría ser que las redes no sólo sirven para difundir entidades institucionales, sino que también actúan como recurso estructural importante de un sistema que puede conseguir las cualidades de estabilidad y adaptabilidad simultáneamente. Estas redes, y la habilidad del actor popular de, a la vez, depender de ellas y adaptarlas, podría, por lo tanto, ser instrumental a un sistema de abastecimiento alimentario entre áreas rurales y la ciudad del Alto que sea eficiente, dinámico y estable.

Las Teorías sobre la Venta de Comida Callejera

Hay un cierto grado de desacuerdo sobre la ocupación de venta de comida callejera y su eficacia como herramienta para ganarse la vida. Mientras se subraya frecuentemente que la ocupación puede ser una opción para mujeres con familias para reconciliar exitosamente sus papeles productivos y reproductivos (Floro & Swain, 2013), la precariedad de la venta de comida callejera se ve frecuentemente como un argumento contra esta utilidad (Chen, 2014; Tinker, 2003). Además, se ha dicho que la necesidad misma de reconciliar roles productivos y reproductivos ofusca el significado de 'elección', implicando que las vendedoras que 'eligen' la ocupación de venta callejera no tienen opciones verdaderas, sino están forzadas a adoptar el negocio, estando restringidas por la necesidad de cuidar a sus hijos simultáneamente (Floro & Swain, 2013)

Las Teorías sobre la Seguridad Alimentaria

La Cumbre Mundial sobre la Alimentación 1996 define que 'la seguridad alimentaria se da cuando todas las personas tienen acceso físico, social y económico permanente a alimentos seguros, nutritivos y en cantidad suficiente para satisfacer sus requerimientos nutricionales y preferencias alimentarias, y así poder llevar una vida activa y saludable.' De esta definición se destaca cuatro partes componentes: la Disponibilidad; el Acceso; la Utilización; y la Estabilidad. Estudios pasados sugieren que la comida callejera juegue un papel importante en la seguridad alimentaria del consumidor urbano de pocos recursos financieros. Esto es porque, en contextos urbanos, el asunto clave no es la disponibilidad de la comida al nivel nacional, sino la cuestión de transportar la comida desde el campo hasta la ciudad de una manera eficiente, y de si esta comida es económicamente y físicamente accesible al consumidor cuando llegue (Crush & Frayne, 2011). Discusiones anteriores sobre la eficiente y el dinamismo de redes como base de la actividad popular económica son, por lo tanto, muy pertenecientes a esto, ya que tales redes podrían ser un sistema de abastecimiento eficaz (acceso físico), y podrían contribuir a una serie de estrategias para bajar el precio de la comida (acceso económico). Además, el concepto de 'preferencia' que sale también de la definición de la seguridad alimentaria, es perteneciente a una discusión de redes populares y la idea que éstas saben responder muy eficazmente a la demanda del consumidor. El asunto de utilización de la comida incluye la cuestión del higiene de la comida callejera, porque esto afecta la capacidad del cuerpo de utilizar los nutrientes de la

comida. El tema del nivel bajo de la comida callejera se cita frecuentemente como obstáculo a cualquiera contribución que la comida callejera hubiera podido hacer a la seguridad alimentaria (FAO, 2007). Dado que las redes pueden jugar un papel institucional, el tema de las redes populares es pertinente también a discusiones sobre la utilización, para ver si estas instituciones regulan el higiene de la comida que se sirve en la calle.

Los temas de institucionalidad, y de la adaptabilidad de redes también están relacionados con la estabilidad alimentaria a largo tiempo, la cuarta parte componente de la definición de la seguridad alimentaria, ya que la capacidad de proteger contra, o adaptar a, estreses y choques es clave para conseguir niveles de seguridad alimentaria que sean duraderos a lo largo del tiempo.

Metodología

El estudio adoptó varios métodos como partes de un proceso de investigación iterativo y heurístico que duró 16 semanas. Observaciones de participantes iniciales proveyeron datos preliminares que alimentaron la formulación de una guía de entrevistas. Estas entrevistas fueron mayoritariamente conversaciones non-estructuradas, hechas durante varias visitas repetidas a las mismas vendedoras durante el periodo de la investigación, pero también hubo algunas entrevistas semi-estructuradas. Las observaciones de participantes continuaron mientras se efectuaba las entrevistas y se pusieron paulatinamente más profundas con la evolución de mis relaciones con las vendedoras, hasta el punto que algunas tenían bastante confianza en mí para invitarme a su casa, y al mercado para comprar productos. También pasé tiempo trabajando como la asistente de una vendedora, lo cual me permitió una interacción más profunda con ella, sus clientes, y otros miembros de su asociación². Más tarde en el proceso de investigación, se efectuó un sondeo de consumidores para triangular las perspectivas de los/las consumidores con las de las vendedoras, y para triangular los métodos para aumentar la 'credibilidad', la alternativa cualitativa a la 'validez', de los datos. Hubo 12 vendedoras como participantes en la parte cualitativa-etnográfica de la investigación, y 160 consumidores como participantes en el sondeo.

Preguntas de Investigación

Pregunta central: *¿Cuáles formas de redes sociales juegan un papel en las actividades económicas de vendedoras de comida callejera y cómo contribuyen éstas a la seguridad alimentaria en El Alto, Bolivia?*

Preguntas secundarias:

1. ¿Cuáles son las características principales de los negocios de comida callejera en El Alto?
2. ¿Hasta qué punto contribuyen las redes de las vendedoras al acceso alimentario (económico y físico) en El Alto?
3. ¿Hasta qué punto atienden las redes de las vendedoras a las preferencias alimentarias del consumidor?
4. ¿Hasta qué punto contribuyen las redes de las vendedoras a la utilización de la comida?
5. ¿Hasta qué punto contribuyen las redes de las vendedoras a la estabilidad de la seguridad alimentaria en El Alto a largo plazo?

Contexto

Enfrentados con exclusión política, social y económica, los aymara establecieron históricamente sistemas económicos e instituciones populares para ellos mismos, basados en valores y estructuras de poder indígenas, en los intersticios del estado (Tassi, 2012). Por lo tanto, sistemas económicos crecieron en gran parte fuera de la esfera de regulación oficial, y las estructuras institucionales que los gobernaban se basaban en entidades indígenas con una

² Un cuerpo organizativo parecido a un sindicato. La mayoría de vendedoras(/es) en El Alto pertenecen a una asociación, la cual les ofrece varias formas de oportunidades y protección sociales, económicas y políticas.

importancia otorgada a los conceptos claves de solidaridad, reciprocidad, y redistribución (Arbona 2011; Yampara, 2012).

Ahora, los aymara disponen de un poder político y económico considerable, su involucración en los bloqueos alteños durante la Guerra del Gas y la subsiguiente renuncia del anterior Presidente, Carlos Mesa sirviendo como recuerdo constante de su capacidad de influencia política (Lazar, 2008). Además, las economías populares, enraizados en la cultura aymara, son el modelo dominante y convencional en El Alto (Tassi, 2013). La ciudad misma se ve descrita como una 'ciudad indígena' a causa del hecho de que la mayoría de la población se autoidentifica como aymara (Lazar, 2008). Esta mayoría aymara resulta de procesos de urbanización masiva, provocados por la discriminación y abandono de grupos rurales aymara por el Estado (Arbona, 2011).

Una identidad aymara puede otorgar beneficios considerables a los actores económicos populares en El Alto, lo cual significa que se nutre y se implementa valores de la cultura aymara en tiempos modernos. De esto resulta su importancia persistente en la institucionalidad del comportamiento económico.

La actividad económica popular tiene una centralidad en El Alto, a diferencia de otras ciudades, lo cual hace que el centro de la ciudad siempre se ve animado por actores populares.

En El Alto, entonces, las estructuras económicas y políticas populares son dominantes, poderosas, y centrales en la vida diaria de la población alteña. Aunque el Estado reconozca la importancia de programas más inclusivos y anti-neoliberales y de la propiedad nacional de sistemas alimentarios (la soberanía alimentaria), su perfil actual de políticas suele enfocarse en la formalización de negocios populares y la conexión de productores de pequeña escala a cadenas de valor globales. Por lo tanto, no logra reconocer el papel crucial que juegan los sistemas alimentarios populares en la seguridad alimentaria, y su potencial para alcanzar los mismos objetivos de inclusión y propiedad local que la retórica estatal parece ratificar.

Hallazgos

Características y Papel de la Comida Callejera en El Alto

Un enfoque en la pregunta de investigación secundaria número 1, *¿Cuáles son las características principales de los negocios de comida callejera en El Alto?*, provoca una idea primera de cómo la comida callejera en general contribuye a la seguridad alimentaria en la ciudad. Esto, a la vez, prepara el camino para una discusión más enfocada sobre cómo las redes, específicamente, en las cuales operan las vendedoras, contribuyen a estos aspectos.

Los puestos que se ha incluido en el estudio son los *agachaditos*, el nombre que usan los alteños mismos para este tipo de puesto. Las **características** principales de los agachaditos son que sirven platos bolivianos tradicionales que se hacen mayoritariamente con ingredientes tradicionales, y que los platos servidos pueden sensatamente reemplazar una comida cocinada en casa. Estos puestos son muy abundantes en la parte central del Alto, lo cual está acompañado por el consumo de este tipo de comida por una proporción elevada de la población. Se puede decir que hay una cultura de comida callejera en esta parte central de la ciudad, y la proporción de la gente que consume comida rápida en la calle también está alta. Sin embargo, los consumidores comen en los agachaditos más frecuentemente que comen comida rápida en la calle, y los datos del sondeo de consumidores sobre las razones para comer en los agachaditos sugieren que esto sea porque los agachaditos también son 'rápidos', porque la comida de los agachaditos se ve como más nutritiva, porque prefieren el sabor, y porque el precio de una cantidad determinada de comida es más competitivo.

Los puestos pueden ser permanentes, semipermanentes o temporales, lo cual significa que hay variación en la manera de que las vendedoras operan su negocio, basada en cuántos asientos tiene, y cuánto equipamiento la vendedora puede guardar en el sitio del puesto. Relacionado con esto es el hecho de que la cantidad que una vendedora puede vender depende de cuánto puede transportar entre su casa y su puesto. Esto, a la vez, depende de cuánto puede guardar ahí así como cuál acceso tiene al transporte.

El hecho de que la concentración de vendedoras refleja la ubicación de concentraciones de gente a lo largo del día sugiere que las vendedoras ubiquen estratégicamente sus puestos en lugares concurridos para aumentar sus ventas. Esto se traduce en mayor **acceso físico** en áreas más concentradas de personas, un resultado de la capacidad de las vendedoras de responder a las demandas de acceso del consumidor. Además, ya que un 43% de las razones citadas por consumidores por comer en los agachaditos fueron relacionadas con el acceso físico, hay indicios fuertes de la contribución de las vendedoras al acceso físico de la comida en El Alto. La importancia de la combinación de porciones grandes y precios bajos observada en el sondeo de consumidores y en las observaciones de participantes señala una contribución alta al **acceso económico** por las vendedoras. La opinión del consumidor sobre la comida callejera revela también la existencia de opciones nutritivas entre los tipos diferentes de comida servidos en los agachaditos, al menos desde el punto de vista del consumidor, quien puede tener o no tener conocimientos sobre la nutrición. No obstante, la idea que existen opciones nutritivas a bajo precio sirve para contrarrestar afirmaciones sobre el contenido nutritivo bajo de comida callejera y, por esto, una falta de contribución a la seguridad alimentaria. También relacionada con el concepto de **utilización** es la idea de que la comida de los agachaditos se sirve fresca diariamente, un factor señalado frecuentemente por vendedoras y consumidores. En los hallazgos se ve la existencia de una trayectoria hace arriba disponible a las vendedoras: todas las vendedoras en el estudio han crecido su negocio para que sea más grande ahora de lo que ahora cuando empezaron el negocio. Esto señala que el negocio ofrece un grado de **estabilidad** económica a la vendedora, lo cual se podría traducir en estabilidad a largo plazo por lo que se refiere a la seguridad alimentaria del consumidor, siempre y cuando los agachaditos contribuyan a la seguridad alimentaria. El hecho de que una proporción elevada de las vendedoras en el estudio son madres solteras que saben apoyar a una familia con los ingresos del negocio de comida sugiere que el negocio sea viable como fuente de ingresos primaria. La existencia de oportunidades económicas reales en el negocio reta las teorías sobre la venta callejera que ven la actividad como mera estrategia pasiva para sobrevivir. Los datos sobre las características principales de la venta de comida callejera, entonces, señalan una contribución alta por los agachaditos en general a la seguridad alimentaria del Alto. La sección siguiente observará el papel que juegan las redes, específicamente, en la seguridad alimentaria urbana.

La Contribución de Redes a la Seguridad Alimentaria en El Alto

Redes Familiares: La colaboración familiar para apoyar a vendedoras con su negocio reduce los costos para éstas. También se observó que diferentes negocios familiares se entrelazan, lo cual baja los costos de transacción para el negocio de la vendedora. Los dos fenómenos están relacionados con el concepto de *pluriempleo*, una característica de actores populares en El Alto (Aramayo, 2013; Tassi, 2013), donde individuos y unidades familiares suelen involucrarse en más de una ocupación simultáneamente.

Las redes familiares también implican el mantenimiento de vínculos con el campo, lo cual se traduce en la conexión eficiente entre el campo y la ciudad, y el movimiento de alimentos entre los dos. Esto a la vez se traduce en productos más baratos para la vendedora y precios más bajos para su cliente.

Redes de Caseros: Una relación de caseros es la asociación a largo tiempo entre dos actores económicos donde, con el paso del tiempo, el abastecedor se pone a ofrecerle ciertos beneficios al comprador para recompensar su lealtad. Ya que las vendedoras tienen caseros abastecedores así como caseros clientes, ellas son nodos en una red, basada en vínculos caseros, de productores, comerciantes y consumidores.

Las vendedoras utilizan caseros abastecedores de varias maneras para reducir sus costos, por ejemplo recibir *yapas* (cantidades mayores de producto para el mismo precio), rebajas, y entrega a domicilio, de sus abastecedores, así como la confianza, en un contexto donde un comprador corre el riesgo de ser engañado con la calidad o el peso del producto.

Los caseros clientes proveen estabilidad al negocio de la vendedora. Como el consumidor demanda precios bajos de la comida, las vendedoras utilizan las reducciones de costos que

adquieren del uso estratégico de redes en otros contextos para transferirlos al consumidor en la forma de bajos precios del plato, y hacer competencia para su clientela fiel a largo plazo. Sin embargo, el consumidor también demanda calidad de la comida. Una de las razones más citadas por consumidores por tener una vendedora casera fue la confianza en el higiene de esta casera. Cayendo enfermo de la comida de una casera, un cliente dejaría de frecuentar el puesto. Para asegurar sus clientes regulares, entonces, las vendedoras deben lograr un equilibrio entre calidad y precio, lo cual involucra la manipulación estratégica de sus relaciones caseros con abastecedores.

Asociaciones: La estructura institucional más formal de la asociación ofrece varios beneficios que contribuyen a una reducción de los costos de la vendedora, tales como controlar la competencia con otras vendedoras en la asociación; y mitigar molestias de la alcaldía. Las asociaciones ofrecen también beneficios sociales a las/os afiliadas/os, puesto que los miembros colaboran para dar apoyo financiero a una afiliada que sufre un choque económico o personal. Otras lealtades y rivalidades corren por las asociaciones, y en algunos casos estos vínculos son muy fuertes, y los miembros se ayudan y se protegen de maneras que van mucho más allá de las formas de protección otorgadas por el cuerpo oficial de la asociación misma.

Redes basadas en amistad y confianza: Las vendedores usan miríadas de otras redes, basadas en la amistad y la confianza, para bajar sus costos de transacción y pasar estos ahorros al cliente, lo cual contribuye al acceso económico a la comida del cliente.

Redes basadas en la identidad aymara: Características tales como llevar una *pollera*, la ropa tradicional para mujeres, o hablar el idioma aymara, pueden proveer un grado más alto de confianza y oportunidades económicas. Una vendedora solía llevar ropa del estilo occidental, pero se puso a llevar una pollera para aumentar sus ventas y la confianza del consumidor. Los consumidores eligen frecuentemente la comida de una vendedora dada, específicamente porque es *de pollera*. Hay, entonces, una red de solidaridad basada en la identidad aymara que resulta en oportunidades mayores y costos de transacción más bajos para la vendedora y, por último, precios más bajos para el consumidor.

Comunicación como función de las redes: Métodos de comunicación basados en intercambios personalizados tienen dos funciones en relación con la seguridad alimentaria en El Alto. Primero, proveen informaciones extremadamente actualizadas que ayudan a las vendedoras a adaptarse a estreses y choques, o conseguir productos escasos o difíciles a encontrar a bajo precio y alta calidad. Sirven también para difundir chisme y estándares del comportamiento que es socialmente aceptable, sobre todo relacionados con el higiene de la comida, lo cual significa que las redes juegan también el papel institucional de empujar a las vendedoras de controlar por su propia cuenta el higiene de su comida, para evitar tacha social.

Conclusión

La conclusión vinculará las funciones de las redes de las vendedoras de comida callejera en El Alto con las partes componentes de una definición de la seguridad alimentaria urbana, lo cual estará seguido por una discusión breve sobre el significado de esto en relación con otros estudios y el contexto político.

El Acceso: Las redes de vendedoras de comida callejera contribuyen al acceso económico y físico de la comida en El Alto. Todas las redes sirven para reducir los costos de transacción para la vendedora, y ella pasa estas reducciones al consumidor en la forma de precios más bajos de sus platos para hacer competencia con otras vendedoras y mantener sus relaciones con sus clientes *caseros* regulares. Se asegura el acceso físico a la comida en la ciudad: por la mantención de vínculos familiares con el campo, donde las vendedoras pueden conseguir productos para traer directamente a su negocio en la ciudad; por comprar directamente de productores de pequeña escala conocidos; y por el uso de redes en general para conseguir informaciones altamente actualizadas y precisas sobre dónde y cuándo buscar productos claves.

La Preferencia: La relación casera y la importancia de transacciones personalizadas 'cara a cara' en las redes de vendedoras permite que éstas sean altamente conscientes de la preferencias del consumidor y que sepan responder muy eficientemente a las demandas de estos consumidores.

La Utilización: El higiene de la comida de los agachaditos se ve controlado por dos mecanismos diferentes relacionados con la seguridad alimentaria. Primero, las vendedoras se ven incentivadas a mantener buenos niveles de higiene a causa de la necesidad de sostener sus relaciones caseras con sus clientes, quienes dejarían de frecuentar el puesto si cayeran enfermos a causa de la comida. Segundo, las vendedoras enfrentan estigma social debida a rumor y chisme, difundidos por sus varias redes, que vinculan niveles bajos de higiene con vergüenza social.

Estabilidad: La contribución de las vendedoras a la seguridad alimentaria sólo será duradera con el tiempo si los negocios mismos de las vendedoras lo son también. Aunque flexibles, las redes de las vendedoras otorgan altos grados de apoyo que se basan frecuentemente en conceptos tales como la reciprocidad, la solidaridad y la responsabilidad del individuo hacia el grupo, lo cual sugiere que una parte de la razón por la viabilidad institucional de aquellas redes que se basan en la confianza viene de la importancia persistente de valores tradicionales aymara en tiempos modernos. Estos valores apoyan no solamente a las vendedoras sino aseguran también la contribución de estas vendedoras a la seguridad alimentaria de los grupos de recursos muy bajos que normalmente no tendrían acceso económico a los platos que venden las vendedoras. Hay una interacción entre la estabilidad y la flexibilidad en el sistema de redes de las vendedoras: la vendedora debe adaptar y reaccionar estratégicamente a un ambiente económico fluido por lo que se refiere a la disponibilidad de la comida y fluctuaciones en los precios de los alimentos, pero ella hace esto para mantener la relación estable con sus clientes caseros, para seguir proveyéndoles los beneficios que demandan. Otra forma de interacción es que las redes, hasta las más fluidas, están arraigadas en valores tradicionales aymara, los cuales se han mostrado ser muy estables con el paso del tiempo. Esto significa que las redes, incluso las más flexibles, tienen un fundamento institucional, y que el bienestar social de vendedoras y consumidores es inherente en el sistema socioeconómico.

Mientras otros estudios subrayan la precariedad de la venta de comida callejera y la vulnerabilidad de las vendedoras, en El Alto, casi todas las vendedoras se agrupan en organizaciones colectivas, las cuales les otorgan voz y protección política, y su capital social se basa en vínculos imbuidos por una institucionalidad fuerte de valores tradicionales aymara. Aquí, entonces, las vendedoras constituyen un vínculo importante en la cadena de actores populares que conectan el campo con la ciudad, y tienen oportunidades económicas reales para crecer su negocio.

Las vendedoras de comida callejera en El Alto hacen, entonces, una contribución valiosa a la seguridad alimentaria en la ciudad por su uso de redes. Sin embargo, un reconocimiento de la contribución de actores populares a la seguridad alimentaria no consta en políticas y programas estatales bolivianos. Hay que diseñar políticas y programas para apoyar y fortalecer el sistema en que las vendedoras de comida callejera juegan un papel, para facilitar y aumentar su contribución a la seguridad alimentaria. Por ejemplo, se podría ofrecer educación gratuita a las vendedoras sobre la preparación y manipulación de alimentos para ayudarles con los esfuerzos que ya están haciendo para controlar el higiene de su comida por su propia cuenta.

El sistema de redes de las vendedoras no puede ser pregonado como solución perfecta a temas de seguridad y soberanía alimentaria: una importancia para los vínculos sociales y el capital social para oportunidades y estabilidad económica significa que hay también un riesgo de exclusión para vendedoras y consumidores que no poseen estos vínculos. Observaciones tales como la fuerte competencia entre vendedoras, aunque asegura bajos precios y acceso económico para el consumidor, constituye un elemento de riesgo económico³. Además, tales sistemas son jerárquicos, y hay un elemento de dominación de los menos poderosos por los más poderosos (Tassi, 2013). Sin embargo, el papel importante de las vendedoras de comida callejera y sus redes no debe ser ignorado.

³ Aunque son justamente las redes de la vendedora y su capital social que, como se ve en el estudio, lo que ofrecen protección a la vendedora contra estos tipos de riesgo.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my two primary research assistants, Richard Canaviri and Carolina Ilaya. Both applied their wealth both of local and theoretical knowledge to the research process with dedication and passion. They provided crucial support to the research not only by facilitating access by accompanying me to interviews and explaining aspects of culture and everyday life in El Alto that were new to me, but also by providing useful insights on popular economies in Bolivia that contributed to the evolution of the study. Carolina's wealth of knowledge on the street food trade was invaluable, and her willingness to openly share personal information about her own life and explain her own trade to me were fundamental to an understanding of the topic in question. A special thank you to her for this.

Other research assistants carried out the consumer survey efficiently and skilfully. Adelia Aruquipa, Elsa (Monica) Limachi, Wilfredo Casablanca and Leonel Mayta are all sociologists and are all thanked for their enthusiastic participation in carrying out the survey.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Gery Nijenhuis, who provided constant support throughout the fieldwork and write-up process, assisting with concerns encountered during fieldwork and discussing the writing process with me in depth on a number of occasions, always giving me motivation to improve.

Thank you to my classmate, Ralf Leonards, who also spent his fieldwork period in La Paz, and who was always willing to talk through theory, methodology and results, and share information and literature he thought might be relevant to my research. He has been a wonderful friend and colleague.

I have been amazed by the willingness of busy academics and professionals to take the time to meet with me and discuss and critique my research. Thank you to Mauricio Gil of CIDES, and Juan-Pablo Solís of Hivos, who provided useful information and contacts to get me started with the research. Also to Sjoerd Panhuysen, of the Dutch branch of Hivos, who met with me before I departed to Bolivia and contributed helpful ideas and Bolivian contacts that were very reassuring as I made preparations to travel to a new place. I would also like to thank Diego Muñoz, who met with me in the middle of the fieldwork process and gave an honest critique of the shortcomings of the research that really helped improve the quality of the study. Thank you also to Maria-Teresa Nogales and Javier Thellaeche of Fundación Alternativas for invaluable information and theoretical advice on food security in La Paz.

A special thank you to Dr. Nico Tassi, who provided constant advice and information throughout the research process, put me in touch with my research assistants, and showed me around areas of El Alto to explain food-marketing processes to me. I have learned a great deal both from his books and from our conversations and I am sincerely grateful for his generosity.

Thank you also to Jaime Mejía taught me Aymara language with patience and dedication.

I would like to thank Yecid Aliaga for his advice and support, especially with Spanish language concerns such as understanding responses from participants, and helping me with language concerns when I have needed to produce write-ups in Spanish.

Above all, I am overwhelmed with gratitude to the vendors who welcomed me into their confidence and had the patience and the openness to explain their trade to an outsider. They have not only given me hours of conversation, countless free plates of food, invitations to spend time in their homes and meet their families and observe them shop and cook, but also, I hope, long-lasting friendship. I would like to pay special attention to Doña Sandra, who not only allowed me to blunder along as her assistant for many weeks, and explained to me in detail all manner of topics related to her trade, but with whom I also shared a friendship that made my time in Bolivia particularly special.

Finally, for the warm welcome and loyal friendship I received from so many in La Paz and El Alto,
Thank You

Kim Gajraj, 4th August 2015

Summary

Introduction

In a world where rapid urbanisation processes mean State service provision in cities struggles to keep pace, risk of urban food insecurity is an ever-growing global problem. The current development paradigm focuses on private sector development, and linking small-scale producers to global value chains, as a way to help countries develop. This may, however, be at odds with the way that a country's food economies currently ensure the provisioning of food from the countryside to urban populations. Urban residents tend to be more dependent on cash income for food security than their rural counterparts, spending up to 30% more money on food (FAO, 2007). This pressure to earn money also often translates into time pressure, as urban dwellers work to earn money (Ruel et al., 2010). Street food has therefore been identified as being increasingly relevant to food access issues among rapidly expanding urban populations, since they provide low cost food to urban consumers who do not have time to cook, at convenient locations. Street vendors operate on a largely informal basis, outside the realm of regulation by the State. In El Alto, Bolivia, these forms of popular economic system are particularly prolific and powerful. Since El Alto is also rapidly expanding and has a long history of facing gaps in provision of services by the State, a key reason for the growth of popular economies, it is highly relevant to examine the role that street vendors play in urban food security in El Alto.

The economic systems of popular actors such as street food vendors rest on personalised networks of actors (Vorley, 2013). These networks will form the focus of the study, which will explore and explain the extent of their contribution to food security in El Alto.

Theoretical-Thematic Framework

Popular Economies

An overview of the literature on popular economies highlights the need to move beyond traditional characterisations of informal versus formal and the perception of informality as a relic of backwardness and underdevelopment that needs to be eradicated. Not only are popular economies often partially legitimated at State level, they can also be highly efficient and dynamic. Moreover, it has been suggested that the small-scale nature of popular businesses, interconnected by means of long-founded social networks, results in a decentralised structure that can play an important role in fair distribution of resources and "trickle-down" (Tassi et al., 2013). The suggestion that popular economies can be efficient and responsive to consumer demand since food needs to move through an effective marketing system that links countryside to city and distributed among the urban population, meaning efficiency and responsiveness to consumer demand are key. Furthermore, the fact that popular economies involve socially-centred networks as an integral part suggests an inherent concern for social welfare that may be highly compatible with topics of food security.

Formal and Informal Institutions

Rooted in social interaction, networks may be highly dependent on informal institutions as a way of governing the behaviour of the economic actors that operate within them. Previous studies have suggested that, while kinship and contract offer viable institutional frameworks for economic activity, trust can only be seen as a 'last resort' (Hart, 2000). The importance, however, of Aymara culture in El Alto and its valuing of reciprocity, solidarity and the responsibility of the individual towards the group (Arbona, 2011; Yampara, 2007) are highly relevant, since if popular economic activity is found to be heavily rooted in Aymara culture, the latter will be a key determining factor in the behaviour of economic actors and the rules governing it, and will play a role in the effectiveness of trust as a basis for economic activity. In turn, networks may play a role in diffusing and enforcing these institutions (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004), creating the sense of a dual function of networks within popular economies, since they are both grounded in certain informal institutions, and serve to diffuse these institutions.

Networks in Popular Economies

Bolivian popular economic actors employ social relations on a number of levels as a basis for and a facilitator of economic activity. The different types and levels of social interaction used results in a rich fabric of networks through which economic activity is mediated. This may not only serve to diffuse institutional entities, but may also be an important structuring device of a system that can simultaneously achieve stability and adaptability. These networks and the popular actor's ability both to depend upon them and adapt them may therefore be highly instrumental to an effective, responsive and stable food supply system between rural areas and urban El Alto.

Theories on Street Food Vending

There is some disagreement on the occupation of street food vending and its effectiveness as a source of livelihood for the vendor. While it is often highlighted that the occupation can be an option for women with families to successfully reconcile productive with reproductive roles, the economic precariousness of street food vending is often seen to counter such usefulness (M. A Chen, 2014; Tinker, 2003). Moreover, the very need to reconcile productive and reproductive roles is seen to blur the meaning of 'choice', implying that vendors who do 'choose' the occupation of street food vendor do not in fact have any real options but are forced into the trade, restricted by the need to care for children simultaneously (Floro & Swain, 2013).

Other scholars see creativity and power in the occupation of vendor due to their successful employment of social capital (Turner & Schoenberger, 2011), and due to being a key node in the system that connects rural producer with urban consumer (Aramayo Canedo, 2013).

Many of the issues raised in discussion on street food vending are directly relevant to concepts of food security: while views that excessive competition drive down earnings for vendors suggest precariousness for the vendor, they do in fact also point to an important contribution of street food vendors to lowering food prices for the urban consumer. The need to cook and sell food daily, seen as another form of precariousness, does, nonetheless, suggest the daily provision of fresh food to the urban consumer, which may also be seen to play a role in food security. Moreover, the emphasis on vendors as being at a crucial nexus between rural producer and urban consumer also points to the vendors' likely importance to the food supply system that links rural and urban areas.

Food Security and Street Food Vendors

The 1996 World Food Summit defined food security as existing 'when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'. Studies suggest that street food may play an important role in the food security of the low-income, urban consumer. This is because, in urban contexts, the key issue is not availability of food at country level, but whether food is delivered from countryside to city in an effective way, and whether the product is affordable and spatially accessible to the urban consumer when it arrives (Crush & Frayne, 2011).

Previous discussion on the efficiency and dynamism of networks as a basis for popular economic activity is therefore highly relevant to this, since such networks may not only serve as a supply system but also as a series of strategies relating to food price. Also relevant is the concept of 'preference' that is integral to the World Summit definition of food security, since popular economic systems based on personal networks has been identified as instrumental to responsiveness to consumer demand.

The issue of food utilisation and, specifically, questions relating to the hygiene of street food, are also relevant to the discussion on networks, since networks have been linked to institutionality on a number of levels. Food hygiene issues are often cited as a barrier to any contribution street food vendors might otherwise have made to urban food security (FAO, 2007) It will be important, therefore, to examine whether or not informal institutions of street food vendors serve to regulated hygiene levels and protect the consumer from risk of infection.

The topics of institutionality, and adaptability of networks also relate to long-term stability, the fourth pillar of food security, since the ability to buffer against or adapt to stresses and shocks is key to achieving levels of food security that are durable over time.

Methodology

The study adopted a number of methods as part of an iterative, heuristic research process that took place over a period of 16 weeks. Initial participant observation provided preliminary data that were used to formulate an interview guide for mostly unstructured, and took the form of numerous conversations over various repeated visits with the same vendors, but a small number of semi-structured interviews were also conducted. Participant observation continued during the time interviews were conducted, and became gradually more in-depth as relationships with vendors evolved and I was trusted enough to accompany vendors to their homes, and to the market to make purchases. I also spent time working as a vendor's assistant, which allowed more in-depth interaction with her, her customers and other members of her *asociación*⁴. Later in the research process, a consumer survey was carried out in order to triangulate consumers' perspectives with those of the vendors, and to triangulate methods and increase credibility, the qualitative alternative to validity, of data. The study included the participation of 12 vendors of street food for the in-depth, qualitative-ethnographic part of the study, and of 160 consumers for the survey.

Research Questions

Central question: *What forms of social networks play a role in the economic activities of street food vendors and how do these contribute to food security in El Alto, Bolivia?*

Sub-questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto?
2. To what extent do street food vendors' networks contribute to food access (economic and physical) in El Alto?
3. To what extent do street food vendors' networks cater to food preference?
4. To what extent do street food vendors' networks contribute to food utilisation?
5. To what extent do street food vendors' networks contribute to the long-term stability of food security in El Alto?

Context

Faced with political, social and economic exclusion, the Aymara historically established for themselves popular economic systems and institutions based in indigenous values and structures of power, in the interstices of the State (Tassi, 2012). Economic systems therefore grew largely outside the realm of formal regulation, and the institutional structures that governed them were based on indigenous entities such as the *ayllu*, with importance attached to key concepts of solidarity, reciprocity and redistribution (Yampara, 2007).

Now, the Aymara hold considerable political and economic power, their involvement in the El Alto blockades during the Gas Wars and the subsequent resignation of former president Carlos Mesa serving as a constant reminder of their political clout (Lazar, 2008). Moreover, popular economies rooted in Aymara culture are the dominant and mainstream economic model in El Alto (Tassi, 2013). Indeed, the city itself is often described as 'indigenous' because of the heavy Aymara majority (Lazar, 2008), a result of mass urbanisation processes which were also caused by discrimination and neglect by the State of Aymara peoples in rural areas (Arbona, 2011). Aymara identity can have considerable benefits for the popular economic actors in El Alto, meaning that Aymara culture is nurtured and enforced, resulting in the continued importance of Aymara-based networks in the city and a crucial role played by Aymara values in the institutionality of economic behaviour.

⁴ A body similar to a union. Most street food vendors in El Alto belong to an *asociación*, which offers them various forms of social, economic and political opportunities and protection.

Popular economic activity in El Alto has, unlike in other cities, a centrality which means that the central area of the city is constantly alive with popular economic actors.

In El Alto, then, popular economic and political structures are dominant and powerful and central to the lives of the *alteño* population. Although it acknowledges the importance of more inclusive, anti-neoliberal programmes and of country ownership of food systems (food sovereignty), the State's current policy profile tends to focus on formalisation and linking to global value chains, and fails to recognise the crucial role played by popular economic food systems and their potential to achieve the very goals of inclusivity and local ownership that Bolivian policy rhetoric appears to uphold.

Findings

Characteristics and Role of Street Food in El Alto

A focus on research sub-question 1, *what are the main characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto?*, points to a first idea of how street food in general contributes to urban food security in the city. This, in turn, sets the stage for a more focused discussion of how the networks, specifically, in which the vendors operate contribute to these aspects.

The stalls included in the study were the *agachaditos*, a name that *alteños* themselves use for this type of stall. The main **characteristics** of the *agachaditos* are that they serve traditional Bolivian dishes made with traditional ingredients, and that the dishes sold can reasonably replace a cooked meal. These stalls are highly prolific in the central part of El Alto, which translates into the consumption of food served from them by an extremely high proportion of the population. There is something of a street food culture in this central part of the city, and the proportion of the population that also consumes fast food on the street is also high. Nonetheless, consumers will eat in the *agachaditos* proportionately more often than they eat fast food, and consumer data on reasons for eating in the *agachaditos* suggests that this may be because the *agachaditos* are also 'fast', because food in the *agachaditos* is seen as more nutritious and, perhaps, because the taste and the price are more competitive. Stalls may be permanent, semi-permanent or temporary, meaning there is variation in the way the vendors operate their business based on how much seating is available, and how much vendors can store on site. Related to this is the fact that the amount that a vendor can sell is dependent on how much she can transport to and from her stall, which depends upon how much she can store there as well as what access she has to transport.

The fact that the concentration of vendors mirrors the location of concentrations of people throughout the day suggests that vendors strategically locate their stalls in highly frequented places in order to increase sales. This can be said to translate into greater **physical access** in areas more concentrated with people, and the vendors' responsiveness to access demands by the consumer. Moreover, since 43% of reasons consumers gave for consuming food in the *agachaditos* were related to physical accessibility, there is strong evidence for the contribution of street food vendors to physical access of food in El Alto.

The importance of a combination of large portions and low price observed in participant observations and in survey responses also points to a high contribution to **economic access** by the *agachaditos*.

Consumer opinion on street food also reveals the existence of nutritious options among the different types of food served in the *agachaditos*, at least from the point of view of the consumer, who may or may not have expertise in nutrition. Nonetheless, evidence of nutritious and low-cost options serves to counter claims about the low nutritional quality of street food in general, and subsequent lack of contribution to food security. Also related to the pillar of food **utilisation** is the idea that food is served fresh daily by the vendors, a factor that is pointed out frequently by both consumers and vendors.

Evidence of an upward trajectory available to vendors suggests that the trade offers a degree of economic **stability** for the vendor, which may translate into long-term stability in terms of food security for the consumer, where street food does contribute to food security. The fact that a number of vendors in the study are single mothers supporting a family alone through profits

from the business suggests its viability as a source of income. The evidence of economic opportunity also questions theories on such vending activity as being merely a passive strategy for survival.

Data on the main characteristics of street food vending, therefore, points to a high contribution of the *agachaditos* to food security in general in El Alto. The following section will observe the role that social networks, specifically, play in urban food security.

Contribution of Networks to Food Security in El Alto

Family-Based Networks: Family collaboration to support vendors with their street food business reduces costs for the vendor. Also observed was the interlinking of family businesses, which lowers transaction costs for the vendor's street food business. Both phenomena are linked to *pluriempleo*, a characteristic of *alteño* popular economic actors, where individuals and family units tend to be involved in more than one occupation simultaneously.

Family-based networks also involve maintaining links to the countryside, which translates into the effective linking of countryside and city and movement of food from the former to the latter, and also into cheaper ingredients for the vendor, which means lower prices for the consumer.

Casero Networks: A *casero* relationship is a long-established economic relationship between two parties, where, over time, supplier comes to offer certain benefits to customer. Since street food vendors make use of the *casero* relationship with both their suppliers and their customers, they are nodes in a network, based on *casero* bonds, of producers, traders and consumers.

Vendors use their *casero* suppliers to reduce costs in a number of ways, such as receiving *yapas* (larger quantities of ingredient for the same price), discounts, and home delivery from suppliers, and trust in a context where buyers risk being cheated on quality or weight for produce they buy. *Casero* customers provide long-term stability to the vendor's business. Since customers demand low price of food, the vendors use cost reductions made from strategic use of networks in other contexts to transfer low prices of dishes to the consumer, and compete for their custom and long-term *casero* fidelity. Customers, however, also demand quality of food. One of the main reasons given by consumers for having a *casera* vendor was in order to be able to trust in the hygiene of the food. A customer who became ill from a *casera's* food would cease using this stall, ending the *casero* relationship with the vendor. To secure their *casero* customers, therefore, vendors must achieve a balance of quality and price, involving strategic manipulation and adaptation of their *casero* relationships with suppliers.

Asociaciones: The more formal institutional structure of the *asociación* offers a number of benefits that relate to a reduction in transaction costs for the vendor, such as controlling competition with other vendors in the *asociación*, and reducing problems with the city hall. The organisations also offer social welfare to vendors, where members collaborate to give financial assistance to an affiliate who falls upon hard times. Other allegiances and rivalries also run through the *asociaciones* and in some cases bonds are strong enough for members to protect each other in ways that go beyond forms of protection offered by the official body of the *asociación* itself.

Friendship and Trust-Based Networks: Vendors use a myriad of other networks, based on friendship and trust, to lower transaction costs for themselves, allowing them to pass on lower food prices to the consumer, which contributes to food access.

Networks based on Aymara Identity: Characteristics such as wearing a *pollera*, the traditional Aymara dress for women, or speaking the Aymara language can provide a greater degree of trust and greater economic opportunities. One vendor used to wear Western-style clothes but started wearing a *pollera* in order to increase sales and become more trusted by customers. Customers will often choose a vendor's food specifically because she is '*de pollera*'. There is, therefore, a network of solidarity based on Aymara identity which results in greater economic opportunities and lower transaction costs for vendors and lower prices of dishes for consumers.

Communication and word of mouth as functions of networks: Communication methods based on face-to-face, personalised exchanges have two functions in relation to food security. First, they provide extremely up-to-date information that assists vendors in adapting to stresses and

shocks, or sourcing ingredients that are difficult to find at good quality and low prices. They also serve to diffuse gossip and socially accepted standards of behaviour, especially relating to food hygiene, meaning that networks also play the institutional role of driving vendors to regulate their own hygiene levels in order to avoid social staining.

Conclusion

Food Access: Street food vendors' networks contribute to both economic and physical access to food in El Alto. All networks serve to lower transaction costs for the vendors, and lower food prices are passed on to the consumer through the vendor's need to compete with other vendors and maintain her *casero* relationships with customers. Physical access is secured through the maintaining of family links to rural areas in the countryside, where vendors can source ingredients; through buying directly from known producers; and through the use of networks in general for highly up-to-date and accurate information on where and when to source key ingredients.

Food Preference: The *casero* relationship and the importance of face-to-face transactions in street food vendors' networks makes the vendors highly aware of customers' preferences and responsive to demands from these customers'.

Food Utilisation: Food hygiene is controlled through two different mechanisms relating to street food vendors' networks. First, vendors are incentivised to keep to good hygiene levels due to the need to maintain *casero* relationships with their customers, who would cease use of the stall if they became sick. Second, vendors face social stigma due to rumours and gossip, diffused through their various networks, that link bad food hygiene of vendors to social shame.

Food Stability: For the contribution of vendors to food security to be stable over time, the vendors' businesses themselves must also be stable over time. While flexible, street food vendors' networks also provide a high degree of support, often based in concepts such as reciprocity, solidarity and the responsibility of the individual towards the group, which suggests that part of the reason for the institutional viability of these trust-based networks comes from the continued importance in modern times of traditional Aymara values. These values not only support the vendors, but also ensure the vendors' contribution to the food security of very low-income groups who would not normally have economic access to the dishes the vendors sell. There is an interplay between stability and flexibility in the network system of street food vendors: the vendor must strategically adapt and react to a changing environment in terms of food availability and price fluctuations but this is in order to maintain the stable relationship that she has with her *casero* customers, and continue providing these *caseros* with the benefits that they demand. Another form of interplay is that even fluid network relationships are rooted in traditional Aymara values, which have shown themselves to be extremely stable over time, meaning that even the more flexible networks have an institutional foundation, and that social welfare of both vendors and consumers is inherent in the economic system.

While other studies highlight the precariousness of street food vending and vulnerability of vendors, in El Alto, nearly all vendors are grouped into collective organisations, which give them political voice and protection, and, since their social capital is based on ties that are strongly enforced by Aymara identity, here vendors are an important link in the chain between countryside and city, and have real economic opportunities to scale up their business.

Street food vendors in El Alto therefore make a valuable contribution to food security in the city through their use of networks. However, contribution of popular actors to food security is absent from Bolivian government policies and programmes. Policies could be designed to support and strengthen the system that vendors are part of, in order to further facilitate their contribution to urban food security. For example, free education for street food vendors on food hygiene and handling could help them to make more effective their own efforts to control the hygiene of their food. The network system of street food vendors cannot be held up as a perfect solution to issues of food security and food sovereignty: an importance of social ties and social capital for economic opportunities and stability means that there is risk of exclusion for both

vendors and consumers who do not possess these ties. Aspects such as competition with other vendors pushing down prices for the consumer and increasing her/his economic access to food does create economic risk for the vendor, even though this is arguably buffered in other ways, largely, again, through the vendor's strategic use of her networks and social capital. Moreover, such systems are hierarchical (Tassi, 2013) and do involve the more powerful actors dominating the less powerful. Nonetheless, the crucial role of street food vendors and their networks should not be ignored.

Table of Contents	Page no.
List of Tables and Figures	21
List of Abbreviations	22
1. Introduction	23
2. Theoretical-Thematic Overview	25
2.1 <u>Popular Economies</u>	25
2.1.1 Defining informality	25
2.1.2 Characteristics of informality	26
2.1.3 Historical perspectives on informality	27
2.2 <u>Formal and Informal Institutions</u>	28
2.2.1 Defining informal institutions	28
2.2.2 Informal institutions and popular networks	29
2.3 <u>Networks in Popular Economies</u>	30
2.3.1 Forms of personal relations in the popular economy	30
2.3.2 Personal networks and efficiency	31
2.3.3 Networks vs. Structures	32
2.4 <u>Theories on Street Food Vendors</u>	33
2.4.1 Street food vending and productive/reproductive roles	33
2.4.2 Precariousness of street food vending	34
2.4.3 Power, voice and agency of street food vendors	35
2.5 <u>Food Security</u>	36
2.5.1 The Four pillars of food security	36
2.5.2 The urban context of food security	37
2.6 <u>Summary: Theoretical-Thematic Framework</u>	38
3. Research Design	40
3.1 <u>Conceptual model</u>	40
3.2 <u>Research questions</u>	41
3.3 <u>Methodology</u>	42
3.4 <u>Operationalisation of concepts</u>	45
3.5 <u>Data Analysis</u>	47
3.6 <u>Facilitating access</u>	47
3.7 <u>Limitations to the research design</u>	48
3.7.1 Limitations and risk in the methodology	48
3.7.2 Discussion on rigour in the research design	48
4. Context	50
4.1 <u>The Political Context and the Role of the Aymara</u>	50
4.2 <u>Indigeneity, the Aymara, and a History of Exclusion</u>	52
4.2.1 Indigeneity	52
4.2.2 The Aymara	52
4.2.3 The <i>Ayllu</i>	53
4.2.4 A history of exclusion	54
4.3 <u>El Alto</u>	55
4.3.1 Urbanisation of El Alto	55
4.3.2 Peculiarities of El Alto	56
4.3.3 Collective organisation in El Alto	56
4.3.4 La Ceja	57
4.4 <u>Popular Economies in Bolivia</u>	58

4.5	<u>The policy context in Bolivia</u>	59
4.5.1	<i>Vivir Bien</i> in the <i>Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010-2015</i> (PND)	59
4.5.2	Bolivian policies and programmes relating to microenterprises and popular economic actors	60
4.5.3	Bolivian policies and programmes relating to food security	61
4.5.4	Food Sovereignty	62
4.6	<u>Summary: The context of the study</u>	63
5.	Definition and role of street food vendors in El Alto	64
5.1	<u>Type of food and stalls included in the study</u>	64
5.1.1	Selection of stalls to include in the study	64
5.1.2	The ‘agachaditos’	65
5.2	<u>Presentation of vendors</u>	67
5.3	<u>The role of the <i>agachaditos</i> in El Alto</u>	72
5.3.1	Daily dynamics of street food vendors in El Alto	72
5.3.2	Use of and opinion on street food by consumers	74
5.3.3	Role of street food for the vendors in El Alto	77
5.4	<u>Summary: Definition and role of street food vendors in El Alto</u>	78
6.	Role of Networks and Contribution to Food Security	80
6.1	<u>Family-based networks</u>	80
6.1.1	Family collaboration in street food businesses	80
6.1.2	Inter-linking of family businesses	84
6.1.3	Using family networks for economic opportunities	85
6.1.5	Family links to the countryside	86
6.2	<u>Caseros</u>	88
6.2.1	Definition of <i>caseros</i>	88
6.2.2	<i>Caseros</i> as suppliers	88
6.2.3	<i>Caseros</i> as customers	91
6.3	<u>Asociaciones</u>	95
6.4	<u>Friendship- and trust-based networks</u>	98
6.5	<u>Networks based on Aymara identity</u>	99
6.6	<u>Communication and word of mouth</u>	100
6.6	<u>Summary & Conclusion</u>	102
7.	Discussion	103
7.1	Main characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto	103
7.1.1	Variety of dishes	103
7.1.2	Proliferation of stalls	103
7.1.3	Economic stability & Possibilities for upward trajectory	104
7.2	Street food vendors’ networks and contribution to food access	105
7.3	Street food vendors’ networks and contribution to food preference	107
7.4	Street food vendors’ networks and contribution to food utilisation	108
7.5	Street food vendors’ networks and contribution to food stability	109
8.	Concluding Remarks	111
	References	114
Annexe 1	Glossary of Spanish and Aymara terms	119
Annexe 2	Qualitative interview guide for street food vendors	121
Annexe 3	Quantitative/Qualitative survey for consumers	125

List of Tables and Figures Page no.

List of Tables

Table 1	Characteristics of Formality vs. Informality	27
Table 2	The Four Pillars of Food Security	38
Table 3	Presentation of the Vendors included in the study	67
Table 4	Vendors' <i>casero</i> relationships with suppliers	88
Table 5	Vendors' estimates on proportion of business dependent upon <i>Caseros</i>	93

List of Figures

Figure 1	Conceptual model	40
Figure 2	Image: working as a vendor's assistant	43
Figure 3	Locations in La Ceja where questionnaires were filled	44
Figure 4	Image: example of a <i>mujer de pollera</i>	52
Figure 5	Image: the city of El Alto	55
Figure 6	Bolivia: Population by city	55
Figure 7	Example of a permanent stall	65
Figure 8	Example of a semi-permanent stall	65
Figure 9	Example of a temporary stall	66
Figure 10	Location of vendors included in the study	71
Figure 11	Concentration of street food vendors during the evening/night	72
Figure 12	Concentration of street food vendors during the morning	73
Figure 13	No. of times traditional street food consumed in past 7 days in La Ceja	74
Figure 14	Traditional vs. Fast-food consumption in La Ceja, past 7 days	74
Figure 15	Collaboration of family members in Doña D's Business	82
Figure 16	Image: <i>alteños</i> travel to countryside to help sort potatoes	86
Figure 17	Bar chart showing benefits of having <i>caseras</i> as identified by consumers of street food	91
Figure 18	Problems with the <i>agachaditos</i> as identified by consumers in La Ceja	92
Figure 19	Breakdown of hygiene concerns among street food consumers in La Ceja	92
Figure 20	Image: Association members dance as a group at the Anniversary Party of the 27 de Mayo	97

List of Abbreviations

DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
EMAPA	Empresa de Apoyo a la Producción de Alimentos
IDH	Impuesto Directo a los Hidrocarburos
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PND	Plan Nacional de Desarrollo
SEPA	Sistema de Ejecución de Planes de Adquisiciones

1. Introduction

Street food is a common sight in many developing countries and Bolivia is no exception. In El Alto, street food stalls line pavements, and it is difficult to walk anywhere in the central area of the city without finding *alteños* sitting on low stalls, chatting and eating different dishes, either in kiosks, under tarpaulins, or quite simply on the street itself, as vendors serve a variety of different dishes at different prices.

Street food as a topic straddles two highly polemic academic debates. On the one hand, since vendors operate on a largely informal, basis, outside the realm of formal regulation, theories on informality are relevant to their activity. While some see small-scale, informal street businesses as a survival strategy used by informal actors to eke out a living in any way they can, others highlight the efficiency, dynamism and responsiveness to consumer demand of systems rooted in de-centralised, network structures of popular economic actors.

Another issue that sparks debate among academics and development actors is the question of whether or not street food contributes to food security. While some see street food as an important contribution to food security by providing a geographically accessible food source at low cost, others see lack of hygienic preparation practices of vendors, due largely to lack of regulation and poor nutritional value of street food, as barriers that hold countries back from achieving optimal levels of nutrition, or see lack of formal organisation as resulting in a sub-standard way of provisioning food from the countryside to the urban consumer.

In El Alto, Bolivia, often described as an indigenous, Aymara city, popular economies and their institutional structures evolved in gaps left by the State due to a long-standing history of social and political exclusion. Now, “informal”, or popular, economies have become dominant and mainstream: popular actors exercise a great deal of political and economic power and their economic activities take centre stage in El Alto’s bustling heart, La Ceja.

These popular economic systems are often described as highly effective, dynamic and flexible, and this is partly due to their de-centralised structure of networks of popular actors. In the context of food security, therefore, these popular economic systems may be highly relevant. Indeed, studies have pointed to the ‘topicality and urgency’ (Vorley, 2013) of examining popular food systems, since current development focus is on linking small-scale producers to global value chains, when in fact these small-scale producers are part of highly intricate food marketing systems that are crucial to the successful provision of food from rural to urban areas. In Bolivia, government policy rhetoric points to the need to foster alternative economic models to Western neoliberal market economies, and to the need for food sovereignty, or ownership of food systems by the population itself, two goals which may be highly compatible with the popular economic food system already in place. Nonetheless, the State continues to design

policies that focus on formalisation of popular businesses and linking small-scale producers to global value chains, policies that would disrupt the popular food marketing systems currently in place.

Mass urbanisation processes worldwide mean that gaps in the ability of the State to provide services to rapidly increasing urban populations are becoming more and more of a problem. Migration to urban areas results in a greater dependency on cash income for food purchases and increased time pressure as urban citizens need to work to earn this income. Street food, then, a 'cheap source of energy and a time saver' (Ruel et al., 2012) may be increasingly important to the food access of urban residents. In a city which is expanding at breakneck speed, where popular economies are especially prolific and may be particularly dynamic and effective at filling gaps in service provision, it is highly relevant to examine the possible contribution of street food vendors to food security there.

Networks are an important aspect of popular economies: they provide the personalised, de-centralised structure that may help make them dynamic and responsive to consumer demand, but are also a source of social capital which may provide stability in a fluid economic environment.

In this study, I will therefore explore and explain the contribution of street food vendors' networks to food security in El Alto. A number of factors will be relevant here: the extent to which networks do indeed provide the dynamism and efficiency necessary to provision food effectively from the countryside to the urban consumer; whether such a system is stable or whether it is, as some claim, a precarious economy resulting from 'last resort' survival strategies of those who need to make a living in any way they can; whether poor food hygiene practices of vendors and poor nutritional value of street food prevent food sold on the street from contributing to food security in urban settings – and if not, how vendors' activity is regulated in a system that operate outside the realm of State regulation.

The thesis will begin with a discussion of the theoretical-thematic context relating to informality, popular food systems in Bolivia and food security. The next section will describe the methodology and research questions used. Next, the political and culture context will be outlined with an explanation of how these contextual factors relate to the topic in question. The following two sections present the results of the research before the final two sections comprise a discussion of the findings and the concluding remarks.

2. Thematic-Theoretical Overview

In order to explore and explain the contribution of street food vendors to urban food security in El Alto, a number of theoretical threads need to be brought together. A first chapter will discuss theory on popular/informal economies (the term popular economy is usually preferred due to racial connotations associated with informality in Bolivia (Tassi, 2013)). A second chapter will examine differences between formal and informal institutions before a third “zooms in” on networks, not only in the context of institutionality discussed in chapter 2 but also in the context of possible contribution to the efficiency of food systems. A fourth chapter will examine theories on street food vending specifically before a fifth chapter lays out concepts of food security and how the topic in question may relate to them. These component parts will be drawn together at the end of the section in order to feed into the conceptual model in chapter 3.1.

2.1- Popular Economies

Street food vendors in El Alto operate on a largely informal basis, outside the realm of formal regulation. The term ‘informal’ is problematic due to academic debate regarding its definition, and due to the different and conflicting economic theories and attitudes that have been applied to the phenomenon through time. The section will therefore begin with a discussion on the definition of informality. Second, conceptualisations and characteristics of this type of economy will be examined before a brief overview of historical and current perspectives on informality.

2.1.1 Defining Informality

The term ‘informal’ was coined by Keith Hart in his 1973 paper on Frafra migrants in urban slums of Accra, Ghana (Hart, 1973). Originally, a distinction was made between the ‘formal sector’ and the ‘informal sector’, one officially registered, taxed and regulated by the State, and the other not. Later, such a dualist attitude to formal/informal distinctions was questioned, and the idea that ‘it is important to avoid the conceptual trap of viewing formal/informal as monolithic sectors in opposition to each other’ (Crush & Frayne, 2011) is now generally accepted. Economic actors may for example be partly legitimised at state level through participation in social organisations such as trade unions (FAO, 2007), a business may engage in both regulated and unregulated activity, and formal and informal can be interconnected in myriad ways, where large ‘formal’ businesses receive inputs from small, ‘informal’ ones, or ‘informal’ vendors sell products produced industrially.

Distinctions have also been made between illegality and informality, where informal activity is seen as illegal, yet not anti-social in intent and therefore acceptable in society (Webb, Bruton, Tihanyi, & Ireland, 2013), yet this is also problematic when applied to phenomena such as

piracy, for example, which is unquestionably seen as illegal on a global scale, but is highly prolific and highly accepted in El Alto, La Paz and countless major cities worldwide.

Castells and Portes therefore describe informality as a 'common-sense notion' and note the difficulty of defining it without recourse to specific characteristics and situations (Castells & Portes, 1989). In Bolivia specifically, Lazar notes 'the impossibility of cleanly separating out formal and informal sectors, or of clearly distinguishing criminal from informal' since 'the informal economy of El Alto is informal in the sense that it is more or less unregulated by the government for taxation purposes. However, it is neither clandestine nor entirely separate from the State' (Lazar, 2008). Links to the State are present due to mediation between it and popular economic actors through the high proliferation of collective organisations in Bolivia, and particularly El Alto, which will be returned to in chapter 4.3.3.

Vorley also warns us of the conceptual dangers of equating 'informal' with *traditional* as opposed to *modern*; with *regulated* as opposed to *unregulated*; and with *unorganised* as opposed to *organised*. He points out that 'the informal economy is highly regulated and highly legitimated, yet not by the State', that the decentralised structure of informal markets make them highly dynamic and responsive to consumer demand, and that modern technology is often incorporated into informal economic systems (Vorley, 2013).

2.1.2 Characteristics of Informality

It is perhaps, therefore, more useful to focus on characteristics of informality, which will lead us beyond simple, and often misleading, categorisations of formal, informal and illegal. Vorley's write-up of a knowledge workshop carried out by IIED, Hivos and Mainumby, includes a table of characteristics that may help make some distinctions between formal and informal.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Informal Economy

Features	Formal sector	Informal sector
Size of firm	Large	Small
Ownership and management	Corporate	Family/self
Technology	Capital intensive	Labour intensive
Bargaining status	Collective	Individual
Legal status	Registered	Extra-legal
Official policy	Promoted/protected	Unpromoted/unprotected
Barriers to entry	Economies of scale, patents, licences	Very modest investment

Source: Vorley 2013

Such distinctions can also be seen as imperfect, but are a useful guide to help with an idea of what informality means. Also noted in addition to the table, and of key importance to the topic of the thesis, is that of personalised means of exchange, ‘underpinned by a rich set of social and trust-based relations that facilitate trade through cohesion and social capital. Written contracts are rarely observed, but long-term relationships (often spanning generations) are the norm’ (Vorley, 2013). This will be returned to in chapter 2.3.

2.1.3 Historical Perspectives on Informality

During the 1950s and 1960s, attitudes towards informality linked to modernisation theory assumed that with the right economic policies, ‘traditional’ or ‘peasant’ systems, seen as a residue of the pre-modern era, would gradually disappear (Martha Alter Chen, 2012).

The term informal was actually coined by Keith Hart in 1973. Hart noted the efficiency, creativity and resilience of informal economic actors, but saw informal activities as marginal and separate from the formal sector. Although, therefore, he moved beyond the sense of informal systems being ‘traditional’ or ‘backward’, he continued to engage in a dichotomous approach to distinctions between informal and formal activity.

The structuralist school of the time saw economic actors as having been driven to informal activity out of necessity, saw them as unfortunate pawns in an exploitative world system that served to reduce labour and input costs for large capitalist firms. (Williams & Gurtoo, 2012) Neoliberal theory on informality sees informal economic actors as clever entrepreneurs, and their activity as ‘the people’s spontaneous and creative response to the State’s incapacity to satisfy the basic needs of the impoverished masses’ (De Soto, 1989). De Soto therefore recommended deregulation in order to remove barriers to entry into the ‘formal sector’ which, it was believed, would lead to the assimilation of the informal sector into the formal.

Popular economic actors have therefore often been seen as either hindrances to economic development or as victims of an economic system who are forced to eke out a living any way that they can.

More recently, however, it has been noted that informal activity is becoming more, rather than less, prolific, leading the ILO to accept that ‘the persistence and growth of the informal economy, especially in developing countries, has defied its initial conception as a “survivalist” and temporary phenomenon that would eventually disappear after its absorption into the modern formal economy’ (ILO 2011, quoted in Choudhary, 2013). Notions of a kind of upward trajectory towards formality have therefore been unfounded.

Dualist and neoliberal attitudes to informality persist in current times with the notion that informality threatens the ability of the capitalist market economy to provide economic development. Recent studies also point to the short life span of informal economies, having observed that rising incomes often lead to a lower propensity to consume goods and services from the informal sector, meaning that the informal sector is constrained from the demand side (Böhme & Thiele, 2012).

It is, however, increasingly being argued that informal economic systems can be an important source of social welfare, and important facilitators of a ‘trickle-down’ effect that approaches such as private sector development cannot provide (Tassi et al., 2013), thus calling into question the likely effectiveness of policies designed to ‘formalise’ such systems.

2.2 Formal and Informal Institutions

A discussion on popular economies raises issues of governance and institutions, or ‘the legal, administrative and customary arrangements for repeated human interaction’ (Pejovich, 2012) since, due to the fact that popular economic actors operate largely outside the realm of State regulation, their institutional structures often differ considerably from those of fully formalised and registered business owners. The first chapter will therefore approach a definition of informal institutions before a second chapter links this to networks, whose possible contribution to urban food security in El Alto is the focus of the study.

2.2.1 Defining Informal Institutions

Polanyi’s paper on informal institutions first emphasised the importance of institutions such as kinship and religion in the governance of non-market economic systems (Polanyi, 1957). A distinction can be made between formal institutions, or ‘rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced through channels which are widely accepted as official’; and informal institutions, or ‘socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels’ (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). Helmke and Levitsky warn against misconceptions about informal institutions, emphasising the importance of taking into account what informal institutions are *not* as well as what they are: they note that informal institutions are *not* formal rules that are weakly institutionalised, or behavioural regularities – in order to be considered an informal institution,

a behavioural regularity must respond to an established rule or guideline, the violation of which generates some kind of sanction. The authors also warn against equating informal institutions with culture in favour of 'defining informal institutions in terms of shared expectations rather than shared values. Shared expectations may or may not be rooted in broader societal values'. Informal institutions, therefore, will be defined as rules shaping behaviour that exist outside officially channels but whose violation involves some kind of sanction. These rules may or may not be rooted in cultural or religious values.

Discussion on informal versus formal institutions, like that on informal versus formal economies has historically been characterised by a largely dichotomous approach to the separation between the two concepts. North, for example, relates informal institutions such as personalised, trust-based relationships, to peasant societies, and notes that these need to evolve when an economy scales up (North, 1989). However, Helmke and Levitsky note that 'much current literature [in comparative politics] assumes that actors' incentives and expectations are shaped primarily, if not exclusively, by formal rules' when in fact there is an interplay between formal and informal institutions on a number of levels in market economies. Moreover, the lack of pure 'informality' in Bolivian popular economies extends to their institutionality, since shared values of popular economic actors are rooted not only in more informal sources such as kinship, religion, culture and trust, but also in more official collective organisations that mediate with the State. It can, therefore be argued, that there is interplay between formal and informal at a number of different levels, not only in terms of interactions between different types of systems but also between the institutions that govern these systems.

2.2.2 Informal Institutions and Networks

Helmke and Levitsky point to networks as a crucial way in which informal rules are communicated, learned and enforced in the absence of written down rules and public enforcement. A key function of the networks that, as described in chapter 2.1.2, play such an important role in popular economies, may be to establish and maintain the institutions that govern these economies.

In turn, these networks are grounded in the institutions that they help to enforce. Popular economies tend to involve highly personalised exchanges that are rarely written down (Tassi et al., 2013). This requires a strong element of trust, something that will likely be enforced by a range of institutional entities.

Trust, however, is a basis for economic activity that Hart describes as a 'last resort' (Hart, 2000). Hart makes the distinction between contract, kinship and trust, and sees the three as arranged in a hierarchy with contract at the top and trust at the bottom. Hart writes that 'kinship and contract each offer a durable model for hierarchy and control: parental and legal sanctions respectively. That is why traditional rural society only has room for trust in the margins for

achieved relationships of friendship and why trust accumulates in the interstices of mass societies and organised markets' since 'trust stands in the middle of a continuum of words for belief, mixing extremes of blind faith and open-eyed confidence'. Within Bolivian popular economies, however, networks are to a great extent grounded in Aymara culture (Tassi 2012) which may serve to enhance the effectiveness of trust-based personal relationships. This will be returned to in chapter 4.4.2.

2.3 Networks in Popular Economies

Personal, face-to-face relations have already been identified as an important integral part of the popular economic system in Bolivia (Vorley, 2013, see section 2.1.2). Indeed, Arbona and his colleagues describe how face to face networks and relations are the very foundations of this economic system (J. Arbona, Canedo, Medeiros, & Tassi, 2015) and Lazar points out that 'in work on informal economies [...] the social relations underpinning market transactions have not always received the attention they deserve' (Lazar, 2008).

As popular actors form personal relations with other actors, and they to other actors, they come to constitute a network of individuals and/or groups. On a basic level, a network can be described as 'a group or system of interconnected people or things'; a social network as 'a network of social interactions and personal relationships' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010). A more comprehensive definition of networks is that 'a network is the form taken by relations or links between actors of a given group, which are means of accessing resources and opportunities'. These resources and opportunities may or may not be advantageous to an actor, depending on how effectively they are used (Díaz-Albertini 2004, quoted in Canaviri, 2015). This section will first describe the main forms of personal relationship that underpin popular economies in Bolivia. Two main themes related to such relations can be drawn from the body of literature on popular economies, namely concepts related to efficiency, and concepts relating to institutionality. The topic of institutionality has already been discussed in chapter 2.2. The second chapter of this section will therefore discuss the role of networks in terms of efficiency. Discussions on institutionality often relate personal, trust-based relationships to small-scale, traditional economic systems. A fourth part to the section will question this idea and address the concept of networks as opposed to structures and the possible relative efficiency of the former in a modernising, globalising world.

2.3.1 Forms of personal relationship in Bolivian popular economies

Three main forms of personal relationship can be identified in Bolivian popular economies. The first involves family ties and relations of kinship, which have been seen not only to ensure stability but also to connect urban areas with rural ones (Castillo et al., 2012), creating a

'rural/urban fluidity' (Lazar, 2008) that will be discussed in further detail in section four. The phenomenon of *pluriempleo* in Bolivia, where families will often be involved in a number of different economic activities (Aramayo Canedo, 2013), means that family networks can lead to the interlinking of different businesses. Moreover, the importance of maintaining family ties with one's community of origin, and often having a house there as well, means that such networks not only link urban economic actors with each other, but that they also connect rural with urban spaces.

A second form of personal relationship is that of the collective organisation, which can involve trade unions, associations and fraternities. Such entities will be discussed in further detail in chapter 4.4.2, but the opportunities that these organisations provide to form personal relationships with others are important ways in which popular economic actors create and consolidate economic networks (Tassi, 2012).

Third, and of crucial importance to vendors and traders in Bolivia, is the *casero* relationship, which involves the repeat economic interaction between economic actors over long periods of time in order to show loyalty, even when a buyer may be able to acquire goods or service elsewhere at a better price. As such relationships mature, certain benefits are established for the actor who has shown loyalty, such as lower prices, phone calls to notify that orders have come in, and goods being kept back for the buyer so that they do not sell out. Since different vendors, traders and suppliers have both forward and backward linkages to *casero* buyers and suppliers, a complex network of *casero* relationships can also be found in popular economic systems.

In addition to the above, popular economic actors strategically use a wide range of personal, social relations, as networks of friends and acquaintances provide various forms of economic opportunities and stability. Such a phenomenon is seen particularly in anthropological studies on popular economies (eg. Aramayo Canedo, 2013; Hart, 2000; Lazar, 2007; Tassi, 2012).

In Bolivia, therefore, personal relations are woven into a rich fabric of networks used as a resource by popular actors in order to provide economic opportunities.

2.3.2 Popular networks and efficiency

In chapter 2.1, it was noted that recent studies on popular economies have pointed to the dynamism, efficiency and responsiveness to consumer demand that can be found in popular economies. The kind of personal networks which are so integral to popular economies in Bolivia are found to be flexible, showing a great propensity to adapt to a fluid economic environment (Castillo et al., 2012). They have also been found to contribute to an efficient system that reduces transaction costs⁵ (*Ibid.*). Aramayo, in her study on the *tambos*, a type of wholesale,

⁵ Transaction costs = The costs incurred in undertaking an economic exchange

producer market, in La Paz, notes the importance of sociability not only for economic exchange, but also in the provision of food items from the countryside to the urban consumer.

Personal relations have been found, therefore, to provide efficiency and flexibility to popular economic systems, which not only reduces transaction costs but also provides an effective arena to respond to consumer demand and promote an efficient supply system for products.

2.3.3 Networks vs. Structures

Although Hart describes trust as a 'last resort' (see chapter 2.2.2), he also points out that 'friends are free, and they remain free or they are no longer friends. Society in this sense is always personal, active, concrete' (Hart, 2000) Indeed, references to the flexibility of popular economic systems in Bolivia has already been noted (Castillo et al., 2012), as has its dynamism and responsiveness to consumer demand (Vorley, Del Pozo-Vergnes, & Barnett, 2012). A remarkable ability to respond to modernity and link to global economic networks is also being seen in the Aymara popular actor (J. Arbona et al., 2015; Tassi et al., 2013), suggesting a popular economy in Bolivia that is not only increasing in size, but also growing more efficient and dynamic and crossing international borders. Since personal networks of economic actors can be one of the ways in which flexibility and responsiveness to consumer demand can be achieved, it is worth considering whether, rather than being characteristic of a backward, peasant society or a 'last resort', networks in fact provide the ability to negotiate an ever-changing modern economic arena in a highly effective way, to navigate the 'liquid times' that modernity has brought us (Bauman, 2007). Bauman writes that "'society" is increasingly viewed and treated as a "network" rather than a "structure" (let alone a solid totality): it is perceived and treated as a matrix of random connections and disconnections and of an essentially infinite volume of possible permutations' (*Ibid.*).

Long & Van der Ploeg's conception of structure is perhaps less concrete than Bauman's. They criticise traditional conceptions of structures as top-down entities that provide a rigid framework for social life, which fails to take human agency into account. Actor-oriented approaches, which do take into account human agency, are criticised for not taking into account that all human agency occurs within the context of a network of social actors, in spaces the authors call 'arenas', which contain the often conflicting struggle of different actors' projects, interests and perspectives. Each project is articulated with other actors' projects, interests and perspectives, and this articulation is strategic, because all actors try to anticipate the actions of the other actors in the arena. Forming coalitions/distancing oneself from others are both part of this strategic actions. Combining concepts of agency and structure, the authors conclude that 'structure can be characterised as an extremely fluid set of emergent properties, which, on the one hand, results from the interlocking and/or distantiation of various actors' projects, while on the other, it functions as an important point of reference for the further elaboration, negotiation

and confrontation of actors' projects' (Long & Van der Ploeg, 1994). If we see the interlocking and/or distantiation of actors' projects as the opportunities taken or not taken by actors who use social networks as a resource, described at the beginning of this section, and the function of this 'set of emergent properties' to serve as a 'frame of reference' – a fluid form of structuring those actors' behaviour, we might therefore refer to networks as structures, based on Long & Van der Ploeg's definition.

Perhaps the Aymara's ability to establish, maintain and adapt such networks, which are simultaneously able to serve as a type of structure while also being extremely fluid and adaptable to rapidly changing times, is one of the very reasons that they are achieving such economic success, and one of the very reasons they should be acknowledged as a viable mechanism by which food security can be achieved.

Bolivian popular economic actors therefore employ social relations on a number of levels as a basis for and a facilitator of economic activity. The different types and levels of social interaction used results in a rich fabric of networks through which economic activity is mediated. This may not only serve to diffuse institutional entities in the way discussed in chapter 2.2, but may also be an important structuring device of a system that can simultaneously achieve stability and adaptability. These networks and the popular actor's ability both to depend upon them and adapt them may therefore be highly instrumental to an effective and responsive food supply system between rural areas and urban El Alto. The specific role of street food vendors in this context will now be discussed.

2.4 Theories on Street Food Vending

In order to avoid repetition, this section will focus on the role of street food vending in the lives of the vendors themselves, while the chapters in section 2.5 will relate these aspects to its role in food security for the urban consumer.

Academic discussion on street food often has a gender dimension, exploring the ability of the occupation to allow women to reconcile productive with reproductive roles. This concept will constitute the first chapter of the section. Next, discussion will turn to the precariousness of street food vending as a trade, an idea that is emphasised in a number of studies on street food vendors. Finally, theories that contest such assertions of precariousness in street food vending as a business will be explored.

2.4.1 Street food vending and Productive/Reproductive Roles

Previous studies on street food vending have highlighted the occupation's compatibility with reproductive roles for women. Floro and Swain's study *Food Security, Gender and Occupational Choice among Urban Low-Income Households*, for example, finds that street food vending is often chosen by women as a way to ensure food security for the household: food security is usually income-dependent in urban areas (this will be returned to in chapter 2.5.2), meaning that lack

of capital in the form of cash can threaten a household's access to food. Floro and Swain explain that when earnings from street food vending are low, 'the counter-cyclical of unsold food helps smoothen food consumption' since the unsold food that has not been successfully converted into cash income can, nevertheless, be consumed by the family at the end of the day (Floro & Bali Swain, 2013). Street food vending is therefore seen as a way of generating income, but with a kind of 'fall-back plan' that acts as a buffer against food insecurity for the vendor's household if business is not good on any given day.

A number of studies also focus on the attractiveness of street food vending to women since, being a more independent form of occupation, it allows vendors to care for children while they work (FAO, 2007; Floro & Bali Swain, 2013; Tinker, 2003). Street vending, therefore, is often seen as a useful livelihood option, especially for female vendors with families, who are able to care for children and ensure household food security in tandem with the income generation provided by the vending business.

2.4.2 Precariousness of Street Food Vending

It is, however, often noted that street vending can be a highly precarious occupation. Tinker sees the need to cook and sell food daily as a source of high economic risk for vendors since unsold food translated into wasted money (Tinker, 2003). Indeed, if a day of poor sales results in more unsold food than the vendor's household requires as an evening meal, unsold food will fail to make either an economic or a nutritional contribution to the household.

Floro and Swain caution that the ease of entry into street food vending as an occupation can lead to excessive competition and sales fluctuation that can put a downward pressure on earnings (Floro & Swain 2013). While in terms of urban food security in general, this phenomenon would contribute to lower food prices for the urban consumer, it must be taken into account that the income opportunities for street food vendors may be threatened by proliferation of vendors in a given area.

Studies also focus on the small scale of vending as a business and lack of capacity to scale up (FAO, 2007), or of a 'hierarchy' of actors within informal food systems, in which street food vendors are at the bottom (Lourenco-Lindell, 1995). It has also been suggested that within popular economies, male owners of small-scale enterprises tend to be entrepreneurial while female owners tend only to invest in their families and have less concern with growing the business. Since street food vending tends to be a predominantly female occupation, this would suggest that street food businesses tend to remain small-scale, due to reproductive duties being a primary concern (FAO, 2007). Such views echo those discussed in chapter 2.2.2 of popular economic actors as victims, forced to adopt a disagreeable and precarious occupation as a survival strategy, from which they must eke out a living.

2.4.3 Power, voice and agency of street food vendors

Elsewhere, however, it has been suggested that high levels of social capital among street food vendors can entail high levels of decision-making ability, power and agency. Ranaboldo and Tassi caution that viewing popular actors such as the vendors in question as victims ignores their role as constructors of creative economic spaces (quoted in Castillo et al., 2012). Turner and Schoenberger's study on street vendors in Vietnam finds that social capital among the vendors results in a high capacity to increase sales, reduce economic risk and avoid harassment by the police (Turner & Schoenberger, 2011). A focus on networks of street food vendors in El Alto will therefore allow the examination of the extent to which this form of social capital serves as a buffer to the precariousness in the occupation of street food vending highlighted in some studies.

Aramayo, in her study of the *tambos*⁶ in La Paz, also rejects the view of vending, in this case of market vendors, solely as a survival strategy, since they are important intermediaries between rural and urban areas (Aramayo Canedo, 2013). Lazar suggests that this intermediary position of vendors allows them to exercise considerable economic and political power, being as they are at an important nexus between rural and urban areas. The focus on being intermediaries between rural and urban areas may also relate to street vendors of prepared food, since they are also nodes in the popular economic system that brings food from the countryside to the urban consumer. Vorley notes that 'informality remains the dominant link between the rural producer and the urban poor' (Vorley, 2013) while the FAO acknowledges that the sourcing behaviour of street food vendors worldwide does tend to give importance to small-scale producers (FAO, 2007). Street food vendors may therefore be important actors in supporting small-scale producers and act as an important node in popular socioeconomic networks that ensure food provision from rural areas to the urban consumer. For this reason, the paper will now turn to a discussion of food security and the role of street food vendors in it.

⁶ *Tambo* = A type of wholesale market to which vendors often travel from the countryside and are given space to prepare their produce for sale as well as sleep

2.5 Food Security

The chapters in section 2.4 suggest that street food vendors and their activities may be highly relevant to discussions on food security in urban areas. Moreover, Aramayo writes that informal food markets in La Paz offer a level of flexibility and adaptability that mean there are viable alternatives to food security and food sovereignty in the city (Aramayo Canedo, 2013). The concept of food security will therefore be discussed in relation to popular economies of street food vendors. A first part will outline concepts of food security before a second part focuses on the urban context and the elements of food security that are most crucial in cities.

2.5.1 The Four Pillars of Food Security

'Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.' – 1996 World Food Summit

The above, well-known definition of food security encapsulates four 'pillars' of the concept. The FAO notes that 'for food security objectives to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously' (FAO, 2003).

The four dimensions of food security as identified by the FAO (2003) are physical **availability** of food; economic and physical **access** to food; food **utilisation**; and **stability** of the other three dimensions over time. The following table provides a useful overview of these four pillars:

Table 2: The Four Pillars of Food Security

Physical AVAILABILITY of food	Food availability addresses the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.
Economic and physical ACCESS to food	An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives.
Food UTILIZATION	Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Combined with good biological utilization of food consumed, this determines the <i>nutritional status</i> of individuals.
STABILITY of the other three dimensions over time	Even if your food intake is adequate today, you are still considered to be food insecure if you have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of your nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on your food security status.

Source: FAO 2003

Also to be noted from the World Food Summit definition is the importance given not only to the dietary needs of the consumer but also to her/his food preferences. This means that discussions on popular economic systems and their responsiveness to consumer demand outlined in chapter 2.1.1 may also be relevant to the role of street food vendors in food security, since responsiveness to consumer demand suggests a high propensity to cater to preference. Since street food vendors operate within urban contexts, it is important to outline those aspects of

food security that are most relevant in urban areas in order to determine the role the vendors may play in it.

2.5.2 The Urban Context of Food Security

It is important to make the distinction between rural and urban food security. In urban settings, where households are less likely to have access to arable land for food production, there is a far heavier reliance on market purchases (Floro & Bali Swain, 2013). The FAO predicts that urban residents spend approximately 30% more on food than their rural counterparts (FAO, 2007), meaning that urban dwellers are far more dependent on cash income for food security (Ruel et al., 2010). Food prices – economic access to food – therefore play an important role in the food security of urban low-income groups in El Alto.

Physical access to food is a fundamental aspect to food security in urban contexts, since even if a country has adequate rural food production, the effectiveness of supplying food to cities and the availability of food outlets in the city dictates whether or not urban residents are able to achieve food security. For this reason, 'lack of food access is the key to the food security of poor urban households, rather than food production' (Crush & Frayne, 2011).

Alongside the focus on food access in urban contexts, a more recent focus on food utilisation has come to be seen as of equal importance (Timmer, 2009). In order for the body to be able to benefit optimally from food consumed, food must be nutritious, and the body must be able to absorb those nutrients effectively. In the context of street food vendors, this raises the issues of the nutritional value of street food and of food hygiene in the food preparation and handling practices of the vendors. Both of these issues are primary arguments *against* any contribution of street food vendors to urban food security, since street food is usually seen as being of poor nutritional value and of poor hygiene (FAO, 2007).

Nonetheless, there is suggestion that street food vendors may play a crucial role in food access. Crush and Frayne find that 'the food supply in Southern African cities and towns rests on a well-organised informal marketing system' (2011). The efficiency and flexibility of popular economic systems based in networks of personal relations that has been described previously in the section, in which street food vendors play a role, may therefore contribute to the urban resident's ability to have adequate physical access to food produced in rural areas.

Ruel and her colleagues find that one of the main food-based coping strategies of poor urban households in various countries around the world, when threatened with food insecurity, is to increase consumption of street food, which is a 'cheap source of energy and a time-saver' (Ruel et al. 2010). This concept of time is a crucial element to food access: since food security is income-dependent, saving time on food preparation, or on travelling to food sources, means more time to work and earn money, which translates into greater economic access to food.

2.6 Summary – Theoretical/Thematic Overview

Now that the main theories and concepts relating to the topic of the paper have been discussed, networks will be used as a central concept from which to branch out to and discuss the different concepts of food security that have been identified as relevant to the urban context of El Alto. The role of networks to each of these food security concepts will be considered, mediated through other important aspects that have been included as part of the Theoretical/Thematic Overview.

Networks and Physical Access to food: Evidence that popular economic systems grounded in networks of economic actors may involve high levels of efficiency and dynamism suggests a key role in the supply system of food products from countryside to city and, therefore, the physical access to food by the urban consumer. The nodal structure of small-scale actors in the food system and the resulting decentralised nature of this system may also contribute to better distribution of resources than might be achieved by purer forms of market economy.

Networks and Economic Access to food: Networks that are grounded in social interaction may result in a food marketing system that is more socially responsible to groups that are food insecure. Elements of social responsibility that are culture-specific to this part of Bolivia will be examined in chapter 4.4. Moreover, networks present in Bolivian popular economies such as the *casero* relationship and interlinking of family businesses may be instrumental in lowering food prices and therefore in increasing economic accessibility for the urban consumer.

Networks and food Stability: Both the possible institutional qualities of networks, and the institutions in which these networks are rooted, may play a key role in stability of food security over time, particularly in light of evidence that networks may provide a kind of fluid structure for economic activity that is stable yet adaptable. It is possible that networks are capable of providing a balance between buffering against, and adapting to, stresses and shocks that may affect the rural-urban food supply to El Alto.

If urban consumers are, to some extent, dependent on street food for their food security, the stability or precariousness of the vendor's business is also relevant. The social capital offered by a vendor's network system may therefore also play a key role in the stability of food security in terms of the durability of the service that the vendor is able to offer in terms of the economic risk that may threaten her(/his) business.

Networks and food Preference: The dynamism and responsiveness to consumer demand identified as a possible result of network structures in popular economies also relates to the concept of food preference.

Networks and food Utilisation: Food hygiene usually requires regulation and enforcement of strict rules and guidelines in order to ensure cleanliness of food and lack of risk of infection for the consumer. With street food vendors, the topic of food hygiene is therefore problematic,

since the vendors are part of systems that operate largely outside the realm of formal regulation. However, since it has been suggested that networks are both grounded in, and are instrumental in diffusing and enforcing, informal institutions, it is possible that informal institutional entities that control food hygiene practices of the vendors may be in place within their popular socioeconomic system.

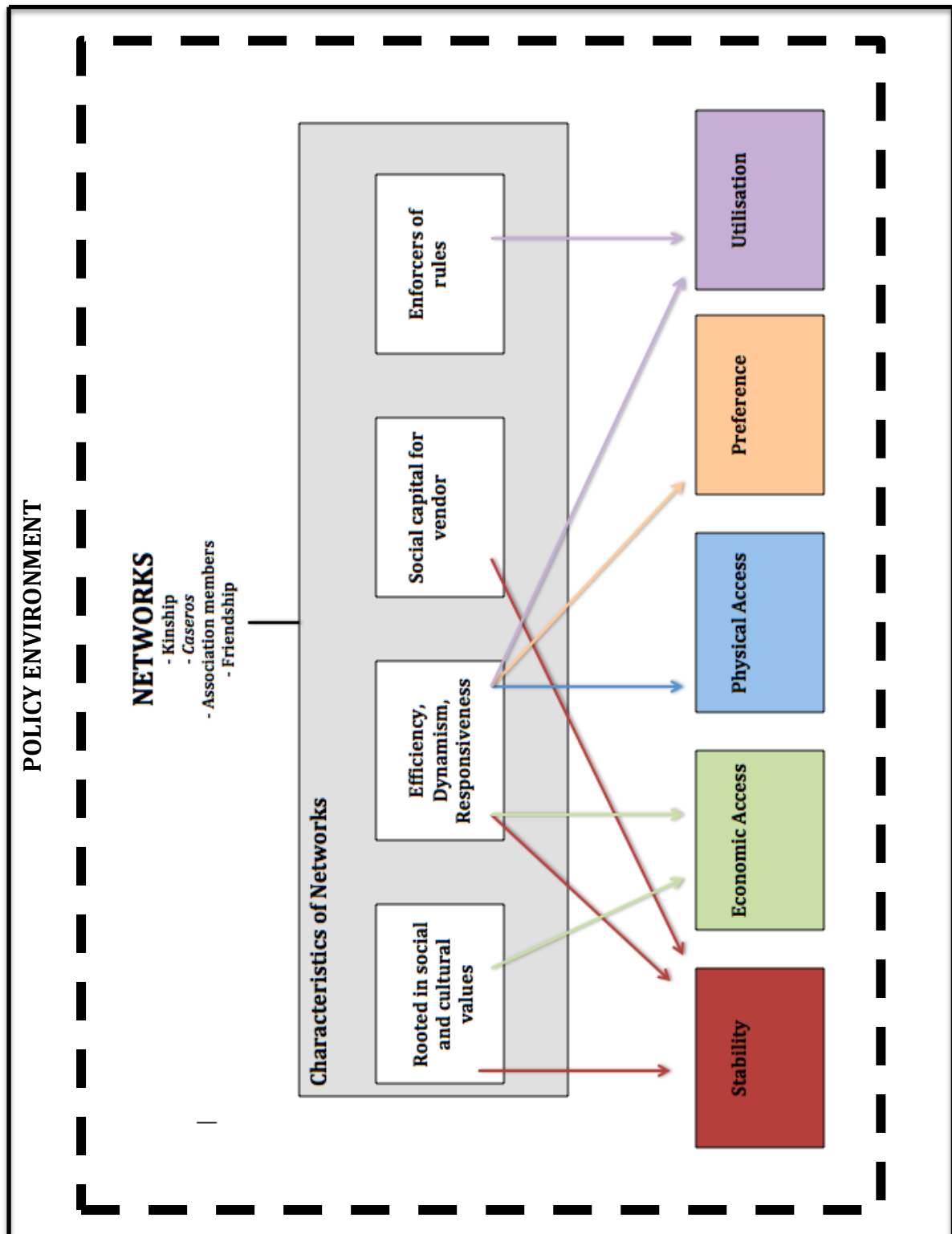
Since the importance of an interplay between formal and informal institutions has been noted, as well as the idea that Bolivian popular economies are 'neither clandestine nor entirely separate from the State' (Lazar, 2008), it has also been considered important to consider the Bolivian policy environment and how this relates to the popular economic food system within which street food vendors operate.

3. Research Design

3.1 Conceptual Model

Chapter 2.6's summary of the Theoretical-Thematic context of the paper has identified a number of threads that have been woven into the below conceptual model.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



3.2 Research Questions

A central research question and corresponding sub-questions were posed based on the thematic-theoretical discussion and the conceptual model:

Central question: *What forms of networks play a role in the economic activities of street food vendors and how do these contribute to food security in El Alto, Bolivia?*

Research sub-questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto?
2. To what extent do street food vendors' networks contribute to food access (economic and physical) in El Alto?
3. To what extent do street food vendors' networks cater to food preference?
4. To what extent do street food vendors' networks contribute to food utilisation?
5. To what extent do street food vendors' networks contribute to the long-term stability of food security in El Alto?

3.3 Methodology

The research was carried out in a number of phases as part of an iterative, heuristic research process that was carried out over a period of 16 weeks. Due to the nature of the research focus, which involved economic actors engaged in activities that they would be more inclined to hide than share, it was decided that the research would primarily follow an ethnographic approach, with attempts to get to know a small number of vendors well in the hope of acquiring truthful, in-depth information from them. As Tassi notes about popular economic actors in the region of Bolivia in question 'you cannot simply hand them a questionnaire asking for information on income, turnover and economic networks. First and foremost, given that the majority of their activities are informal and their business agreements are of a verbal nature, most people have no real interest in discussing such matters openly' (Tassi, 2012, my translation). For this reason, when dealing with the vendors, techniques of participant observation were combined with unstructured interviews. A total of 12 participants were reached in this way.

Later in the research process, it was decided that a consumer survey would be carried out. While it had previously been hoped that information on consumers could be obtained from the vendors, it became clear that vendors were not in possession of some of the information required to respond fully to the research questions. While a survey had been deemed inappropriate as a research instrument to use with vendors, the kind of information required from consumers was not sensitive and could be obtained anonymously, and was therefore considered an appropriate way to obtain a broad view of consumer use of street food in El Alto. Research was carried out in El Alto for a period of 17 weeks between February and June 2015. Since Carolina, one of the research assistants, vends street food on Sundays in La Paz, her perspective on street food vending was also taken into account, even though she is not based in the city of El Alto. Where the research assistants had contacts who were street food vendors and with whom trust was already established, but who vended outside the central area of El Alto, it was decided that these would also be interviewed in order not to miss the opportunity of having access to more respondents.

The research instruments used will be discussed in detail below:

Participant observation: Participant observation was an important research instrument used throughout the research process. At the beginning of the research, the method involved visiting the stalls of vendors, eating their food, and chatting with them. Observations were made, but care was taken not to ask personal questions of the vendors straight away, since the objective was to first establish trust through forming a personal relationship with each vendor. Eating the food was also considered an important way of establishing trust, as has been noted in a past ethnographic study of street food vendors (Estrada & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2010). Preliminary data gained from these visits was used to formulate an interview guide, to be used as the basis

for unstructured interviews with the same vendors, after trust had been established. Annexe 2 presents the interview guide.

As the research process continued and levels of trust grew, closer relationships with three of the vendors was established. This allowed closer methods of observation and for the reach of the

Figure 2: Working as a vendor's assistant



observations to stretch beyond the location of the vendors' stalls.

Both trips to the market to purchase ingredients with these vendors and visits to their homes were carried out with these vendors.

With one vendor, the opportunity arose to work as her assistant.

Work as the vendor – Doña Sandra's – assistant was carried out at lunchtimes, five days per week for a period of around two

months. Such work enabled personal relationships and subsequent unstructured interviews with other members of the vendor's association, including association leaders, as well as attendance at the association's annual anniversary party.

Transect walks: Transect walks were also carried out with the research assistants, Richard and Carolina, at different times of the day, in order to understand the role that street food plays in the daily lives of *alteños** at different times of the day.

Unstructured interviews: The interview guide that was generated from the participant observation was originally intended for use in semi-structured, recorded interviews. The technique, however, was piloted on one respondent and deemed inappropriate. First, the vendor, who I had known at that point for around a month, was made notably uncomfortable by the environment surrounding the interview: although I was interviewing her in her own stall, I had brought with me a research assistant and my interview guide in paper form. The participant in question, Doña Guillermina, became more closed and quiet in the presence of both the assistant and the papers. Furthermore, although we had explained the use of the recording device to Doña Guillermina before we began the interview, shortly after starting she exclaimed "Before I used to sell... Well... Something else... hey! You're taking photos of me!" (*pointing to the recorder*). I explained 'No, no it's not a photo, it's just for the voice', to which Doña Guillermina

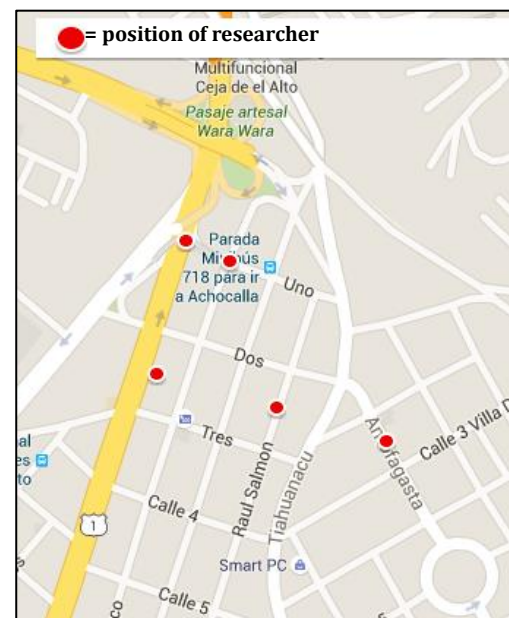
* *Alteño* = Someone who is from or who lives in El Alto

replied, ‘Oh no! I’m not going to talk anymore, then’. It took some persuasion from Carolina before Doña Guillermina would continue with what she was saying, which was a shame, because for around a month leading up to the interview I had been visiting Doña Guillermina’s stall repeatedly and had established at least a certain degree of trust with her. The fact that such trust could be lost so easily through use of a tape recorder was seen as a higher degree of risk than losing data by relying on memory. After this, therefore, apart from one interview with a friend of Carolina’s who is a lawyer as well as helping his mother vend food on Sundays, and understands recording as part of the research process, all interviews took the form of casual conversations, while keeping in mind the interview guide which had been constructed as a rough guide for the process. Conversations were remembered and written down as soon as possible afterwards.

Consumer survey: The consumer survey involved a very short questionnaire with a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions (see annexe 3). Five sociologists carried out the survey, most of whom were trusted friends made during my time in La Paz and El Alto. In a preliminary training session, the researchers were instructed to each stand in a specific place in La Ceja, the central part of El Alto (see section 4), which had been selected at random using a map of the area. They were instructed to select every 5th passer-by and ask him/her to participate in the survey. The combined practices of choosing locations at random and asking every 5th passer-by were carried out in order to reduce selection bias as much as possible. Two researchers carried out research during the weekend and the others on

weekdays, and all researchers were instructed to fill out half of their questionnaires during the day, before 7.00pm, and the other half at night, after 7.00pm. This was done in order to make sure that respondents were approached at different times of the day, again to reduce selection bias. The sociologists were both male and female, of a range of ages, and all were of Aymara descent. A total of 160 questionnaires were completed as part of the survey.

Figure 3: Locations in La Ceja where questionnaires were filled
Source: Google Maps



3.4 Operationalisation of concepts

In order to carry out both the qualitative methods of unstructured interviews and participant observation, and to compose the questionnaire used in the quantitative consumer survey, concepts were operationalized in the following manner:

Concept by postulation	1st Operationalisation	Concept by intuition
Characteristics of vendors	Personal characteristics	Age
		Civil status
		Number of children
		Level of education
		Place of residence
	Characteristics of occupation	Location of stall
		Type of food sold
		Length of time in occupation
		Permanent/Temporary
		Number of plates sold per day
		Number of hours worked
		Whether or not vendor is stall owner
		Number of stalls owned by vendor
		Number of employees
Relative contribution of income from vending to total household earnings		
Role of vendors in urban contexts	Use of street food by consumers	How often consumed
		Why consumed
Food Access	Economic Access	Price of street food
		Price of street food compared to other food sources
		Portion size relative to price
		Affordability of street food relative to consumer's income
	Physical Access	Stalls nearby place of work
		Stalls nearby home
		Stalls located on normal travel routes
		Vendors' contribution to movement of food products from countryside to city
		Time concerns
Food Utilisation	Food hygiene practices	Whether hands washed
		Whether vegetables washed
		Use of aprons, masks and headwear
		Use of fresh ingredients
		Not reusing leftover food

Food Utilisation cont.	Attitude of vendors towards food hygiene	Is food hygiene an important consideration?
		Do vendors know how to take care of food hygiene?
Food Stability	Vendors' ability to cope with stresses and shocks	Response to fluctuating food prices
		Response to fluctuating food availability
		Strength of ties to other economic actors
		Effectiveness of institutions
Food Preference	Consumer's tastes	Individual tastes
		Culturally acceptable types of food
Networks	Relationships with other social and economic actors	Customer relationships
		Supplier relationships
		Other members of collective organisations
		Relationships with family
		Relationships with friends
Networks and institutionality	Social & Cultural institutions	Acquaintances
		Social norms
		Reputation
		Trust
		Aymara traditions
		Religion

3.5 Data Analysis

For the qualitative data on the street food vendors obtained through participant observation and unstructured interviews, data was consulted on repeat occasions and grouped under headings in order to organise and compare. From the participant observations and transect walks, maps were also put together to show vendor activity at different times of the day. Where specific questions with quantitative answers were posed to vendors, such as the number of dishes sold per day, a table was constructed in order to present and compare the most important parts of such data.

The consumer survey was analysed quantitatively. For the qualitative questions, these were coded and analysed quantitatively, since the repetitiveness of responses of the same type allowed response to be grouped under main headings and a more statistical representation of consumer habits and opinions to be achieved.

3.6 Facilitating Access

Access was considered a key issue, since the Aymara have the reputation of being a closed community that is often hostile to penetration from the outside. One method that proved particularly helpful in facilitating access was to take lessons in the Aymara language. Both vendors and customers at street food stalls expressed great delight in hearing me attempt to communicate. By the time I started to work as a vendor's assistant, I was able to offer food and take orders in Aymara, which I believed helped a great deal in being accepted by the association members and by Doña Sandra's regular customers.

I also employed two research assistants, Richard Canaviri and Carolina Ilaya. Both are sociologists of Aymara descent, and helped a great deal at the beginning of the research process with tours of markets. Some interviews were also conducted with personal friends of the assistants with whom trust was already established. This meant that data could be collected much more quickly with these vendors than with those who were unknown at the beginning of the study. Carolina also has her own street food stall with her mother, a temporary stall which the pair run on Sundays, and which Carolina uses to help fund her masters degree. She was therefore a valuable source of information on the everyday realities of street vending as an activity, which helped formulate the interview guide for vendors.

3.7 Limitations and risks in the Research Design

3.7.1 Limitations and risks in the methodology

The following limitations have been identified in the research:

- Lack of random sampling in the participant observation/unstructured interviewing elements of the research. This will likely have introduced unknown forms of researcher bias into the selection process such as, for example, my choosing certain vendors because they looked friendlier/open, or because their food looked tastier.
- Small sample size of vendors: the advantages to the use of an ethnographic research style with the street food vendors – depth of data and confidence in the truthfulness of data collected – has the downside of meaning that a broad view cannot be obtained and generalisations about vendors cannot be made. This is to some extent mitigated by the use of triangulation of methods in the form of the consumer survey.
- Time limitations: The period of 17 weeks is short for an ethnographic style of research, and the ability to integrate successfully into a community in this time can be questioned.
- Use of assistants: Although the use of Aymara assistants will in some ways have facilitated data gathering in the survey, the use of a number of researchers will likely have introduced variation into the delivery of questions and recording of responses, which will have caused an element of bias in the collection of the survey data.
- Language barrier: Some data will have been lost due to my inability to conduct research in Aymara, and the possibility of my misunderstanding some words in Spanish, particularly slang with which I may have been unfamiliar.
- Survey sampling: No mechanism was established in order to avoid sampling the same individual twice, when research assistants stopped every fifth passer-by to fill out the questionnaire. This means that, though unlikely, it is conceivable that the same respondent could appear twice or more in the results.

3.7.2 Discussion on Rigour in the research design

Although the research made use of some quantitative methodology, in the form of the consumer survey, the primary methods used were qualitative. For this reason, Guba and Lincoln's criteria of *trustworthiness* were used as a guide, rather than the criteria validity and reliability more relevant to studies that are primarily quantitative in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The authors find trustworthiness to be made up of four criteria: credibility, which corresponds to internal validity; transferability, which corresponds to external validity; dependability, which corresponds to reliability, and confirmability, which corresponds to objectivity.

- *Credibility:* This criterion entails the acceptability of a researcher's account of social reality to others. Care was taken during the research to discuss findings with the

vendors involved in the study at all stages of the process, in order to receive respondent validation that the research was heading in a direction that was acceptable to those who were the focus of the study. Moreover, after the initial phase of participant observation, questions that mirrored preliminary observations were included in the unstructured interviews, in order to check whether my own observations as a researcher were compatible with the perspective of the vendors. This constituted a form of triangulation within the qualitative methodology. Furthermore, the high correlation of responses between the consumer survey and the participant observation and unstructured interview suggests a high degree of credibility to the findings of each method. Huge amounts of data from repeat visits and interactions with vendors along with a relatively large number of respondents for the nature of the survey conducted have, it is hoped, provided enough data to allow findings to be credible, despite the small number of respondents in the ethnographic part of the study.

- *Transferability*: Since the study involves the in-depth examination of a small group in a specific culture, I have tried to provide what Geertz (1973, quoted in Bryman, 2012) refers to as a 'thick-description', a detailed account of the respondents concerned as well as rich contextual and cultural information, so that researchers can determine the transferability of the findings to the context of their own studies.
- *Dependability*: Complete records have been kept of all aspects of the research, such as field notes, interview transcripts, data analysis, etc. However, these records have not been subjected to peer auditing to determine whether proper procedures have been followed and whether theoretical inferences are justified (Bryman 2012).
- *Confirmability*: Constant interaction with local research assistants, as well as consultation with experts from a number of different theoretical and political camps are hoped to have helped ensure that I have not allowed any pre-existing theoretical inclinations or personal values to sway the research process.

4. Context

Evident in its full name, the Plurinational State of Bolivia celebrates a diverse mix of cultures and is often described as Latin America's most indigenous nation. The upholding of indigenous cultures and values, however, has been something of a journey for the country, and is the result of a turbulent recent political history particularly relevant to the Aymara, the indigenous people that forms a majority in El Alto, and the culture in which popular economic activity in the area is grounded. It is therefore important to provide a brief outline of the recent political history that has led to the current political context, and this focus will constitute the first chapter of the section. A second chapter will zoom in further on the history and culture of the Aymara, who played such a crucial role in political uprisings outlined in chapter 4.1. A third chapter will lay out relevant contextual information on El Alto and its central areas, and peculiarities of the city in relation to other cities in Bolivia and Latin America in general which affect the role of popular economic actors, in this case street food vendors. In light of the contextual detail discussed, a fourth chapter will allow a description of the way popular economies operate within the Bolivian context. A final chapter will explore the current policy environment in which vendors currently operate.

4.1 The Political Context and the Role of the Aymara

Bolivia has a turbulent political history. During the late 1980s and the 1990s, Bolivia had 'an excellent track record in following the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and World Bank, often complying with more than the donors demanded' (Dijkstra, 2011). In 1985, the then president Víctor Paz Estenssoro implemented the infamous Supreme Decree 21060 in an attempt to combat problems of hyperinflation and inability to pay international debts. The Decree promoted neoliberal principles of market liberalisation and the rolling back of the State in the country, making the Bolivia one of the first laboratories for the neoliberal theories that had been formulated by Western economists. Neoliberal policies and programmes continued under successive governments with, for example, the first Sanchez de Lozada government (1992-1997) initiating such policies as the privatisation of strategic public enterprises, which were supported by policy based loans from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (*Ibid.*).

With these policies grew increasing social unrest centred around lack of social welfare and service provision by the State. The 'gaps' left by the State were also filled by more 'informal' institutions, which were often based on indigenous structures of power (Tassi, 2013) and have been identified as a key reason for the growth of popular economies in the country. As will be shown in more detail in chapter 2.2, it was often indigenous peoples such as the Aymara who were the 'victims' of such neoliberal policies, often living in more marginalised locations and

being most affected by gaps in service provision, all exacerbated by a history of social and economic exclusion that had existed since colonial times.

Public unrest culminated in the Cochabamba Water Wars of 2000, a response to the privatisation of the municipal water company Semapa, and the Gas Wars of 2003, which centred in El Alto and involved protests over the export of natural gas. Conflicts over both the water and gas issues continued until the president, Carlos Mesa, was forced to resign in March 2005.

Solidarity based on Aymara identity between urban dwellers of El Alto and protesters who came into the city from rural areas has been identified as a reason for the power and success of the protests (Lazar, 2008) and the Aymara of El Alto and the surrounding areas of the *altiplano* have acquired, since the protest, a kind of political presence that comes from knowledge of what citizens are capable of, seen by some as a constant threat looming over the political and social elite of La Paz (Lazar, 2008; Tassi, 2012).

The resignation of Carlos Mesa was followed by the coming into power of Evo Morales and the beginning of a new political scene for Bolivia. Morales is of Aymara descent and is the first indigenous president of Bolivia. He won the December 2005 elections with an 'unprecedented' 54% of the popular vote (Albro, 2006). His party, the MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo* – Movement Towards Socialism) focuses on indigenous cultural and political engagement and rejects neoliberal market principles. He repealed the Supreme Decree 21060, nationalised the country's oil and gas industries, started a land redistribution programme designed to benefit previously landless beneficiaries, and rewrote the Bolivian constitution. The new constitution focuses on the concept of *Vivir Bien* (Living Well) which involves respect for diversity, and living in harmony with each other as well as with nature. The idea is that 'a person cannot live well if others live badly'. Both the New Constitution and the Bolivian National Development Plan 2010-2015 mark a distinction between *Vivir Bien* and the *Vivir Mejor* (Living Better) of the West, which, they write, focuses on individualism and material gain at the expense of other people and of the planet (Ministerio de Planificacion, 2009; *New Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia*, 2009).

It is to be noted, however, that concepts of *Vivir Bien* and anti-neoliberal rhetoric are described by many as a mere discourse, when in fact the country continues to follow a largely neoliberal logic (Arbona et al., 2015). Moreover, recent elections suggest that Evo may be starting to lose the overwhelming public popularity he used to possess: in the subnational elections of 29 March 2015, the MAS lost key seats: the mayoralties of El Alto and Cochabamba and the governorships of the La Paz and Tarija departments (*El País*, 30 March 2015).

The current government gives an importance to indigenous culture and collective organisations that was not previously present in political regimes. This will be discussed in the next chapters.

4.2 Indigeneity, the Aymara, and a history of exclusion

4.2.1 Indigeneity

As has been noted, since the coming into power of MAS, government policies and programmes have been attempting to bring indigenous inclusion to the forefront, making it of increased importance in development programmes. There are a number of indigenous groups in the country, but the Aymara and the Quechua groups are by far the largest. Evo Morales' ingenuity in managing to elevate a pro-indigenous discourse that is equally relevant to each of these indigenous groups, as well as middle-class Bolivians, has been noted as a way of unifying different indigenous cultures and of 'widen[ing] the appeal of cultural heritage as the basis for a political call for enfranchisement' (Albro, 2006). Nonetheless, it is the Aymara in particular who have achieved considerable economic success through popular economic systems, who have come to exercise considerable economic power and, some would claim, constitute a constant shadow that looms over the rich middle- and upper- classes in the South of La Paz and threaten the latter's political and economic dominance (Lazar, 2008).

4.2.2 The Aymara

Visitors to La Paz are struck by the timelessness of the city, where Aymara women walk the streets dressed much the same way as they have been dressing for centuries, with a wide skirt called a *pollera* over a many-tiered petticoat in order to accentuate the hips in accordance with the Aymara view of beauty of the female form, and use the traditional method of an *awayu* tied around their waist and neck to transport both children and goods. Visitors would find such a sight to be even more prevalent in El Alto, and particularly in La Ceja, although many tourists, if they do visit the city of El Alto, rarely venture beyond the large twice-weekly market, the famous and impressive *feria* in the 16 de Julio zone of El Alto. Aymara men in El Alto now dress more or less in the Western style, except for special occasions, and many Aymara women do also wear Western clothes. With women, a distinction is made between those who are *de pollera* and those who are *de vestido*. The word *vestido* can mean dress, gown, or in general, clothes or apparel and is used to refer to Aymara women who wear the Western style of clothes. Shops and other businesses advertising for staff, if looking for a female employee, will often also make the distinction between whether they are looking for a *señorita*, from which it is understood that a girl or woman *de vestido* is sought, or a *cholita*, another word for a female Aymara person who is *de pollera*. During time spent in El Alto, it

Figure 4: A *mujer de pollera*



Photo: Kim Gajraj

became apparent that certain benefits or increased respect is awarded to women who are *de pollera* or *cholitas*. This will be discussed in more detail in the findings section of the thesis, however a general example not related specifically to the topic of street food vending is an occasion where I spent the night in a well-known nightclub in La Ceja. Both traditionally and non-traditionally dressed women were present at the club, but the MC, a man with a microphone responsible for making sure everyone had a good time, on a number of occasions invited the *cholitas* up to the front in order to have a free shot of alcohol from a bottle he was holding. With the Aymara, the centrality of and respect for traditional culture is so strong, that *alteños* are defying economic ‘modernisation’ theories, remaining grounded in traditional values and indigenous cosmology even after becoming very rich, often by means of popular economic activity (Tassi, personal communication).

Aymara culture holds deep respect for the *Pachamama*, or Mother Earth. When drinking beer, or sometimes even soda, it is very rude not to pour a libation to *Pachamama* first. Harmony with nature, and with each other, is therefore very central to Aymara cosmology. Reciprocity, solidarity and the individual’s responsibility to the group are also closely linked to an Aymara cosmology yet, as has been noted by many, individualised competition is also crucial (Arbona et al., 2015; Hillenkamp, 2014; Tassi et al., 2013), and the Aymara can be highly shrewd businesspeople and drive an extremely hard bargain. These aspects are all crucial to an examination of institutional roles of networks, since the latter are formed and maintained in a context of Aymara beliefs and practices, and will therefore be returned to in the presentation of the research findings.

4.2.3 The ‘Ayllu’

The *ayllu* is a traditional Andean, socially oriented form of organisation. It is described by Silvia Rivera as:

‘[...] a unity of territory and kinship that groups interrelated family lineages that belong to segmented hierarchies on a diverse scale of demographics and complexities. [...] The complex Andean social organisation has been compared to a set of Chinese dolls, interlinked by ritual and symbolic relationships that allowed the higher levels to achieve a high degree of legitimacy in their domination of the lower levels’ (Rivera, 1993, quoted in Arbona, 2011, my translation)

The sense, then, is of a complex network of actors rooted in Andean cosmology. Arbona describes how ‘while the foundation of the *ayllu* was based in complementarity (family, ecology, etc.), its institutionality was anchored in an ensemble of authorities which represent the responsibility of the individual towards the group’ (Arbona 2011, my translation), and shows

how this traditional Andean, rural institutional structure has been transferred to modern *alteño* political and economic systems.

Yampara shares the view, writing that 'in the Andean world, many ancient principles still prevail today, as can be seen in behaviours that are based in reciprocity, solidarity, redistribution, exchange, and others', enabling the 'transcendence of Western, neoliberal, forms of exchange' (Huarachi, 2007).

Nuñez del Prado writes of the impossibility of separating economic from social concerns in the Andean lifeworld, since the economy is not seen as a separate entity among indigenous peoples but that 'life is perceived, approached and lived as a single and unified 'whole' among ancestral and indigenous entities, where the economy is an integral part embedded in society, politics, culture, religion and beliefs' (Nuñez del Prado, 2009).

The cultural 'embeddedness' of predominantly Aymara popular economic systems might therefore be said to provide an institutional framework based around traditional cultural practices that invokes a greater degree of social responsibility and more inclusivity than other economic systems are capable of expressing. This consideration moves us beyond the previous definition of networks as being systems which provide opportunities to the actors involved, to the suggestion that they might also regulate or channel economic behaviour and activity, both protecting actors from economic risk (financial loss and transaction costs), ensuring that they follow certain practices or engage in certain behaviours.

4.2.4 A history of exclusion

Tassi writes of a 'double exclusion' (Tassi, 2012) of Aymara people, both political and economic. He writes that Aymara people have face political exclusion due to the fact that States in Bolivia have traditionally allied themselves with the wealthy elite in an attempt to exercise control, resulting in 'total disinterest in incorporating the indigenous majority into the State and into political decision-making' (my translation), and a weakness in terms of controlling indigenous regions. Moreover, he writes, indigenous Aymara people have faced economic exclusion, historically through exploitation in urban and mining centres, and abandonment of rural areas, and then through articulation with transnational business, which marginalised small-scale farmers. In the context of this exclusion, the Aymara constructed their own form of underground economy, 'a series of informal channels of supply and distribution, which remained invisible to the State and stayed on the fringes of traditional economic structures' (my translation).

4.3 El Alto

4.3.1 Urbanisation of El Alto

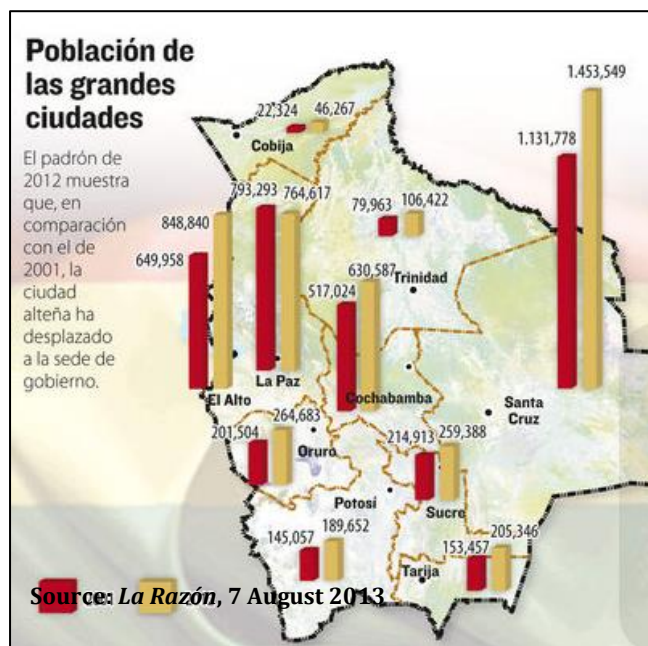
El Alto was officially recognised as a city in 1988. It began as a part of the city of La Paz, a kind of indigenous periphery that was a result of emigration from rural or mining areas. 2012 census information shows that El Alto has now overtaken La Paz in terms of population size, with a population of 848,840, while La Paz, formerly larger than El Alto in 2001, has a population of 764,617 (see figure 6), pointing to extremely rapid expansion of El Alto, especially in relation to its neighbour, La Paz. This is partly due to

Figure 5: The city of El Alto



Source: annbolivia.info

Figure 6: Bolivia- Population by city



Source: La Razón, 7 August 2013

geography, with La Paz located in a valley where the rocky landscape is hostile to outward expansion of the city. El Alto is located on the *altiplano*, the high, flat, plateau that stretches out above La Paz, at 4100m above sea level, meaning that geographically there is much more scope for the city to expand.

The process of urbanisation of El Alto, however, is also 'a concrete expression of power relations between different social sectors throughout national history' (J. M. Arbona, 2011, my translation). Political and historical events such as the Great

Drought of 1982-3 and the closing of State mines in 1986 kick-started migration to the city from rural areas and mining centres respectively. Mass urbanisation processes combined with the State absence caused by neoliberal policy implementation that began at around the same time resulted in huge gaps in infrastructure and service provision which led to 'a series of strategies not only of survival, evident in the strength of the informal economy, but also in terms of the construction of neighbourhoods' (*Ibid.*, my translation). In the urbanisation of process of El Alto, therefore, the seeds of the city's popular economy can be found, a system that rose out of gaps in State service provision and with its foundations in indigenous Aymara identity and its economic and political exclusion.

4.3.2 Peculiarities of El Alto

The way that El Alto has grown has resulted in a number of peculiarities which make it stand apart from other cities: there is a great amount of fluidity between the city and rural areas (Lazar, 2008), as migrants from rural areas maintain family ties and often even maintain a second residence in their community of origin (Tassi, 2012).

The strong rural ties have also been linked to the dominance of Aymara culture there. The fact that 74% of the population self-identifies as Aymara in the city have caused it to be described as an 'indigenous city' (Lazar, 2008), with rural migrants maintaining traditional cultural practices. Arbona writes of the transposal of the traditional structures of *ayllu* institutionality onto urban life in El Alto. As has been described, the *ayllu* is a complex system of social organisation based around the interrelation of actors through ritual and symbolic relationships. According to Arbona, this system was rearticulated and re-contextualised by the *alteño* population when it constructed its own political structures, in the absence of the State, maintaining the values of adaptation, resistance, creativity and reciprocity found in traditional structures (J. M. Arbona, 2011).

This State absence also resulted in the rise of popular economies and the economic success of the Aymara in the 'interstices of the State' (Tassi, 2012), which will be discussed in chapter 4.4.

4.3.3 Collective Organisations in El Alto

El Alto has been described as the 'poorest city in the poorest country in South America' (Lazar, 2007). Nonetheless, the Gas Wars of 2003 gave El Alto the reputation of a city with considerable political power and the ability to influence political change, with the historical power of *alteños* in the Gas Wars a constant threat to political powers. The MAS government is always 'looking through the rear-view mirror' (Tassi et al., 2013) at the collective organisations that are so strong in Bolivia, and in El Alto in particular, and protests and demonstrations by unions, associations and neighbourhood organisations are a common occurrence in the city. It is categorically unsurprising for traffic to grind to a halt as columns of protestors march through city streets shouting phrases such as 'the people will not be silenced', or for everyday conversations in the city streets to be punctuated by loud explosions from fireworks set off by those marching.

El Alto is a city where popular economies dominate and where the people exercise a great deal of political power. The State has an odd function in the city, with the City Hall financing development-related projects, but holding little power or control. Lazar explains that 'in El Alto, the relationship between citizens and the state is mediated by a well-established structure of collective organisation that is parallel to the state and that interacts with it at multiple levels' (Lazar, 2008). These organisatory entities often have an internal structure that imitates that of formal state institutions, yet at the same time works hard to keep the state at a distance (Tassi

et al., 2013). Lack of State control in El Alto is seen in the example of a news article by the newspaper *La Razón* on 22 October 2012⁷ which describes how the City Hall authorised 81 associations of street vendors without knowing how many members were in each of them, that information being kept confidential by association leaders, meaning that the City Hall were unaware of how many vendors they had authorised to operate in key areas of La Ceja.

Lazar provides a useful description of how the collective organisation system works in El Alto. While the predominantly male jobs of driving and artisanal work are grouped into *sindicatos* or trade unions, predominantly female jobs such as street trading are grouped into *asociaciones* or associations. The *asociaciones* 'mediate between individual and the state and represent the traders in negotiations with the other civic bodies in the zone where the work'. They are affiliated with the affiliated Federation, which mediates conflicts between associations and assists with negotiations with state authorities. Lazar underlines that 'negotiations with the state are not necessarily characterised by cooperation and acquiescence and can be highly confrontational' (Lazar, 2008).

4.3.4 La Ceja

Another result of the 'bottom-up' style of urbanisation of El Alto was that the city grew without a colonial structure and its accompanying 'socio-spatial hierarchisation' (J. M. Arbona, 2011) meaning that in El Alto, popular economic activities have a centrality that is not observed in other cities (J. Arbona et al., 2015). This means that, while in other cities, informal economic activity tends to be marginalised and based in more remote parts of the city, in El Alto, the very centre of the city is also the main hub of its popular economy. Lazar describes La Ceja as a 'fierce engine of trade' and a 'crucial node in networks of social relations' (Lazar, 2008). It is difficult to convey the extent to which this is apparent when spending time in La Ceja. Commercial activity in the area borders on overwhelming, with every manner of item available to purchase, and the sounds and smells of vendors marketing their wares an assault on the senses. The activity and vibrancy of La Ceja distinguish it from the far quieter La Paz, and many people travel to La Ceja in order to shop. As Martha, one of the street vendors in the study who will be introduced later, puts it: 'you can find anything and everything in La Ceja'.

⁷ (http://www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/ciudades/Comerciantes-apropian-cuadras-Ceja-edil_0_1710428973.html)

4.4 Popular Economies in Bolivia

Bolivia is a unique case when considering informality. First, previous studies on popular economies in Bolivia have noted that while in other countries and contexts informal activity is marginal and hidden, in Bolivia the informal economy has become dominant and mainstream (Tassi, quoted in Vorley, 2013). In El Alto and La Paz, this 'economy within the economy' is founded on indigenous Aymara identity and has been found to control up to 90% of the market of rural products (Tassi, 2012). Informal spaces, which grew up in the gaps left by the state in the context of a long history of exclusion of the Aymara (see chapter 4.2) have become solid and dynamic (Aramayo Canedo, 2013). Moreover such activity, contrary to mainstream economic theory, has been found to expand rather than contract in times of economic bonanza, thus defying views of informal activity as a survival strategy and suggesting that in Bolivia, informal activities can be seen as real economic opportunities to generate wealth and upward mobility (Aramayo Canedo, 2013; Tassi et al., 2013). Bolivia is estimated to have one of the highest levels of informality in the world, at 75.1% of those engaged in non-agricultural activity (ILO, 2011). Also noted in recent literature on informality in Bolivia is the importance of the concept of *pluriempleo*, where an individual (Tassi et al., 2013) or family unit (Aramayo Canedo, 2013) is likely to be involved in numerous economic activities, which may be more 'formal' or more 'informal', with even policemen and university professors also engaging in informal economic activity such as informal trade. The sense, then, in El Alto is of a complex web of economic actors, and of the simultaneous participation of a household or even an individual in numerous activities at any given time.

4.5 The Policy Context in Bolivia

4.5.1 *Vivir Bien* in the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010-2015 (PND)

The MAS released its 'National Development Plan' (PND) in 2006 to mark a new approach to development and a change in attitude towards Western development organisations. What is striking about the PND is its heavy use of emotive and rhetorical language – very different from the dry tone usually found in documents of this kind. The effect of such language is a highly emphatic portrayal of the importance of indigenous national culture and of reducing the inequalities that marginalise indigenous people, and resistance to Western hegemony, consumerism and neoliberal capitalism.

One effect of discursive devices used in the PND is to link neoliberalism to colonialism (Ranta, 2014), an example of which is a statement that describes how Bolivia must take back the power and control that has been lost to '*colonialismo neoliberal*'. The articulation of the concept of neoliberalism with that of colonialism represents a striking critique of the economic approach of neoliberalism.

The PND lays out the notion of *Vivir Bien*, seen by many as an exciting alternative to development, which has become a 'zombie concept', having been declared dead and resurrected so many times (Gudynas, 2011). Noel Aguirre, who held the role of Vice Minister of Planning and Coordination from January 2006 – February 2009, explains in an interview with Ranta (2014) that the notion of *vivir bien* aims to highlight the positive aspects of indigeneity and promote active agency of indigenous peoples as positive subjects of change, rather than poor and deficient objects and targets of development. In the PND document itself, *vivir bien* is described as 'belonging to the native and indigenous cultures of Bolivia' and the 'call for the humanisation of development'.

The concept of *Vivir Bien* and the new approach to development are described in the PND as being formed by four pillars: *Bolivia Democrática*, *Bolivia Digna*, *Bolivia Productiva* and *Bolivia Soberana*. The first of these refers to the importance of the inclusive involvement of society in politics by ensuring forms of participation and political decision-making for social movements and indigenous peoples. The second refers to social development and a redefining of social protection as unrestricted access to public services for everybody. The third, *Bolivia Productiva*, refers to state involvement in regulating and controlling productive relations. *Bolivia Soberana* refers to the recovering of national sovereignty from international actors such as IFIs, the DEA, and transnational companies.

It has been suggested however, that such rhetoric denouncing neoliberalism and promoting the concept of *vivir bien* masks a reality where Bolivia has not strayed much from the neoliberal paradigm (J. Arbona et al., 2015; Ranta, 2014).

4.5.2 Bolivian policies and programmes relating to microenterprises and popular economic actors

Chapter 5 of the PND proposes the financing of productive units by means of a *Sistema Nacional de Financiamiento para el Desarrollo* and formalisation of informal workers and businesses and their integration into a new productive network, as ways of consolidating a new productive network that integrates all sections of the economy. Parra Bernal, however, writes in 2013 that three years after the initiative was launched, not much had happened. In an interview with Lupe Zabaleta of the Ministry of Production and Microenterprise he finds that the main difficulty of implementation was coming from the fact that popular economic actors would attempt to benefit 'marginally' from funding that was available from the government, while at the same time remaining 'invisible' in a productive sense, refusing to register officially so that the government could make a database of how many actors there were. An effort was seen both at the individual level and at the level of the unions and other collective organisations to benefit as much as possible from government funding while remaining invisible. The lack of effect of the programmes therefore constitutes another example of the ability of popular economic actors to keep the State at arm's length. Indeed, Lazar refers to *alteños*, who she describes as 'neither fully assimilated nor fully excluded' as a constant reminder of the failure of political projects that aim to assimilate indigenous peoples into a unified economic and political scene.

The PND is focused on the productive development of small and micro firms and the provision of incentives to formalise (World Bank, 2009). Yet with the strength of popular economic actors and their collective organisations, and the power of both to remain largely invisible to the State, the ability of the State to truly influence the popular sector must be questioned.

Some programmes in fact seem to be indirectly strengthening the popular economy. The *impuesto directo a los hidrocarburos* (IDH) for example, involves a direct tax on hydrocarbon resources that has been directed into social benefits and conditional cash transfer programmes to areas such as education, maternity and pensions. It has been suggested that such benefits accrue to those parts of society most likely to be involved in popular economic activity, thus increasing the capital of these actors (Aramayo Canedo, 2013).

4.5.3 Bolivian programmes and policies relating to food security

The PND also makes references to food security, but the policy guidelines became more material in the *Plan de Apoyo a Seguridad Alimentaria*, or the Plan to Support Food Security. The main activities involved in Bolivia's approach to food security are:

- Land redistribution in favour of previously landless peasants
- The promotion of production (and export) of foodstuffs and potatoes through the state-owned enterprises EMAPA (the 'support for food production' company) and SEPA (the 'sowing of potatoes' company)

- Nutritional programmes for pregnant women, children and lactating mothers
- School programmes such as the Zero Hunger Programme and the National Programme of School Meals.
- A strategy to integrate small- and medium- producers into value chains, though this is described as ‘still in the making’ due to problems with coordination, producers’ associations, and financing (Cuesta, Edmeades, & Madrigal, 2013)

This policy approach has a heavy focus on food production, which has already been identified in section 2 as being less important than food access in urban settings such as El Alto.

Aramayo points out that some of the food security projects implemented by the MAS have constituted a great advancement in food security in the country: the *Plan de Revolución Rural, Agropecuaria y Forestal*⁸ presented by the Ministry of Rural, Agricultural and Environmental Development in 2007 and the *Ley de Revolución Productiva Comunitaria Agropecuaria*⁹, promulgated in 2011 form a ‘legal framework that recognizes and incorporates the right to adequate nutrition; the reality of peasant food producers allows the provision of healthy foods to educational establishments; and the social sectors are actively involved in the design of public policies’ (FAO 2008, quoted in Aramayo 2013).

Nonetheless, Aramayo notes that the above programmes, as well as programmes implemented by the municipal government of La Paz, which aimed to increase food security through the implementation of climate change adaptation programmes, focused too heavily on food production and ignored aspects of demand and access that are so crucial to urban settings. She also argues that public policy is often out of step with the realities of urban food provision in La Paz, denying the importance of popular trade and informal markets and therefore making invisible the principle means of food access used by the most vulnerable members of urban society there (Aramayo Canedo, 2013). She writes that for this reason, government policy fails to take into account the crucial role of popular economies in urban food provision.

Vorley also notes the ‘topicality and urgency’ of studying the informal sector due to the focus on private sector development which, as a policy response to food insecurity, involves linking small-scale farmers to global value chains, ignoring the fact that in many cases, it is informality that ‘remains the dominant link between smallholder producers and the urban poor’ (Vorley, 2013). Moreover, Crush and Frayne warn that ‘food corporations are not NGOs and cannot be

⁸ The ‘Plan for a Rural, Agrarian and Forestry Revolution’ identifies three main objectives: 1) to attain food security and sovereignty; 2) to enhance the condition of rural populations by increasing agricultural and forest production and 3) to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources (Cuesta et al. 2013)

⁹ The ‘Productive, Communal and Agricultural Law’ involves government provision of agricultural insurance for rice, potato, wheat, soy, maize and quinoa and a mechanism to mitigate shocks to agricultural production and food security (Cuesta et al. 2013)

expected to behave like them' (2011), echoing wider debates that question the relevance of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility of Firms (Friedman, 1970).

4.5.4 Food Sovereignty

The concept of food sovereignty is more recent than that of food security and was born from issues raised about limitations in the traditional concept of food security. The concept of food sovereignty was included in Bolivian policy in 2008 and should therefore be mentioned as an aspect of Bolivian policy on nutrition. Food security focuses on adequate nutrition for all but does not specify where food comes from, and many find that the implied acceptance of global food imports meant favouring of large, multinational food chains to the detriment of local production (World Development Movement, 2012). In 2007, a Food Sovereignty Forum called the Nyeleni Forum in Mali defined food sovereignty:

'Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability'.

The focus on local production places importance on street food vendors, who are part of an 'informal' food marketing system of the kind that is often the primary link between small-scale producers and urban areas (Vorley 2013). Vorley writes of the 'urgency and topicality' of the debate on informal economies at the moment, due to the focus on private sector development and linking small-scale farmers with modern value chains and formal markets (*Ibid.*). In the context of food sovereignty, strengthening and supporting informal markets may be a more effective way of supporting both local production and urban food security, rather than the value chain approach to development that is currently in vogue. Also related to this is the importance of local control of food systems found in the concept of food sovereignty. A decentralised network system made up of popular actors may be a valid way to ensure such local control. The Bolivian government announced in December 2014 that it hopes the country will be free from dependency on food imports within five years (Telesur, 28 December 2014) and has been applauded for taking into account food sovereignty, which is seen as a more inclusive approach than food security. Nonetheless, an acknowledgement of the role of popular economies in food supply systems remains absent from policy.

4.6 Summary – The Context of the Study

Faced with political, social and economic exclusion, the Aymara established for themselves popular economic systems and institutions based in indigenous values and structures of power, in the interstices of the State. Economic systems therefore grew largely outside the realm of formal regulation, and the institutional structures that governed them were based on indigenous entities such as the *ayllu*, with importance attached to key concepts of solidarity, reciprocity and redistribution.

Now, the Aymara hold considerable political and economic power, their involvement in the El Alto blockades during the Gas Wars and the subsequent resignation of former president Carlos Mesa serving as a constant reminder of their political clout. Moreover, popular economies rooted in Aymara culture are the dominant and mainstream economic model in El Alto, a city often described as ‘indigenous’ because of the weight Aymara majority, a result of mass urbanisation processes which were also caused by discrimination and neglect by the State of Aymara peoples in rural areas.

Aymara identity can have considerable benefits for the popular economic actors in El Alto, meaning that Aymara culture is nurtured and enforced, resulting in the continued importance of Aymara-based networks in the city and a crucial role played by Aymara values in the institutionality of economic behaviour.

Popular economic activity in El Alto has, unlike in other cities, a centrality which means that the central area of the city is constantly alive with popular economic actors.

In El Alto, then, popular economic and political structures are dominant and powerful and central to the lives of the *alteño* population. Bolivia. Although acknowledging the importance of more inclusive, anti-neoliberal programmes and of country ownership of food systems (food sovereignty), the State’s current policy profile tends to focus on formalisation and linking to global value chains, and fails to recognise the crucial role played by popular economic food systems and their potential to achieve the very goals of inclusivity and local ownership that Bolivian policy rhetoric appears to uphold.

5. Definition and Role of Street Food Vendors in El Alto

The purpose of this section is to provide an introduction to street food and its vendors in El Alto and an overview of the role of street food in daily life in the city. The section therefore primarily addresses research sub-question number 1, *What are the main characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto?*, but it also touches upon sub-questions 2-5, since the discussion on the role of vendors in *alteño* life starts to produce a picture of how vendors and their networks might be seen to contribute to the different pillars of food security in the city.

The first chapter explains the process of selecting the type of food and stalls to be included in the study and provides a description of these stalls and variation among them. A second chapter presents the vendors who are part of the study, their main characteristics and the locations where they vend. A third chapter discusses the role of street food in the daily life of *alteños* and describes the daily dynamics of street food availability and vending activity as well as the role of street food from the perspective both of the consumer and the vendor.

5.1 Type of food and stalls included in the study

5.1.1 Selection of stalls to include in the study

There are a number of different types of food sold on the street in El Alto. Foods which would be classed as snacks, such as *salteñas* (pastries with a meat or cheese filling); fruit portions; bakery items; and other foods which would be consumed between meals, rather than as a meal themselves, were excluded from the study. This was because it was considered most relevant in terms of urban food access to include foods in the study which can reasonably replace a home-cooked meal for those too busy or who work too far away from home to cook for themselves. In fact, it was decided that the street food stalls that would be included in the study would be those referred to as *agachaditos* by local people. The name *agachadito* comes from the Spanish verb *agacharse*, which means 'to crouch down', because when people eat at the stalls they tend to sit on low stools or benches, adopting a crouching position as they eat their meal. The term does not only refer to the way that people sit and eat, but also to the type of food served. *Agachaditos* serve traditional Bolivian dishes, as opposed to fast food stalls that sell hamburgers and *salchipapas* (sliced hotdog sausage with fries). Food sold in the *agachaditos* can range in price from a ridiculously cheap 3BOB (which translates to 0.43USD at the time of writing), which will buy a large plate of pasta or a thick soup containing potato, grains, vegetables and a small piece of meat, to much more expensive dishes of around 15BOB (which translates to 2.17USD at the time of writing) which will purchase larger dishes with large pieces of meat such as lamb, pork or chicken and will usually come with a *segundito* or second course, usually a clear soup. There is variety, therefore, in the price of the dishes and the type of dishes sold. The *agachaditos* were considered an appropriate category for the type of street food to include in the study since they

serve traditional food that can replace a home-cooked meal, and because the categorisation is one used by *alteños* themselves as a recognisable type of street food, which allowed me to avoid creating artificial categorisations based on my own observations as an outsider.

5.1.2 The 'Agachaditos'

Agachaditos can include three main types of stall. The most permanent and durable, giving most shelter from the elements, are permanent kiosks, usually blue in colour. They are made of metal and remain in place at all times. They have an upward-sliding door that can be locked with a padlock, meaning that utensils and plates can be stored there safely during the night (see figure 7). While the vendor is serving from the kiosk, benches and stools often spill out into the street, while seating is also available inside the kiosk. The existence of seating inside the kiosk means that these vendors have an advantage when it is raining since they are able to offer their customers somewhere warm and dry to sit and eat. The second type of stall is a wooden platform with poles on four corners. This construction remains in place at all times, and some equipment stored there

Figure 7: example of a permanent stall



Photo: Kim Gajraj

Figure 8: Example of a semi-permanent stall



Photo: Kim Gajraj

when the vendor is not working, covered with tarpaulin and tied tightly with rope. During the day, the tarpaulin is extended over the poles to offer some shelter, and food is served underneath (see figure 8). The construction is often called a *ch'iwiña*.

The third type of stall identified is that of temporary stalls, where vendors transport all their equipment to and from their vending site each day. Some

vendors carry their equipment, including the stools used for seating customers, in *awayus* on their backs. Others use taxis or transport owned by the family.

In the case of all types of stall, but particularly the case of vendors with temporary stalls, the need to transport food and/or equipment to and from the stall means that the amount that can be carried by the vendor and any helpers that she has, has a direct effect on the amount of food that can be sold. The vendor pictured in figure 9 has a cart on wheels that she uses both to transport her food and equipment and from which to serve her food. All the stools and benches are transported in the cart. Other vendors place the cooking pots from which they serve on the ground and sit, like their customers, on the low stools in order to serve, with the customers sitting around them.

Figure 9: Example of a temporary stall



Photo: Kim Gajraj

Whether their stalls are permanent, semi-permanent or temporary, the vendors included in the study all use the same location every time they vend. When vendors' stalls are temporary, they transport all their equipment to and from the same sales pitch. Doña Dolores vends in two locations, one in El Alto and one in La Paz, but returns to one of these two locations each time she vends, rather than being a mobile vendor who moves around numerous different locations at random. Mobile vendors, therefore, have not been included due to difficulties associated with being able to find such vendors on regular occasions as part of the iterative research process, and because fully mobile vendors tend not to serve full meals that can replace a home-cooked meal, nor do they tend to be classified as *agachaditos* by local people. The research findings, therefore, will relate only to stationary, and not mobile, street food vendors.

5.2 Presentation of the vendors

As was described in chapter 3.3, 12 vendors were included in the study. In most cases, data was gathered from the vendors by visiting their stalls and eating with them over a period of 16 weeks, meaning that the information on the vendors is an amalgamation of data gathered through a number of instances of participant observation and unstructured interviews. All vendors apart from two have agreed for their real name to be used, and a number of them have requested that their name be included in the research write-up. Nonetheless, only first names have been used and, in all but one case, surnames were not learned, in order to protect the identity of the vendors. Basic information on the vendors and the rough locations where they vend are included below (table 3). A definition of the types of food listed in the 7th column, “dishes served”, can be found in the glossary in annexe 1. A map showing the locations of those vendors who sell in the central area of El Alto is included (figure 10).

NB: Street food vending is overwhelming a female occupation in El Alto, and all vendors involved in the study are female even though there was no sampling procedure to exclude men.

Table 3: Presentation of the Vendors included in the study

Name	Age	Marital Status	No. of children	Type of stall	Stall/ Business-owner?	Dishes served	Price range of dishes	Hours during which food sold	Approx. no. of dishes sold per day	Location	Assistants/ employees?
Andrea	36	Married	4	Temporary	No- Mother owns stall	<i>Sajta</i>	12BOB	6.00am – 3.00pm, 5 days per week	120	Avenida Antofagasta/ Feria Franz Tamayo	Brother-in-law often helps
Doña *Guillermina	60	Single- Never married	0	Permanent kiosk	No- Cousin owns stall	<i>Aji de fideo & Sopa de maní</i>	3BOB	8.00am – 2.00pm, 7 days per week (Doña Guillermina works 2 of 3 shifts per day, 5 days per week)	650	Central area where Avenida 6 Marzo meets Juan Pablo II	6 employees and 5 family members help Doña Guillermina's cousin with her 3 food stalls- all 3 are in the area
Doña Sandra	46	Widowed	3 (one lives with her sister)	Permanent kiosk	Yes	Always: - <i>Biste</i> - <i>Albóndiga</i> - <i>Th'impu de panza</i> Other dishes in rotation	7BOB – 13BOB	11.30am – 3.00pm, 5 days per week	60-70	Calle 2, Villa Dolores	Son helps her carry food and set up; used to employ 1 assistant
Doña Juana	58	Widowed	8	Temporary	Yes	<i>P'esque</i>	7BOB	8.00pm – 11.00pm	80	Avenida 6 Marzo	8 children all fit in helping with their jobs/studies
Martha	29	Married	2	Temporary	No- Aunt owns stall	<i>Aji de alberja, Biste, Chayro, Caldo de Pata</i>	4BOB – 8BOB	8.00am – 3.00pm, Monday & Wednesday	50	Avenida Antofagasta	Husband sometimes helps cook the food
Doña Rojelia	46	Married	4	Semi-permanent	Yes	<i>Chicharrón-chicken & pork</i>	14BOB	10.00am – 8/9.00pm, 6 days per week	80-100	Calle 3/Raúl Salmón	Husband helps cook; Daughter helps serve & runs a juice stall nextdoor

* The term 'Doña' is used respectfully towards vendors who are older than the researcher, in accordance with custom in El Alto

Doña Wilma	38	Married	1	Temporary	Yes	Around 12 different dishes	3.50BOB – 12BOB	7.00pm – 12.00am, 6 days per week	100	Avenida 6 de Marzo	Cooks together with husband; Husband transports food in his minibus; Daughter helps when no school next day
Doña Dolores*	59	Widowed	1	Temporary	Yes	<i>P'esque</i>	9BOB	Sundays: 9.00am – 2/3.00pm Other days, varies	50	Sundays: Plaza Rhiosinio, La Paz. Other days, mobile vending: La Paz & El Alto	Son helps on Sundays, other days vends alone
Doña Andrea	44	Divorced	3	Permanent (now has 2 restaurants where stall used to be)	Yes	Different menu each day of the week	10BOB – 20BOB	8.00-3.00pm, 6 days per week	100	Santiago II zone	Mother helps (paid) plus 3 employees
Doña Hilda	56	Widowed	4	Temporary	Yes	<i>Saice, Chayro, Biste</i> , other dishes in rotation	3BOB – 10BOB	8.00pm – 12.00am, 5 days per week	50-70	Calle 2/Carrasco	Children take turns helping
Doña Feliza	45	Married	3	Temporary	Yes	<i>sajta, bistec, albóndigas, revuelto, papaliza, panza</i>	9BOB	7.30am – 3.00pm	30-40	Villa Adela zone	Husband and children help prepare & cook
Carolina's mother	58	Widowed	2	Temporary	Yes	<i>Different each time</i>	9BOB – 14BOB	12.30pm – 2.30pm	50	La Paz: Plaza Rhiosinio	Carolina and mother cook and serve together. Ingredients purchased in collaboration with Carolina's aunt, who also has a street food business.

* Name changed at request of vendor

As can be seen from the table, there is a high degree of variety among the vendors in the study in terms of age, type of stall, type of dishes served, working hours, price of dishes and the number of dishes sold per day. While the number of dishes sold per day tends to range between approximately 50 and 100, extraordinarily, Doña Guillermina's stall sells around 650 dishes per day. This is because the stall remains open 24 hours per day and is part of a large, family-coordinated operation involving three food stalls in the area that are all owned and run by Doña Guillermina's cousin.

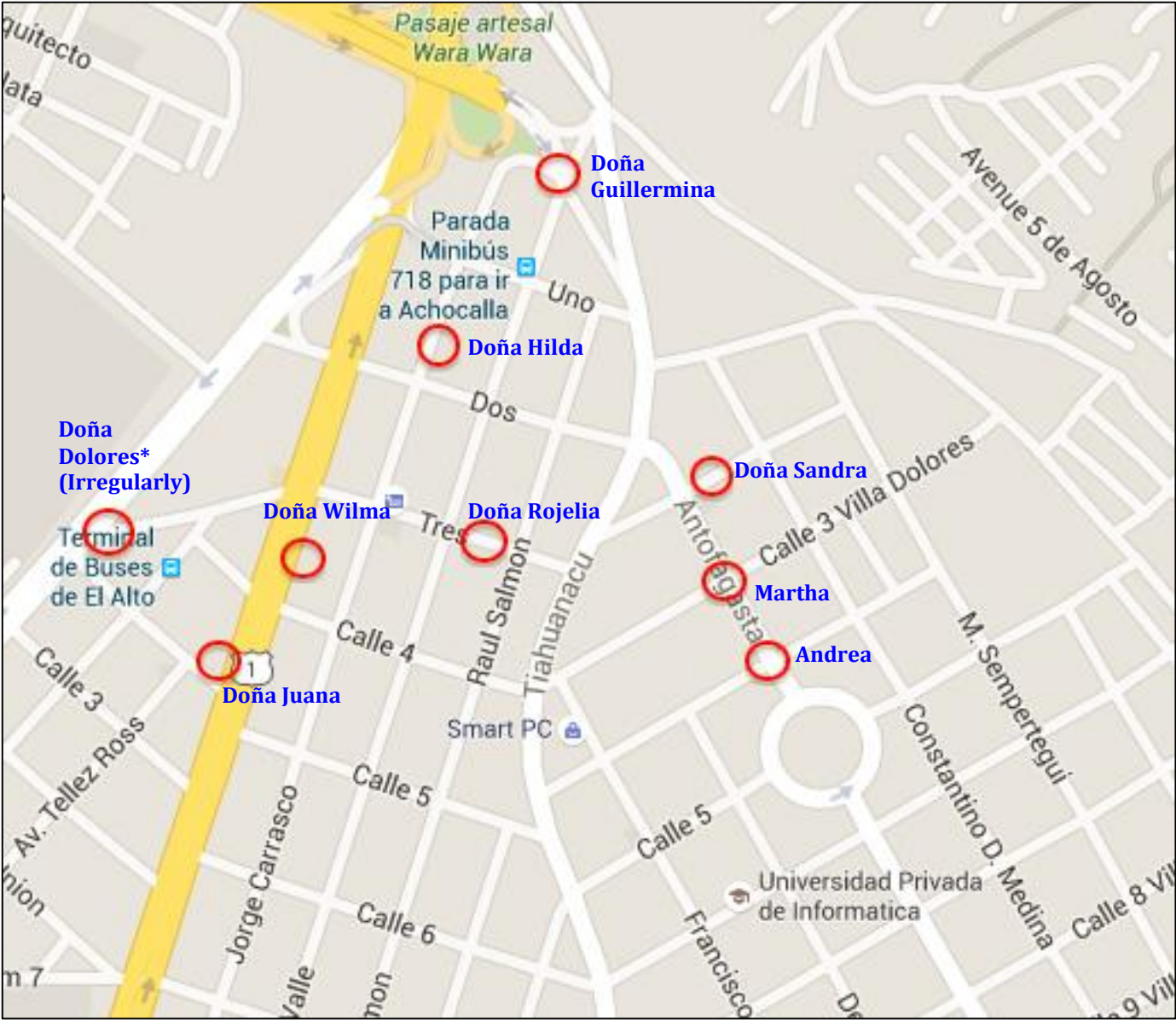
Half of the vendors are single mothers having been either divorced or widowed. Due to the lack of random sampling when selecting participants for the study, it is not possible to draw any conclusions from this observation in terms of characteristics of vendors and whether or not vendors tend to be single mothers or not. Nevertheless, the observation does point to the implication that street food vending can be a viable primary occupation with which a mother can support her children without the involvement of a husband or father figure. This runs contrary to informal conversations with *alteños* at the start of the research process, which revealed that street food vending is often seen as a role that can support the male head of a family but that is not viable as a primary source of income.

Related to the above point is the high degree of family collaboration in vendors' businesses, something that may strengthen the activity as an economic base for those vendors who depend on it as a primary source of income. All vendors receive considerable input from family members.

All but one of the vendors have children, of which one or more continues to be financially dependent on the vendor. The exception is Doña Guillermina, who has never married and has no children, but the overwhelming characteristic of having children suggests that street food vending often plays a role in supporting the needs of the vendors' dependents.

The below map presents the location of the vendors included in the table, when they vend in the central area of El Alto. Although no specific geographical sampling method was employed, an effort was made to select vendors that were fairly spread out in the central region of the city.

Figure 10: Locations of those vendors who sell in the central area of El Alto



Source: Google Maps

5.3 The role of the *agachaditos* in El Alto

5.3.1 Daily Dynamics of Street Food Vendors in Central El Alto

The most notable role of the *agachaditos* in the central area of El Alto is the high proliferation of these stalls. Furthermore, this high concentration of vendors moves around the city at different times of the day, as different vendors adopt different strategies to make sure they are placed in areas where sales will be high. Since different places in the central part of El Alto are busy at different times of the day, different areas become concentrated with *agachadito* stalls at different time of the day as well. This is not merely a result of mobile vendors moving around the city, but also of different stationary vendors adopting different time schedules according to the busiest times of the day in the area in which they sell.

Transect walks with the research assistants, Richard and Carolina, at different times of the day, shed light on which parts of the city are most concentrated with vendors at which times. As noted by Lazar (2008), the two main engines that drive the economy of El Alto are transport and commerce, and it is these also that drive the concentration of locations of street food vendors in the city, which follows the different places that light up with both economic activity, and transport activity, at different times of the day.

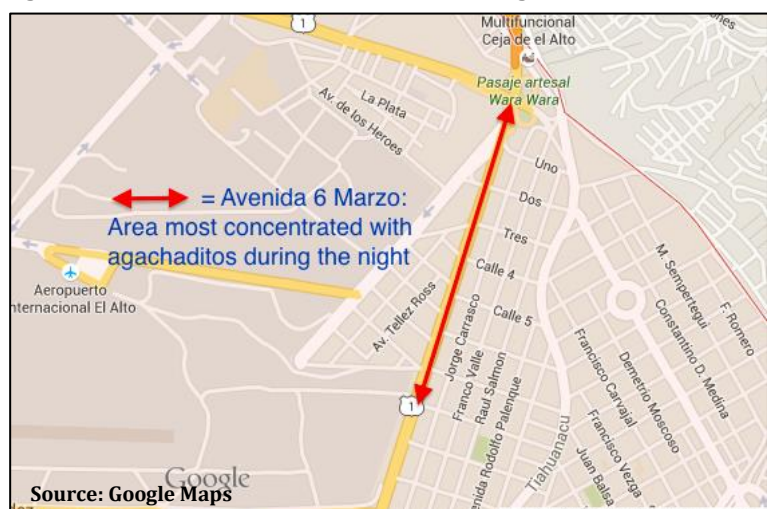
Daytime

During the day, the stalls cater overwhelming to lunch for those who work or study in the centre of El Alto, and vendors are relatively dispersed around all areas of La Ceja and the parts of zones such as 12 de Octubre and Villa Dolores which are close to the centre. Due to a large proportion of clientele who are either shoppers or other vendors selling other items, the daytime *agachaditos* are often found dispersed among stalls selling other goods, within the associations of street vendors which tend to be grouped by street or block, and serve lunch to the other vendors in their association and the people shopping in their stalls.

Evening/Night

During evening and night, from around 7.00pm until the early hours of the morning, the stalls where *alteños* shop, and the offices where they work, close, and the areas which have been busy with lunchtime street food vendors during the day become empty. It is one of the main routes in and out of El Alto, the Avenida 6 de Marzo,

Figure 11: concentration of street food vendors at night-time in El Alto



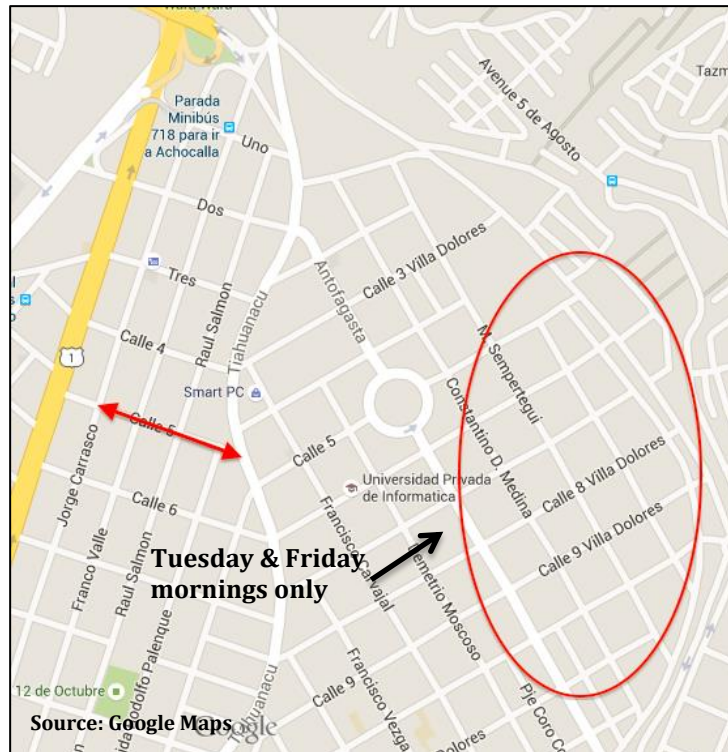
which becomes extremely busy with street food vendors (see figure 11). This is the road which

alteños and *paceños* use to travel to and from El Alto and La Paz. It is also a road used by any *alteños* travelling between the Southern or South-Western neighbourhoods of El Alto for nights out or night work, and a major route used by those travelling between La Paz/El Alto and other Bolivian cities of Bolivia such as Oruro, Cochabamba and Sucre. Travellers, taxi- and minibus-drivers and partygoers therefore seem to be those who use the *agachaditos* the most at this time of the day.

Morning

As the city begins to wake up, producers arrive from the countryside, or traders who have collected produce from them, and gather in calle 5 in order to sell potato, *chuño* and meat. A kind of morning market is created, and people begin to concentrate in this area. Here, then, also gather large number of street food vendors selling *agachadito*-style food to those buying and selling. A similar thing takes place in Villa Dolores, on a much wider scale

Figure 12: Concentration of *agachaditos* during the morning



on Tuesday and Friday mornings, where produce which has arrived in lorries the night before is sold in different sections of the Villa Dolores zone, depending on which region of Bolivia the producer/trader has come from. Here also, on those mornings, a large number of *agachaditos* can be found where vendors, again, cater to those buying and selling in the feria. In the case of calle 5 this lasts from around 5.00am until around 8.00am; the Villa Dolores feria continues until mid-afternoon and street food vendors are to be found there on feria days throughout this time, but especially in the morning.

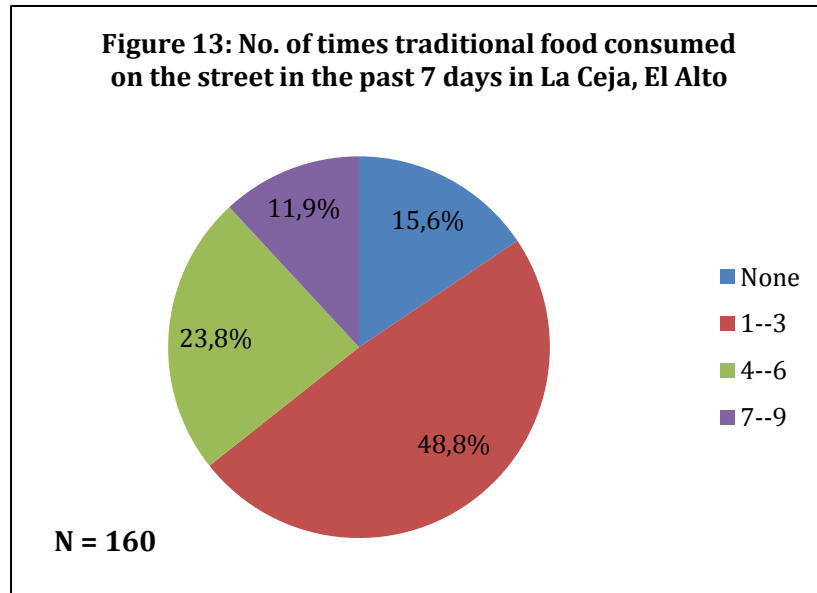
A point about the concentration of street food at different times that was made by the vendors themselves was that a large number of vendors vacate their usual sales plots in the central area of El Alto on Thursdays and Sundays. This is due to the huge *Feria 16 de Julio*, the twice-weekly market held in the zone of the same name. On this day, areas of La Ceja and Villa Dolores are relatively empty in comparison to the other days of the week, and vendors respond either by ceasing business on those days and using the time to fulfil other responsibilities, such as

childcare and housework duties or running another business. Some vendors simply move their street food business, and have another food stall in the *Feria* on Thursday and/or Sundays.

5.3.2 Use of and Opinion on Street food by consumers

Since passers-by in La Ceja were chosen at random to be asked about their consumption of street food, respondents from a wide range of occupations were questioned, including

professionals such as policemen and lawyers, popular economic actors such as traders, university and school students, and unemployed people. Overwhelmingly, 84.4% of those surveyed had eaten at an *agachadito* at least 1-3 times in the past seven days (see figure 13). As the chart shows, around half of *alteños* consume street food

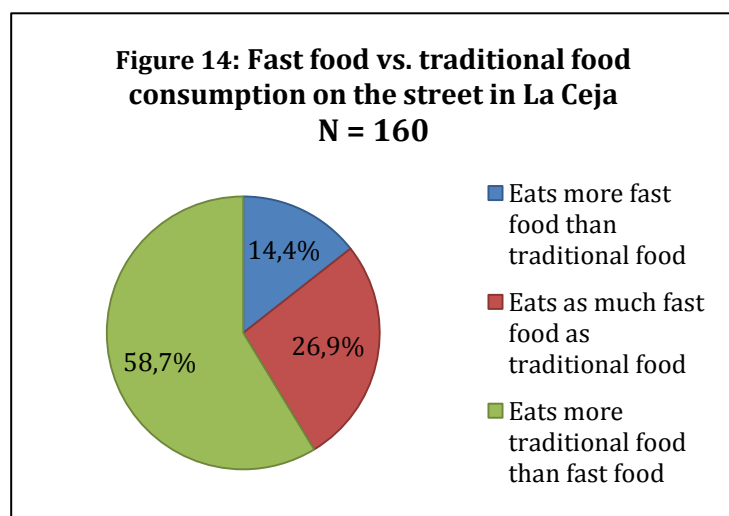


in the *agachaditos* with moderate frequency, around 1-3 times per day based on the sample of 7 days included in the survey. Nonetheless, around a quarter of *alteños* consumed this type of food 4-6 times in the last 7 days, which, if eaten once per day, means eating in the *agachaditos* on more than half the days of a week. 11.9% of people are fairly dependent on the food as a food source, having consumed it 7-9 times in the past 7 days.

In order to compare the relative importance of traditional food served in the *agachaditos* with those street stalls that sell non-

traditional, “fast” food, respondents were also asked about their eating habits of foods such as hamburgers and *salchipapas* served on the street. Around two thirds of *alteños*, 76.9%, told researchers that they had consumed fast food on the street in the past 7 days. This shows that, even though consumption of fast food is lower than that of traditional food, it

is still consumed by a large proportion of *alteños* in their daily lives. Figure 14, however, shows



the amount of traditional food consumed in comparison to fast food by the respondents. As can be seen, a majority of *alteños* consume a greater amount of traditional food, the kind served in the *agachaditos*, than they do fast food.

The high consumption of food on the street in general can likely be explained by accessibility issues. In the open consumer survey question that asked respondents to provide reasons why they ate in the *agachaditos*, the responses were coded and analysed quantitatively. 24.7% of the reasons respondents identified for consuming food in the *agachaditos* were not being able to get home in time for lunch or dinner, or not having time to cook. A further 18.3% named other reasons associated with physical accessibility, such as there always being *agachaditos* close to their place of work, or on their way to different places. In total, then, 43% of reasons given for consumption of street food in the *agachaditos* were related to its being geographically accessible. This already suggests a high contribution of street food vendors to food access in the city.

Three other responses to the question of why consumers ate in the *agachaditos* were seen with some frequency. 17.2% told researchers that the *agachaditos* are fast, making them competitive with “fast”-food, yet serving traditional Bolivian dishes, cooked mostly with locally-sourced ingredients. This also relates to the time-saver factor discussed in chapter 2.5 on food security: in urban settings where food security and other basic needs are more income-dependent, time saved on everyday tasks also translates into more money that can be earned working. This could therefore also be seen as an indirect contribution to food security in the city.

15.6% of respondents named price as a reason for eating in the *agachaditos*, which relates to the economic side of the food security pillar ‘food access’. Indeed, in order to compare food sources in La Ceja, I myself ate at fast-food stalls as well as *pensiones*¹⁰ and restaurants. The *pensiones* offered more food than the *agachaditos* but were more expensive; the fast-food stalls cost about the same as a mid-price dish in the *agachaditos*, but the portions were considerably larger in the *agachaditos*.

8.1% told researchers that the taste of food in the *agachaditos* was better than other food sold outside the home, which relates to the ‘preference’ aspect of food access as well.

Another topic referred to by consumers was that of nutritional value. This relates to the concept of food security and its pillar “Utilisation” which relates partly to the nutritional quality, rather than merely quantity, of food. Due to lack of expertise in nutrition, it has not been considered appropriate to include an in-depth examination of the nutritional value of food sold in the *agachaditos*. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that there appear to be a range of more, or less, nutritious options available. Less nutritious options include *chicharrón*, a dish of deep-fried

¹⁰ *Pensiones*- relatively low-cost restaurants that serve 3 or 4 course lunches, and sometimes dinners, for a set price. They often double up as nightclubs at night.

chicken or pork with corn, potato and *chuño*¹¹. Other types of food, however, are more nutritious, and some survey respondents pointed this out in the open questions in the questionnaire. One mentioned that:

'Some types of street food, like 'wallak'e' are very nutritious and give your body a lot of vitamins'. (Wallak'e is a soup made with fish from Lake Titicaca and k'oa, a type of aromatic herb that also comes from the lake.)

Fish dishes tend to be among the more expensive sold in the streets of La Ceja, however another respondent identified *aji de papa* and *aji de alberja*, types of stew made from potatoes and lentils respectively, as being both tasty and nutritious. These dishes can be purchased with less money. One of the vendors in the study, Martha, for example, sells her *aji de alberja* for 6BOB (0.87USD). A different respondent pointed out that:

'Food like 'chayro' is nutritious and gives you energy, and it is cheap'. Chayro is a hearty soup made from vegetables, grains, ground chuño and some form of meat (a particularly cheap version I once tasted contained a chicken foot), and can be purchased for as little as 3BOB¹².

While other respondents in the survey pointed out the poor nutritional quality of street food from the *agachaditos*, and previous studies on street food tend to stress its poor nutritional quality (FAO, 2007), it seems nevertheless that both more and less nutritious options are on offer, and that there are nutritious options to suit both higher and lower budgets.

5.3.3 Role of Street Food for the Vendors in El Alto

In the context of the discussion on informality in chapter 2.1, and on street vending in particular, it is relevant to comment briefly on the role of the *agachaditos* in the lives of the vendors themselves. While in the literature 'informal' street vending is often seen as a survival or subsistence strategy, the stories of street food vendors in El Alto tell a different story. In all cases there is a degree of upward trajectory. Vendors often start out as mobile vendors selling from carts before progressing to a stationary stall. There is also upward progression in the type of stall used, as vendors gradually reinvest the profits of their business to move from the simple tarpaulin, *ch'iwina* type of stall, to a metal kiosk which offers protection from the elements and a secure storage space for equipment. Some vendors who started from a simple stall now own a number of stalls and turn over huge amounts of capital. Moreover, it was found that vendors may see street food trade as a more reliable business model than trading in other items. Doña Guillermina, for example, who vends radio and television parts as well as street food, and has sold clothes in the past, sees street food as more reliable. She says:

¹¹ *Chuño* is potato that has been frozen and sun-dried over a number of weeks. The product is black in colour, has a harder texture than a potato and a mildly fermented flavour. It is extremely common and popular in the Andean region and accompanies most dishes served in the *agachaditos*

¹² At the time of writing, 1BOB converts to 0.14USD. Prices will be quoted in BOB from now on.

'I prefer to sell food, you know? Everybody eats. Everybody! You can't just decide not to eat! We all have to eat. [...] On the other hand, with clothes, we can just carry on, if they break, we just mend them by hand, or whatever. We just fix them and carry on. Now the stomach – you can't just mend that! No way. We always eat. So I can sell it, you know?' Here then, the fact that food, as opposed to other goods that can be sold on the street, serves a basic need, this occupation is seen as comparatively more reliable.

The evidence of opportunities for upward trajectory, and even for becoming rich as a street food vendor, serves to counter views of street vending as being merely a survival strategy as well as theories that women in popular economies tend not to be entrepreneurial, preferring to invest only in their family rather than in their business. The observation also relates to the Stability pillar of food security since, if there is a relationship between street food and food security in El Alto, precariousness of a vendor's business will result in instability of the food security that depends upon it. Since all vendors in the study are observed not only to be able to rely on street food vending as a viable way to support their family, but also to reinvest profits and grow the business, the sense gained of street food trade is one of stability and opportunity, rather than precariousness and risk.

5.4 Summary and Conclusion

The observations made in section 5 on the characteristics and role of street food in El Alto allow us to address research sub-question 1, *what are the main characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto?*. In turn, this also points to a first idea of how street food in general contributes to urban food security in the city, which sets the stage for a more focused discussion, in section 6, of how the networks, specifically, in which the vendors operate contribute to these aspects. The main **characteristics** of the type of street food included in the study are that they serve traditional Bolivian dishes made with traditional ingredients, and that the dishes sold can reasonably replace a cooked meal. *Agachaditos* are highly prolific in the central part of El Alto, and this translates into the consumption of food served there by an extremely high proportion of the population. In fact, there is something of a street food culture in this central part of the city, and the proportion of the population that also consumes fast-food on the street is also high. Nonetheless, consumers will eat in the *agachaditos* proportionately more often than they eat fast food, and consumer data on reasons for eating in the *agachaditos* suggests that this may be because the *agachaditos* are also ‘fast’, because food in the *agachaditos* is seen as more nutritious and, perhaps, because the taste and the price are more competitive. Stalls may be permanent, semi-permanent or temporary, meaning there is variation in the way the vendors operate their business based on how much seating is available, and how much vendors can store on site. Related to this is the fact that the amount that a vendor can sell is dependent on how much she can transport to and from her stall, which depends upon how much she can store there as well as what access she has to transport.

The fact that the concentration of vendors mirrors the location of concentrations of people throughout the day suggests that vendors strategically locate their stalls in highly frequented places in order to increase sales. This can be said to translate into greater **physical access** in areas more concentrated with people, and the vendors’ responsiveness to access demands by the consumer. Moreover, since 43% of reasons consumers gave for consuming food in the *agachaditos* were related to physical accessibility, there is strong evidence for the contribution of street food vendors to physical access of food in El Alto.

The combination of large portions and low price observed in participant observations and in survey responses also points to a high contribution to **economic access** by the *agachaditos*. Consumer opinion on street food also reveals the existence of nutritious options among the different types of food served in the *agachaditos*, at least from the point of view of the consumer, who may or may not have expertise in nutrition. Nonetheless, evidence of nutritious and low-cost options serves to counter claims amount the low nutritional quality of street food in general, and subsequent lack of contribution to food security. Also related to the pillar of food

utilisation is the idea that food is served fresh daily by the vendors, a factor that is pointed out frequently by both consumers and vendors.

Evidence of an upward trajectory available to vendors suggests that the trade offers a degree of economic **stability** for the vendor, which may translate into long-term stability in terms of food security for the consumer, where street food does contribute to food security. The fact that a number of vendors in the study are single mothers supporting a family alone through profits from the business suggests its viability as a source of income. The evidence of economic opportunity also questions theories on such vending activity as being merely a passive strategy for survival.

Data on the main characteristics of street food vending, therefore, suggest a high contribution of the *agachaditos* to food security in general in El Alto. The following section will observe the role that networks, specifically, play in urban food security.

6. Role of Networks and Contribution to Food Security

Street food vendors in El Alto establish, use and maintain a number of different types of networks in order to take advantage of economic opportunities and provide economic stability to their business. This, in turn, plays an important role in food security in the city. The structure of the section will primarily follow the different types of network that have been identified. A first chapter focuses on family-based networks, a second on the *casero* relationship described briefly in chapter 2.3.1, but here discussed in more detail. The third chapter's focus is on *Asociaciones*, not only the economic network represented by the organisation itself, but also secondary networks of allegiance that run through the more official *asociación* structure. The fourth chapter's focus is on friendship and trust-based networks and the fifth's focus is on Aymara identity and networks established based on this. Chapter six focuses not on a type of network, but on a function of the networks described previously in the section. Communication and word-of-mouth require a special mention as a function of all the networks discussed, since they play an important role in aspects of urban food security in El Alto.

6.1 Family-based networks

6.1.1 Family collaboration in street food businesses

As has been described, one of the characteristics of popular economies that is particular to Bolivia is that of *pluriempleo*, where individuals and families are simultaneously involved in various economic activities. This first part of this chapter relates to *pluriempleo* on an individual level. Within the family unit, many of the relatives of the street food vendors involved in the study fit in helping the vendor with her *agachadito* business around other activities such as other popular economic activity, professional activity, or study.

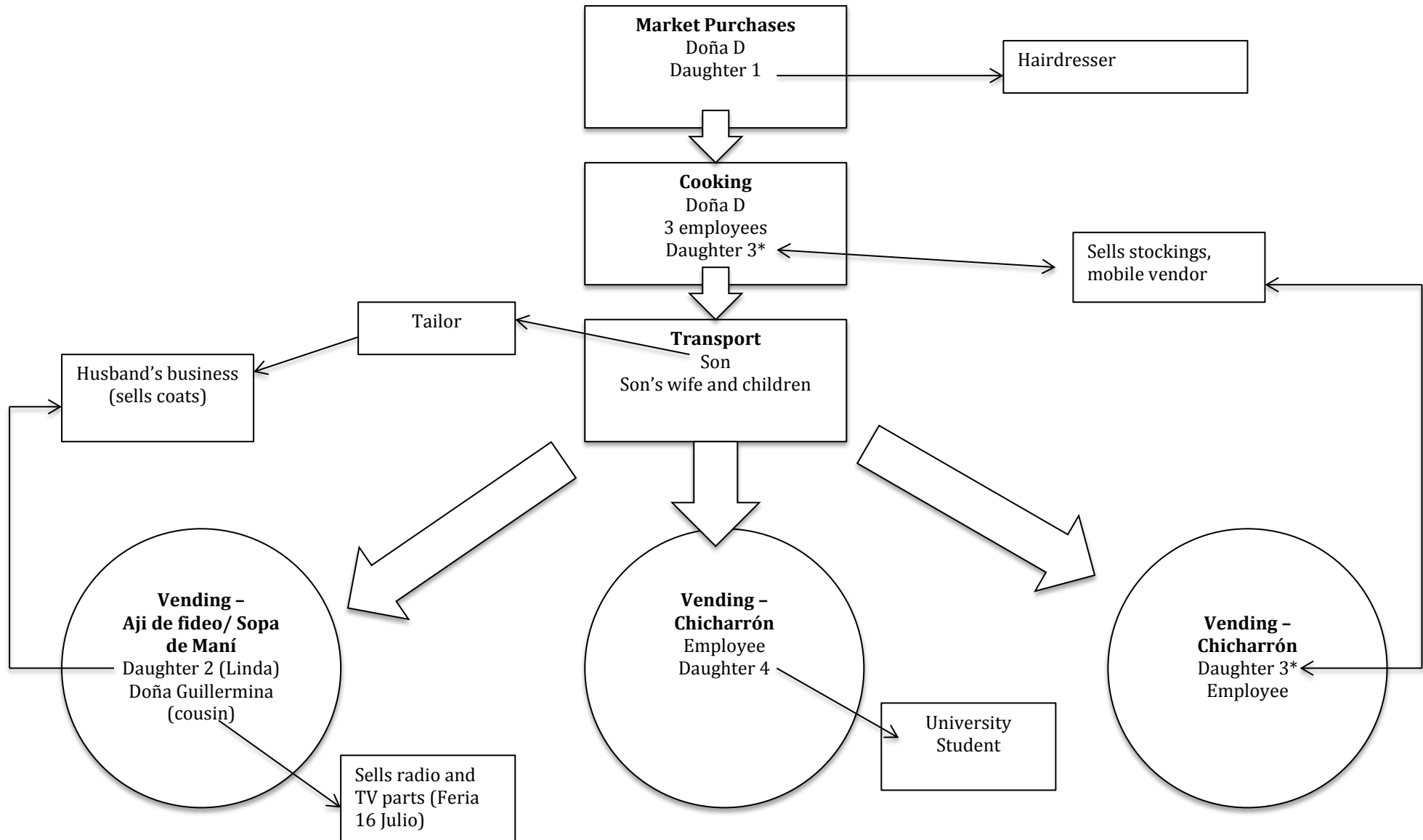
Doña Juana, for example, has eight children, all of whom either have jobs or study at university. They juggle their working/studying with helping their mother make market purchases, prepare food and sell at night on the Avenida 6 de Marzo, meaning that between the eight of them they make sure that their mother, a widow, is never left on her own with the business. Doña Feliza and Doña Sandra both receive help with food preparation activities, such as peeling potatoes, from their children in exchange for pocket money, and Martha, Andrea, Doña Wilma and Doña Rojelia all receive help from their husbands with preparing the food and transporting the heavy cooking pots from their home to their stall.

Doña Guillermina vends at a stall owned by her first cousin, Doña D¹³. The stall is large relative to other stalls in the area, taking up the space of three normal-sized kiosks, and is open 24 hours a day, selling on average 650 plates of food each 24-hour period, which amounts to a gross income of around 2000BOB, or 290USD, per day. The business is a huge operation involving

¹³ Due to lack of direct contact, permission to use the cousin's real name was not obtained

cooperation from a number of Doña D's family members (see figure 16). Her cousin, Doña Guillermina, vends along with her daughter, who has been working at the stall since she was 6 years old, and is now 21. Doña D's other sons and daughters all help with food preparation, vending and transport, but also have other jobs. For example, the son responsible for transporting the food is also a tailor, and the daughter helps her husband, who is a trader, in his stall, as well as serving at Doña D's. Doña Guillermina herself, who was the respondent involved in the research, has her own business selling spare parts for radios and televisions in the Feria 16 de Julio. The family members of Doña D collaborate not only in the stall visited as part of the research, but also in two other stalls, these selling *chicharrón*, also owned by Doña D and also located in the same area, and same *asociación*. This means that the network of family members of Doña D, fitting their responsibilities to the stall around their primary work or study activities, are able to run a huge operation which turns over approximately 6000USD per week.

Figure 15: Collaboration of family members in Doña D's Business



The collaboration of family members in the street food vending business lowers costs for the vendors in two ways. First, among *agachaditos* in the study, family members who helped in the stall were paid less than employees. Doña Guillermina and Doña Juana both reported that family members could be paid less because helping a family member was a kind of responsibility and was not necessarily seen as a job. Linda, Doña D's daughter, also insisted that she was not an employee, even though she has worked in her mother's stall for 14 years and receives a monthly wage. If adult children or a vendor's mother or mother-in-law live with her in her house, this can also be another reason to pay the family member less. There are, therefore, other forms of co-dependency within the family network which mean that it is not necessary to pay family members, or pay them as much as one would an employee, to receive their help in the business. Respondents also reported that, because family members helped out as a favour alongside their main source of income, they did not need to receive a full wage from the vendor. Many vendors whose children are still economically dependent on their mother helped her with food preparation or vending activities in exchange for pocket money, but nowhere near a full wage. The collaboration of family members in the business but for a lower wage than an employee would receive therefore allows vendors to keep their costs lower than they would be able to without such collaboration, meaning that the final price of a dish can be kept lower in order to attract customers in the competitive sales environment of El Alto.

The other benefit to having family members as helpers rather than employees is the element of trust. Doña Andrea pays her mother 200BOB per month less than she does her employees, but trusts her mother far more, leaving the stall in her care when she goes shopping, when she would not do so with the two employees she also has helping her. Doña Andrea's mother lives in a house that Doña Andrea purchased in a different area of El Alto, while Doña Andrea sleeps most nights on site, near her business, so that she can start early in the morning. The arrangement therefore helps the mother, in that she has a large and comfortable place to live without paying rent, and it helps Doña Andrea, since she has somebody to look after her house when she is not there, and is able to pay a lower wage to her mother, who receives accommodation, meaning more capital accumulation for her business.

Doña Guillermina, like Doña Andrea, highlights the trust factor, and contrasts the family members who help in her cousin's business, who '*never fail us*' with the employees who often suddenly stop coming or are lazy and do not work hard. Moreover, vendors who have employees report having to write down all sales and purchases in order to make sure that employees are not stealing. Vendors who are helped only by family members either do not write down business activity or do so in a far more rudimentary fashion, since due to the inherent trust in the kinship bond, it is simply not necessary to keep an eye on whether or not the family members are stealing profits. The reduced economic risk involved in the collaboration of family

members therefore also translates into lower costs for the vendor, and lower prices of her end product.

6.1.2 Inter-linking of family businesses

The simultaneous involvement of a family unit in more than one economic activity, the other form of *pluriempleo* that is characteristic of popular economic life in El Alto, also has the effect of reducing the costs of doing business for a number of the vendors in the study. Family businesses often inter-link with each other, creating another form of network, this time of different businesses. These businesses assist each other not only for economic reasons but also for social reasons of familiar solidarity, which translates into reduced economic costs for one or both of the businesses involved.

Doña Wilma, for example, vends food at night on the Avenida 6 de Marzo. As described in chapter 5.3, this area is extremely high in foot traffic at night, partly because it is one of the primary transport connection areas for minibuses. Doña Wilma's husband is a minibus driver. He is therefore able to use his minibus to transport Doña Wilma's cooking pots and other equipment to her vending site, before picking up passengers from the area as he begins his driving shift. At the end of the night he picks Doña Wilma up from her spot and the two travel home together. In order to transport her equipment to and from her vending site, Doña Wilma would normally need to use a taxi which would cost her around 20BOB each way – a considerable amount considering that one of her dishes costs between 3.50 and 12BOB. The arrangement not only allows Doña Wilma's business to save on transport costs, but also to bring a far greater amount of food to sell that she would have been able to, since there is much more space in her husband's minibus than there is in a taxi.

Doña Rojelia is one of the few vendors who buys her ingredients from an industrial company: she buys Sofia chicken from a shop nearby. This shop, however, is owned by her sister, meaning that she is able to purchase the chicken for a lower price than she would be able to from producers in the markets. The sister, in turn, eats regularly at Doña Rojelia's *chicharrón* stall and purchases soft drinks daily from Doña Rojelia's orange juice and soft drink stall, located right next to the *chicharrón* stall and run by her daughter. While Rojelia's sister therefore receives the repeat custom from the *chicharrón* stall, Rojelia benefits in the form of lower prices for her ingredients, and the regular custom of her sister and her employees, who eat lunch and/or drink from her two stalls.

Carolina's aunt runs a street food stall in the same area as the stall that Carolina runs with her mother. The aunt travels to the countryside weekly for ingredients, something that Carolina and her mother do not have time to do. The aunt therefore brings back a larger quantity in order to provision Carolina and her mother's business, as well as her own. This allows Carolina's aunt to share the costs of travelling to the countryside with Carolina and her mother's business, and

charge a little bit extra for her time. Carolina and her mother receive less expensive ingredients despite the extra amount they give to Carolina's aunt. Both businesses therefore lower their costs, which can again translate into lower prices for the consumer.

In a number of cases, therefore, the interlinking of family businesses reduces costs for the vendor, either through directly lowering the price of her ingredients, or by reducing secondary costs such as transport.

6.1.3 Using family connections for economic opportunities

A number of vendors' businesses are based on long-standing family influence in the areas involved, which can provide access to economic opportunities. A particular use of family connections is seen in entry into *asociaciones*. In busy sales areas in the centre of El Alto, it is very difficult to set up a stall without doing so through one of the *asociaciones* which encompass stalls in different areas. As all vendors note, it is very difficult to become a member of an *asociación* without having some kind of connection, and family connections can be a way in which access to an *asociación* is gained. Doña Rojelia obtained access to her association after renting her stall from a friend over a number of years before taking the opportunity to buy the stall and become a fully-fledged member of the association. Doña Rojelia's membership in the association is what allowed her sister, a few years later, to gain access into the association, where she now sells vegetables.

Martha inherited her stall from her aunt. Since the stall has been in the family for 28 years, Martha has a greater amount of influence in her association than other members. She reports that she was recently able to influence the decision of allowing a clothes vendor, rather than a food vendor, to purchase a stall in her association, thus allowing her to ward off potential competition, due to her family's long-standing position within the association.

Doña Guillermina explained to myself and Carolina that her association, *Comerciantes Minoristas La Ceja*, is made up of family clusters within the association, which is likely to be a result of different family members having used their family connections to gain access to the association, which, being one of the largest associations in one of the busiest areas of the city, must surely be difficult to gain access to.

Since the associations provide access to optimum sales pitches, as well as a variety of forms of economic and social support (which will be described in more detail in part 6.3), the use of family connections to gain access to associations or to be influential within the associations allows vendors to lower costs and provide stability, which can translate into lower food prices for the consumer and the stability of the food source.

Doña Wilma vends in the sales area occupied by the *asociación* named '14 de Abril'. However, she is not affiliated with the *asociación*. When asked how she manages to maintain her position where she sells, Doña Wilma explained that the *asociación* is not accepting new members, but

that her husband's uncle owns the building in front of which she sells, and is therefore one of the 'vecinos' of the area. The uncle mediates with the head of the *asociación 14 de Abril* to negotiate Doña Wilma's right to sell outside the building that he owns. Doña Wilma's family connection thus enables her to sell in the area without being affiliated. Moreover, since Doña Wilma's family member owns a large building, she is able to take up a lot more space than vendors from the 14 de Abril, who have rules on stall size imposed upon them, and is able to sell much more food because she is able to bring more cooking pots with her, as well as more seating. In this way, then, family connections offer an economic advantage, this time outside the realm of the associations.

Family connections can also be seen to provide economic opportunities in other ways. For example, Andrea vends in a *feria* in the Franz Tamayo department, as well as in El Alto. In order to sell in the *feria*, Andrea relies on the help of her father-in-law, who lives in the area, spending the night in his house and using his car to travel to where she vends. Andrea purchases her vegetables and meat in La Ceja, where they are cheapest. Other items, however, such as oil and pasta, are much cheaper in Franz Tamayo, where she purchases the products on the border with Peru, where the products are imported from. Andrea's being able to stay at her father-in-law's house thus enables her to maximize savings on her ingredients, purchasing from El Alto and the Peruvian border respectively, allowing her to lower the prices of the dishes she sells in both places as well.

6.1.5 Family links to the countryside

Figure 16: Urban migrants return to help their families sort harvested potatoes in Santiago de Llallagua, a small village in the La Paz department



Photo: Richard Canaviri

The large amount of mobility between rural areas and El Alto, often referred to as 'rural/urban fluidity' (Lazar 2008) has been noted in section 4. Among the street food vendors in the study, the phenomenon was observed in the way that the vendors maintain their family links to the countryside, travelling there to help sow and harvest potatoes and produce *chuño* and *t'unt'a*, and bringing these back to the city to cook into their dishes.

Carolina's aunt and Doña Feliza travel weekly to the countryside in order to bring back potatoes and *chuño* that they have produced and stored in their community of origin. Doña Sandra

travels less frequently, around twice per month, to and from her community for potatoes and *chuño* but with larger quantities, so that she still uses her own potatoes and *chuño* for all her cooking. Doña Sandra does not own land in her community, but her father gifted her five rows of potatoes from his land.

Other vendors, such as Martha, Andrea and Doña Rojelia, travel far less frequently to their communities. Participation in sowing, harvesting and sorting the potatoes is a social obligation of urban migrants as well as being a practice that enables vendors to acquire ingredients for their dishes without purchasing them. Martha explains that she may lose possession of her family home in Apolo if she does not travel back to fulfill the responsibilities surrounding planting and harvesting potatoes, since her father, who used to live there, has now died, and if the house is left unoccupied and the land unused, the property will be seized. She therefore travels around 3-4 times per year to the area and brings back potatoes and *chuño* when she goes, but purchases the items from the market when they run out rather than going back for more.

The family links that vendors maintain with the countryside, partly rooted in the cultural importance of responsibility of an individual to his/her community of origin, provide a direct link between rural production areas and the urban consumer, meaning a role in the provision of fresh, local produce to the consumer. Moreover, the practice means that vendors lower considerably their costs of supplying themselves with potatoes and *chuño*, which are staple ingredients of many of the dishes.

6.2 Caseros

6.2.1 Definition of 'caseros'

Casero, or its female form *casera*, is a term that is heard with considerable frequency at stalls selling all kinds of products in the streets of El Alto. The *casero* relationship is one of a long-term, repeat relationship between vendor/supplier and client. Past studies on popular economies (Aramayo 2013; Tassi 2013) have identified the *casero* relationship as a key characteristic of popular economies in Bolivia (it is also common in other parts of Latin America), and it involves the repeated purchase from a particular vendor or supplier, even if prices are lower with the competition. This loyalty on the part of the buyer allows the gradual establishment of a relationship that comes to offer a number of benefits to the buyer, and in fact, one of the main ways I myself was able to secure access to information from the vendors was to return repeatedly to their stall over a long period of time in order to establish a trust-based, *casero* relationship with them. The street food vendors have been found to establish and maintain such *casero* relationships with both their suppliers and their customers, meaning that the vendors can be seen as kinds of nodes in a network of producers, traders, and urban consumers.

6.2.2 'Caseros' as suppliers

Most of the vendors in the study have a *casero* for most if not all of their ingredients. The table below (table 4) lists whether or not vendors have *caseros* as suppliers, for which items they have *caseros*, and what benefits this offers the vendor:

Table 4: Vendors' *casero* relationships with suppliers

Name	Caseros?	For which items?	Benefits of having <i>caseros</i> as identified by vendor
Andrea	Yes	All items	- Her <i>caseros</i> give discounted prices
Doña Andrea	Yes	All items	- They give her good service - They know what she buys and save items for her so they do not run out - They give her <i>yapas</i> *
Carolina & Mother	Yes	Meat only	- She can call the butcher and place her order, to be kept back for her, if she is running late - Unknown butchers have tricked her on quantity and quality in the past: she trusts her regular <i>casero</i> supplier
Doña Dolores**	No		
Doña Feliza	Yes	Meat and chicken only	- Discounted prices - Trusts in the quality of the products
Doña Guillermina (Doña D)	Yes	All items	- Suppliers deliver the products directly to her cousin's house - They give <i>yapas</i> and discounts
Doña Hilda	Yes	All items	- They give <i>yapas</i> - They give discounts
Doña Juana	Yes	All items	- They deliver all items to her home
Martha	Yes	All items	- They give <i>yapas</i> - They do not trick her on price
Doña Rojelia	Yes	All items	- They deliver products to her home and her stall - Her chicken supplier is her sister: family loyalty - She trusts in the quality of her pork supplier
Doña Sandra	Yes	All items except <i>panza</i> (=stomach)	- Saves time if you know suppliers who have both good quality and a price: you don't have to spend time shopping around
Doña Wilma	Yes	All items	- They give <i>yapas</i>

* *Yapa* = An Aymara word which means something similar to a tip, except that the tip is for the buyer rather than the vendor. When the deal has been made over what price to pay for a quantity, the vendor adds an extra quantity of product as a how of goodwill

** Due to scarcity and price fluctuations in quinoa, the main ingredient of Doña Dolores' *p'esque*, she uses other methods than *caseros* to source her ingredients. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.5

The responses from the vendors who use *caseros* as suppliers reveal that there are two main reasons why they do so: to keep costs/prices low; and to ensure quality.

Costs are kept low by vendors receiving discounts or extra quantities of product for the same price. Vendors also save on transport costs by having their *caseros* deliver products to their home or stall.

Vendors often risk being cheated when they make purchases. Suppliers have been found to use scales, for example, that over-measure on quantities so that the buyer receives less for her money. Vendors also reported having been sold poor-quality meat in the past, which has quickly started to acquire a bad smell and had to be thrown away. Using a regular supplier means that the supplier has an interest in not losing the vendor's custom, and therefore does not cheat on quantity or by selling meat that is about to expire. Thus, the vendor is able to avoid costs associated with being cheated on quantity or having to throw away meat.

In fact, discussing sourcing strategies with vendors reveals a constant act of balancing concerns of quality and price. Price must be low, so that vendors can compete with other *agachaditos* in their sales area, however, quality must also be good so that the vendors do not lose their own regular *casero* customers. Doña Sandra, for example, uses *casero* suppliers for all her ingredients apart from the *panza*, or stomach. She buys the product directly from small-scale producers who travel from the countryside with a lamb or sheep they have slaughtered, and sell the different parts on a tarpaulin in calle 7 of Villa Dolores. Different producers travel to the area at different times based on when they need to liquidate one of their sheep, and it is therefore not possible to have a *casera* from which Doña Sandra purchases every time. This is less of an issue for Doña Sandra, however, since she has her ways of checking the stomach to ensure the quality: she explains that the visual inspection of the meat to check it is white in colour all over, combined with touching the stomach onto her tongue to test the quality by taste, is enough to be sure. She therefore goes to the area to buy directly from the producers, which is much cheaper than buying from traders in El Alto who buy from producers and sell products on as 'middle men', being sure of her ability to self-test the quality. For other meats, she uses another source which will be described in chapter 6.4.

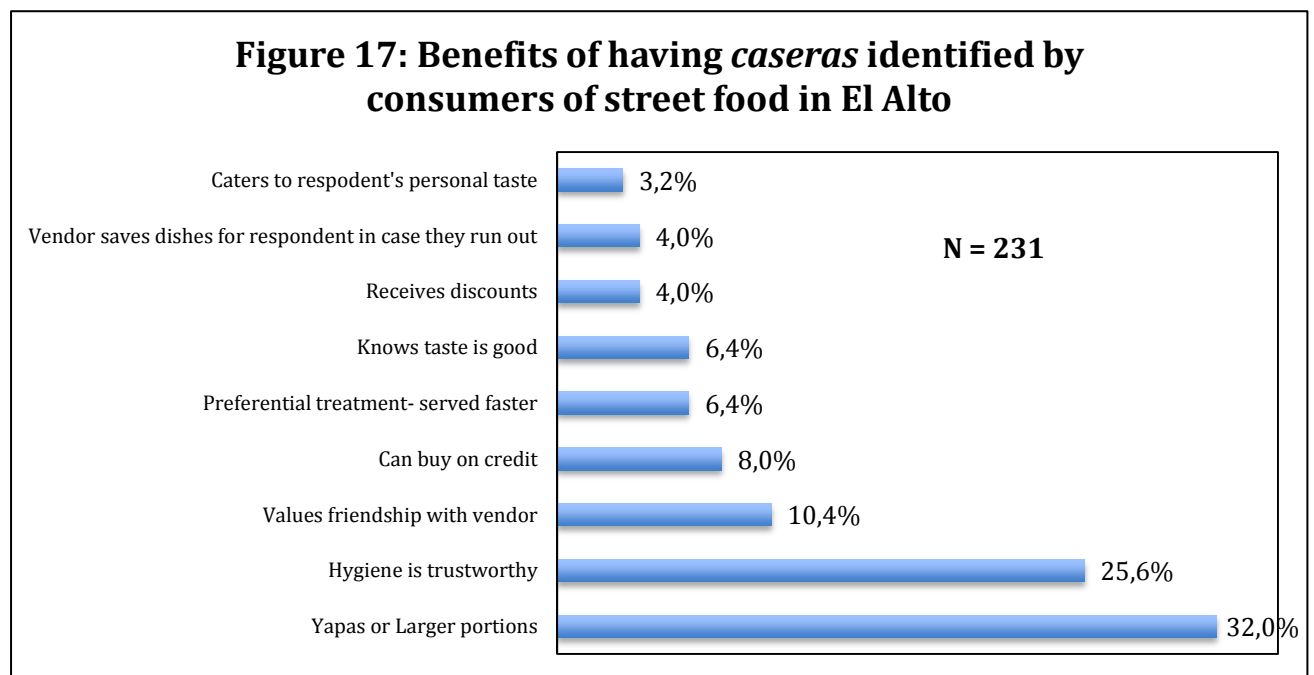
In other cases as well, where vendors use *caseros* only to supply meat and/or chicken, it is because they rely on the *caseros* to ensure the quality of those products, whereas they feel confident to inspect the quality of, for example, their vegetables, themselves, meaning they can go to producer markets (overwhelming the vendors buy their vegetables in the *feria* in Villa Dolores which takes place on Tuesdays and Fridays) and barter for products which they can see are good quality.

The constant need to balance between quality and price therefore means that vendors will often use *caseros* as suppliers, thus acting as important nodes in the network of *caseros* that might be

said to run between producer and urban consumer. Where the *casero* network might be said to be weaker is for small-scale producers who travel to the city only occasionally in order to sell their own products. The vendors also make use of these suppliers, however, as long as they are able to be sure of the quality of the products, since the prices that can be obtained by buying directly from the producer are much better than buying from urban middle-men and -women.

6.2.3 'Caseros' as customers

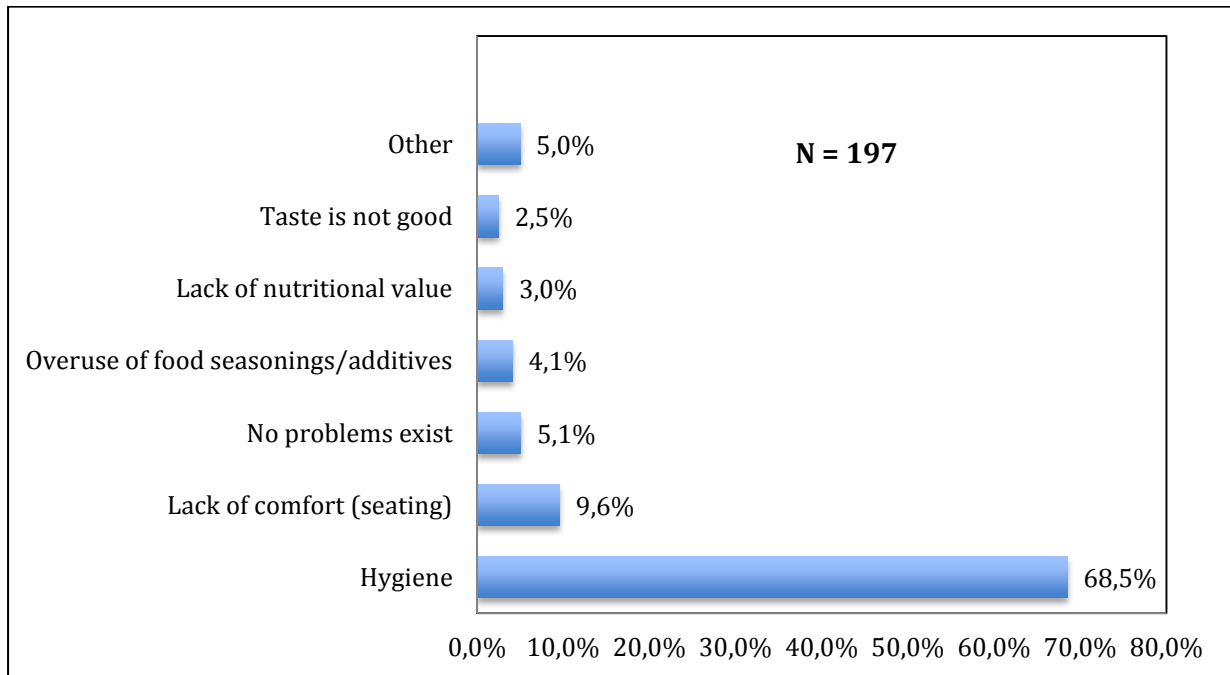
One of the reasons for the focus on quality as well as price is the vendors' own dependency upon the *casero* relationship as their way of securing custom for themselves. Data collected from the consumer survey shows that a majority of *alteños* has at least one *casero*, with 65.9% of consumers who had eaten street food at least once in the last 7 days (N = 135) saying they do have at least one *casera*, while 34.1% said they did not. When asked to list their reasons for having *caseras*, the top responses¹⁴ were related to quantity (*yapas*/large portions), 32.0%, and to being able to trust in the hygiene practices of a vendor the respondent knows well, 25.6%.



The fact that a large proportion of the reasons for having a *casera* were related to hygiene is significant, since, in the same consumer survey, 68.5% of the problems that consumers thought existed with the *agachaditos* were related to hygiene (figure 18 & 19), suggesting that a *casero* relationship is frequently used to counter such hygiene concerns.

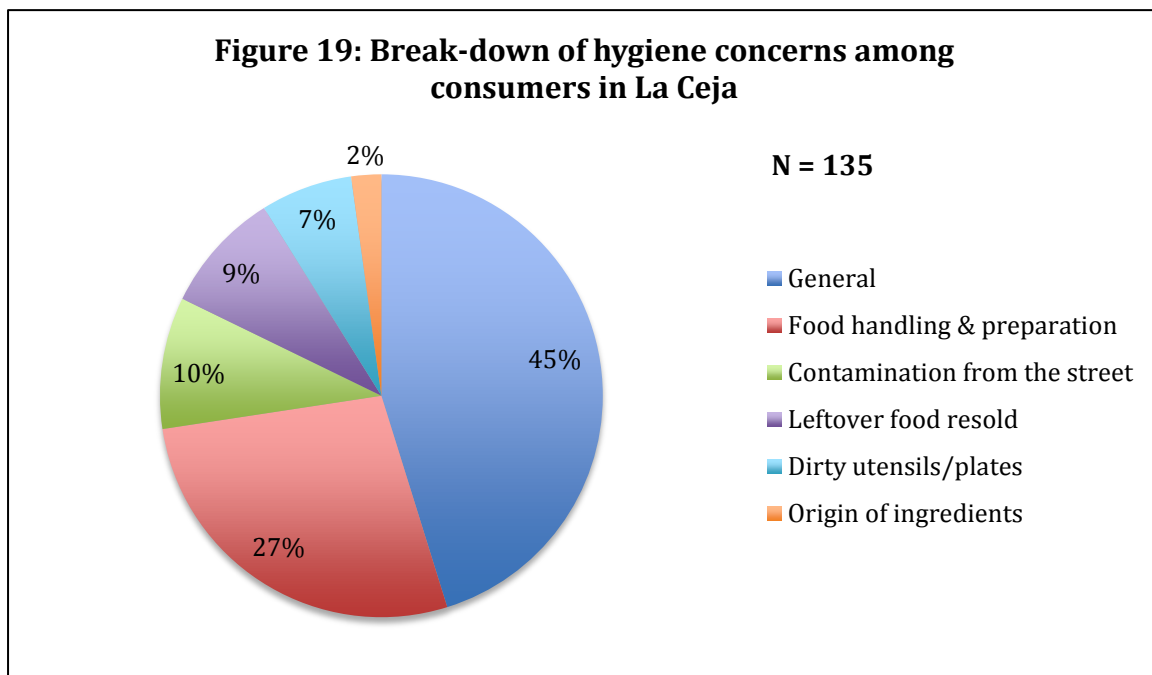
¹⁴ Note that the data for figures 17, 18 and 19 are based on a qualitative question asking consumers to list benefits. N there = no. of benefits rather than no. of consumers.

Figure 18: Problems with *agachaditos* as identified by consumers



(‘Other’ includes the following responses: ‘everything’; personal safety when eating on the street; slow service; bad service; and high price)

Of the 68.5% of responses relating to hygiene, some specific hygiene concerns were given:



As can be seen, hygiene is a major concern among consumers, yet one of the primary ways in which such concerns are mitigated is by consumers establishing a regular *casero* relationship with the vendor. This means that in order for vendors to make and keep their *caseros* they need to make sure that they are visibly showing good food handling and preparation practices as well as making sure that their cooking practices and the way that they source their ingredients

ensure that clients do not become sick. The large amount of time spent with Doña Sandra as her assistant revealed the extent of her preoccupation with her customer not getting ill from her food: it was something mentioned by her on a daily basis. The other vendors agree that even long-established *caseros* would no longer return to their stall if they became ill even once. This means that even in the absence of external regulation of hygiene practices by state authorities in El Alto, vendors take great steps to regulate the hygiene of their own food, due to their dependency on their *casero* customers. Hygiene measures listed by vendors were: washing hands; washing vegetables; ensuring the quality of ingredients, especially meat; wearing an apron; not letting raw meat come into contact with salad ingredients.

It is notable that 78.5% of those consumers who have eaten at the *agachaditos* in the past week expressed hygiene concerns. The fact that such a high proportion of consumers of street food are aware of hygiene problems and continue to eat food on the street suggests there may be high levels of demand for good hygiene levels among actual consumers of street food. Since it has been suggested that improvement in the hygiene of street food needs to come from the demand side (FAO 2007), data from the survey suggests that, in El Alto, such a mechanism is likely already to be in place.

The main characteristic listed by consumers when asked to give benefits of the *agachaditos* was their being cheap, which made up 33.1% of the reasons given (some consumers gave more than one reason).

The vendors, therefore, in order to ensure for themselves the economic security that comes with having regular customers giving them repeat business, must offer *casero* benefits in exchange for their loyalty, and consumers appear to demand most highly low prices, large portions and good hygiene. All of these aspects relate to vendors needing to be able to keep their costs low, and needing to be able to ensure that their customer does not get sick, both by ensuring that the ingredients are of adequate quality, especially the meat, and by using hygiene food handling and preparation practices. Table 5 shows estimates made by vendors on how much of their business is dependent upon *caseros*, or regular customers:

Table 5: Vendors' estimates on proportion of business dependent upon *caseros*

Andrea	70%
Doña Andrea	80-90%
Carolina & Mother	50%
Doña Dolores	60-70%
Doña Feliza	80%
Doña Guillermina	30%
Doña Hilda	70-80%
Doña Juana	30-40%
Martha	20-30%
Doña Rojelia	50%
Doña Sandra	80-90%
Doña Wilma	40%

As can be seen, 8 out of 12 vendors consider that their businesses are 50% or more dependent upon their regular *caseros*, making it important both to be able to afford to offer larger portions or lower prices to make and keep their *caseros* and also not to make a customer ill from selling food that is of poor quality or that has not been prepared in a hygienic way.

The fact that vendors need to ensure regular customers for themselves therefore in part drives strategies to keep prices low, or to be able to offer larger portions, which is in part achieved through the vendors' own strategic use of the *casero* relationship with their suppliers. The dependence of vendors on regular custom therefore contributes to economic food access for the urban consumer. Vendors also need to make sure that consumers do not become ill from their food, in order to make sure that they do not lose these customers as regular *caseros*. They therefore engage in a degree of auto-regulation of food hygiene, which contributes to the 'food utilisation' pillar of food security, ensuring some hygiene standards in food sold on the street and countering to some extent claims that street food does not and cannot contribute to food security in urban settings because of poor hygiene.

6.3 Asociaciones

The *asociaciones* provide both stability and a regulatory framework for vendors who are affiliated with them. As has been noted in chapter 4.3.3, the *asociaciones* legitimise the vendors' sales plots with the State, meaning that vendors' positions are secure, while also keeping the City Hall at a distance. Vendors in the study who are not affiliated, Carolina and Doña Dolores, and vendors who were not affiliated in the past, mention problems with the City Hall such as fines and confiscation of property, which translate into economic loss for the vendors.

Asociaciones also impose norms and rules, expecting vendors to keep their stalls clean and present themselves well in order to preserve the *asociación's* reputation. This arguably goes some way towards contributing to hygiene among those vendors who sell food. Moreover, in *asociaciones* which mainly comprise vendors of street food specifically, the organisations intervene to make sure that not too many vendors are selling the same dish. Doña Juana of the 14 de Abril, for example, is a *p'esque* seller, and cannot change the dish that she sells without presenting a request at one of the association meetings. Moreover, one of the conditions for her entry into the association was that she sold a dish that nobody else in the association was selling already. The associations therefore regulate the amount of competition in the area, protecting the business of the different members involved.

The *asociaciones* also provide some social welfare. For example, all vendors in the study who are members of an *asociación* reported that if an affiliated member becomes ill, if their stall is robbed, or another problem befalls them which affects their ability to vend and make money, the *asociación* leaders go around the stalls collecting a *colaboración*, where the vendors in the association pay into a fund to help the member get back on her feet.

Time spent in Doña Sandra's association, the 17 de Mayo, and follow-up conversations with the other vendors in the study, showed that the *asociaciones* are not necessarily a cohesive and unified body, and complex social networks and alliances were found to run within them. Doña Sandra describes how she is careful who she trusts within her association, and explains that she has a group of friends within the organization who help each other daily, and who seek each other out at the parties and marches that are obligatory for association members and participate in the activities together. The bond between Doña Sandra's friendship group is strong. Before I began to work as Doña Sandra's assistant, her friend, Helena, would run over from her electronics stall and wash dishes for Doña Sandra if she saw that her friend was struggling. The vendors from within the friendship group will also watch each other's stalls if a vendor needs to absent herself. When this happened, it was observed that vendors always asked someone from within the friendship group to watch her stall, rather than someone else. The vendors also change money for each other when they run out of change, and, among Doña Sandra's group of friends, this was also always done within the friendship group. The strong

bonds between friends within the association is also crucial to the personal safety of the vendors. In the central part of El Alto, vendors report problems with drunks and drug addicts bothering them. On a number of occasions, when a vendor found herself in such trouble, those from within the friendship group would rally together to repel the trouble-maker. The case of a particularly difficult and violent trouble-maker, who was also suspected of stealing, involved one vendor chasing him away with a large stick in order to protect her friend – a level of solidarity that might not normally be expected from a co-member of the association.

Other vendors from within Doña Sandra's association have their own friendship groups and allegiances: Doña Sandra's rival vendor, with whom she shares a great deal of animosity, has a friend who vends opposite Doña Sandra, and was always watching Doña Sandra and my behavior and reporting back to the other food vendor.

Friendship bonds within the association are often created and maintained in the parties organized by the associations (Tassi 2012). Such behavior was observed at the anniversary party of Doña Sandra association, the 27 de Mayo. Doña Sandra and her friendship group wore *pollera's*, shirts and shawls that they coordinated in colour, creating a kind of 'uniform' through which to express solidarity with each other.

In Aymara culture, alcohol is an important way of solidifying social bonds (see also Lazar 2008), and it was the different friendship groups of the association who tended to share bottles of beer together. There is a particular ritual surrounding the drinking of beer in Aymara culture, where the drinker not only pours a libation to *Pachamama*, but also toasts to everybody in the group's good health before drinking his/her beer in one gulp. Since the beer is served in just one glass passed around the whole group, far more focus is placed on the act of drinking than in, for example, European culture, and the toasting to the group makes the act a shared experience of friendship and solidarity that is an important way of fostering group cohesion. At one point during the party, Doña Sandra shared beer with a vendor with whom she had been quarreling. The vendor had brought back a plate of food without eating it and without paying, claiming that the food had taken too long to arrive. The pair shared a drink, embraced, and from that time I could make out no more animosity between them. Dance was also an important element to the party, and while friendship groups tended to dance together in small circles, at one point all members of the association joined hands together and danced the entire geographical boundary of the association in show of solidarity.

Figure 20: Association members dance as a group at the Anniversary Party of the 27 de Mayo



Photo: Kim Gajraj

A complex network of allegiance and animosity can thus be found within the association, where affiliated members create and maintain social networks of trust and solidarity within the structure of the organization, which offer both economic and social protection.

It is the social networks within the association therefore, as much as the institutional structure of the association itself, that provide economic and social support to the vendors. Such support lowers the transaction costs of the vendors, again allowing them to offer lower prices to the consumer and compete for his/her custom.

6.4 Friendship and trust-based networks

Friendship and trust have also been seen to function in other ways among street food vendors in El Alto. For example, Doña Guillermina's cousin tends to use predominantly family friends as employees, since she finds them more trustworthy in terms of working hard and not stealing. The friendship ties to the families of the employees therefore provide economic security to the cousin's business.

Conversations with Doña Rojelia's customers revealed that a number of them are family friends who would not usually eat food on the street but, since they know Doña Rojelia personally, travel a bit further to eat at her stall when they are outside the home in La Ceja and need to eat, because they know her and trust the quality of her food.

Doña Sandra has a male friend that she refers to as her 'amigo', which is often a euphemistic term among *alteños* to describe a special relationship with someone of the opposite sex that one is likely to marry. Doña Sandra knows that Don Juan would like to marry her and, although she does not want to marry him, she suggests to Don Juan that she might like to marry him one day and continues to go out with him, partly because of the number of economic benefits that the relationship gives her. For example, Don Juan will drive Doña Sandra to the market in his car, which greatly facilitates and speeds up the task of shopping for ingredients. If Doña Sandra is taking longer to sell all her dishes on a given day, Don Juan will even sometimes go to the market for her. Doña Sandra has taught him, for example, how to check the quality of the *panza* so that he can make the trip on his own. He also lets Doña Sandra use his freezer, meaning she can store meat if she has already shopped but, for some unexpected reason, is prevented from going out to sell (this happened, for example, during the transport strikes in El Alto at the beginning of March). Don Juan is also a butcher, and sells Doña Sandra her meat at cost value. Doña Sandra thus benefits economically from the special friendship that she has with Don Juan.

6.5 Networks based on Aymara Identity

It was noted in chapter 4.2.2 that shops and stalls that advertise for staff often specify whether they are looking for a *señorita* or a *cholita*. Observational data and conversations with vendors suggest that, at least in the case of street food, it is *cholitas* who are more highly sought-after when a vendor is looking for an assistant. Before I worked as Doña Sandra's assistant, she had only employed *cholitas* in the past. Moreover, on a number of occasions, while I was working for Doña Sandra, customers would ask why she had employed me rather than a *cholita*. Often, customers would say that those who are *de pollera* tend to be more hardworking, and therefore make better employees. Similarly, as I visited other stalls and vendors of non-food items to offer them the lunches that Doña Sandra had brought, customers would often ask if the lady I was serving for was *de pollera*, and often, the affirmation that yes, she was, was enough to persuade a potential customer to try her food for the first time. There is, therefore, a relationship between Aymara identity and trust, where a *cholita* employee is seen as more likely to be hardworking, and a vendor who is *de pollera* is seen as more likely to have tastier and better quality food. In fact, Doña Sandra, up until January 2015, was *de vestido*, but she changed to traditional Aymara dress, partly in order to make sure that she got more use out of the expensive traditional clothes that she had only been using for special occasions, but partly also to increase sales by attracting more customers to her stall.

The Aymara language also has observed effects of solidarity among speakers, where vendors have been observed to treat Aymara-speaking customers better, providing them with larger portions or serving them more quickly. In turn, potential customers can also be persuaded to eat at a given stall more easily if the vendor calls out in Aymara rather than Spanish.

There is, therefore, evidence of connections to Aymara identity providing opportunities both for the vendor, in terms of economic opportunities, and for the customer, in terms of better service and larger portions.

The existence of a kind of network of solidarity based on Aymara identity may in part derived from the fact that such an identity is rooted in a system of shared values such as solidarity, reciprocity, and the individual's responsibility to the group, described in chapter 4.2. Without exception, all vendors reported gifting food, either frequently or infrequently, to the homeless and/or needy who are unable to afford the prices offered by the vendor. The economic opportunities afforded to a vendor through Aymara identity are thus also accompanied by a responsibility towards the less fortunate members of the vendor's society which results in a contribution to their food security. The responsibilities attached to a network based in Aymara identity therefore carries aspects of economic loss as well as economic opportunity for the vendor, but the result may be seen as a socioeconomic system that is more socially responsible than other forms of market economy.

6.6 Communication and Word of Mouth as functions of networks

The strong and complex social networks that exist among *alteños* generally mean that these provide highly effective information networks. Vendors from within Doña Sandra's association appear to be able to share information with each other before it hits the news. During the transport strikes at the beginning of March, for example, vendors used their contacts with drivers involved in the strikes to share highly up-to-date information with each other. Vendors stayed in contact by mobile phone after they had gone home in order to keep up to date with the latest information on the strikes in order to know if they should prepare to go out and vend the next day, rather than watching the news on the television.

Doña Dolores also makes heavy use of her networks in order to acquire information. As has been noted in table 4, Doña Dolores is the only vendor who does not make use of a regular *casero* supplier. The main ingredient of her *p'esque* is quinoa, which, she points out, has become very difficult to acquire since Bolivia has opened up to the quinoa export market. She is unable to source directly from a particular supplier because neither the quality of the quinoa nor the supply of the quinoa itself is stable. Indeed, the location where good quality quinoa can be sourced at a good price fluctuates a great deal, and it is very difficult, she recounts, to know where and when she will be able to purchase the product. In the area where Doña Dolores vends on Sundays, however, a large number of producers also come to vend directly from different parts of the countryside. Doña Dolores has established friendships with these people and uses them as her primary source of information on which department has good quality quinoa at a good price, and on what day. Doña Dolores' son then travels to the relevant location to purchase the quinoa. Doña Dolores' information network of different rural dwellers from different areas thus provides the most effective information source for determining how to source the key ingredient to the dish she sells, making word of mouth the key element in the supply network from rural areas to the urban consumer.

A number of the vendors also use their networks to gain information that serves the function of market research. Friends and family members relay information back to the vendor about the price, portion size and type of dish sold by other vendors, which is important to the vendor's own ability to compete in the competitive environment of central El Alto.

As well as contributing to food supply and access, communication and word-of-mouth networks have been seen to play an important regulatory role in the behavior of street food vendors. There is a surprising amount of gossip among the vendors about other vendors, and all of the gossip involves stories about poor hygiene practices of other vendors. Martha, for example, explains how the vendor down the road from her prepares her food without running water, meaning that she does not wash her hands or her vegetables while preparing the food. Carolina describes how a rival vendor goes out under cover of night and steals the used oil left for

collection outside the fried chicken shops and uses the oil to fry her food in the next day. Most of the stories are unlikely to be true, but they show how strongly pride and reputation is linked to good food hygiene practices among the vendors. As noted by James Scott, gossip only works if standards are shared: 'neither gossip nor character assassination [...] makes much sense unless there are shared standards of what is deviant, unworthy, impolite' (Scott, 1985). On the one hand, therefore, the gossip that travels around the vendors reveals that good food hygiene practice is a shared standard, a social norm that exists inherently within the shared worldview of the vendors. On the other hand, the gossip in turn can be said to have an institutional effect of regulating the hygiene practices of the vendors, since it encourages the vendors to implement good hygiene practices in order to preserve their own reputation. Lazar finds that gossip serves a similar function among the *Juntas Vecinales*¹⁵ of the Rosas Pampa zone in El Alto: 'through rumours and gossip *vecinos* hold their leaders to account preemptively, establishing a sense of the public good and an obligation to serve that good' (Lazar 2008).

From a qualitative analysis of the open questions in which consumers in the survey were asked to list benefits of the *agachaditos*, a strong discourse was identified among consumers that matches a discourse also found among vendors. Consumers frequently mentioned the idea that, while *pensiones* often store food and serve what was left over one day on the following day(s), vendors of *agachaditos* cook and sell everything on a daily basis, meaning that the food they serve is more fresh. Indeed, 10% of the benefits listed of the *agachaditos* in the consumer survey were that, unlike the *pensiones*, vendors do not re-use leftover food. Vendors themselves refer proudly to this discourse, comparing the freshness of their own food to the poor hygiene of food stored and re-served in the *pensiones*. The story of a rat found inside a pot that a nasty *pensión* owner had order be kept overnight for the next day was heard too many times from different mouths for the story to be a true one, but the fact that such stories exist as kinds of myths demonstrates the extent to which *agachadito* freshness versus *pensión* lack of freshness is part of a shared discourse among *alteños*. This relates back to issues of the precariousness of street food vending as a trade discussed in chapter 2.4. Although the need to cook and sell food daily must be a source of economic risk for the vendor, this need is also used by vendors to market the type of food they sell and compete with the larger *pensiones*. The discourse observed, therefore, offers economic opportunity to the vendor, providing stability to her business, but also suggests that consumers choose the *agachaditos* for their freshness, pointing to a contribution towards the Utilisation pillar of food security.

¹⁵ *Juntas Vecinales* are collective organisations which function in a similar way to the *asociaciones* but are made up of the *vecinos*, or property owners, of a given area

6.6 Summary

In summary, three main points can be drawn from the relationship between social networks of street food vendors in El Alto and contributions to food security.

First, social networks have been seen to provide a number of economic benefits to the vendors by: lowering the cost of ingredients; lowering other transaction costs, such as transport and salaries to employees; reducing economic risk; providing general support to the vendor's business. Vendors have noted the need to be competitive in El Alto due to the high concentration of vendors. Doña Wilma, for example, highlights the need to be able to buy ingredients cheaply so that she can provide cheaper dishes to the customer: her *sopa de maní* is sold at 3.50BOB while the vendor nearby sells the same dish at 4.00BOB. The 0.50BOB price difference (0.07USD) is enough to attract customers away from the other vendor. It is therefore reasonable to expect that any contribution of vendors' social networks to a reduction in a vendors' costs of doing business translates, in turn, into lower prices for the vendor, and therefore into greater economic access in terms of food security.

Second, networks such as kinship links to the countryside, *casero* relationships with suppliers, and communication networks ensure the effective provision of vendors' ingredients from the countryside to the urban consumer who eats the vendors' dishes. This feeds into concepts of food provision, physical access, and food sovereignty, the latter because it is popular networks who are linking countryside to city, and therefore the people themselves who are controlling the food supply, rather than multinational corporations.

Third, networks are seen to provide an important institutional framework to the vendors' economic activity, providing not only stability, which relates to the 'stability' pillar of food security, but also a regulatory framework, where reputation, shame and the importance of repeat custom channel vendors' food hygiene practices, which is crucial to the 'food utilisation' pillar of food security.

7. Discussion

The research findings will now be discussed in the context of the theoretical-thematic framework in section 2 and in relation to the research questions. The five chapters in the section will relate to the five research questions laid out in chapter 3.2.

7.1 Main characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto

The study revealed a high proliferation of street food stalls in central areas of El Alto which sell a wide variety of traditional dishes at a range of prices. Stalls tend to be located in busy shopping areas, or near to schools and places of work. Stationary vendors adapt their time schedules based on which times of the day are busy in their area, meaning that the concentration of vendors in the central area of El Alto follow the concentration of consumers throughout the day. The *agachaditos* comprise stalls that may be permanent, semi-permanent, or temporary, and there is evidence of both the desire and the ability of vendors to seek an upward trajectory from owning a temporary stall to owning a permanent one. The vendors included in the study were of a wide range of ages, many were divorced or widowed, and most had dependent children. Street food from the *agachaditos* is widely consumed by a very large proportion of the population in the central part of El Alto and therefore plays an important role in the daily lives of *alteños*.

A number of characteristics of street food businesses in El Alto deserve special attention since they show a contribution, in general, to food security by the vendors. This provides a good base from which to examine the role of the vendors' networks, specifically, in food security. The characteristics of variety of dishes; proliferation of stalls; and economic stability & possibilities for upward trajectory will therefore be discussed in more detail.

7.1.1 Variety of dishes

The high variety of dishes served was referred to by consumers as a benefit of the *agachaditos*, since there was always a type of food to satisfy their needs. This means that collectively, the proliferation of food stalls itself serves to cater to consumer preference, one of the FAO integral parts to food security, since there is always likely to be a dish that will cater to the consumer's taste. Moreover, the relatively greater usage of stalls selling traditional food than of stalls selling fast food suggests that the *agachaditos* inherently cater to consumer preference, since most consumers prefer these stalls to their main alternative.

The observation on variety of dishes offered also relates to food utilisation, since *agachaditos* as a collective whole are able to offer nutritional variety, with more nutritious options also available for the health-conscious consumer.

7.1.2 Proliferation of stalls

It was also found that *agachadito* stalls are highly prolific in the central area of El Alto, and that vendors concentrate in areas where there is most demand from consumers at different times of the day. This points to a role in physical accessibility of food for urban consumers, an idea that is enforced by the heavy use of the *agachaditos* by the *alteño* population, where 84.4% of those surveyed had eaten street food at least 1-3 times in the past week, and 43% of reasons given for eating in the stalls were related to physical access.

Physical access is likely an issue not only for low-income groups, but also for higher income groups. The fact that the consumer survey included a wide variety of occupations, ranging from very high-income to no income, but that street food consumption was high across all groups, suggests a dependency on the service that does not stem purely from economic access requirements. While 15.6% of reasons for consuming food from the *agachaditos* were its low price, suggesting that economic access is indeed an issue for lower income groups, the fact that higher priced street food also exists suggests that physical access is an issue for members of both higher- and lower- income groups. This finding runs contrary to Böhme and Thiele's observation on popular economies in West African cities that 'rising incomes tend to lead to a lower propensity to consume informal sector goods and to use informal distribution channels' (Böhme & Thiele, 2012, see chapter 2.1.3). Crush and Frayne's observation on food security in urban contexts, that food may be spatially accessible but economically inaccessible, and, on the other hand, economically accessible but spatially inaccessible (Crush & Frayne, 2011) points to the importance of satisfying both aspects of food access for it to be achieved. Evidence of consumer use for purposes both of physical and of economic access points to the *agachaditos'* ability to satisfy both requirements.

7.1.3 Economic stability & possibilities for upward trajectory

Another characteristic identified in the *agachaditos* was the businesses' viability as a primary occupation with opportunities for upward trajectory. All vendors in the study have businesses which are currently larger and bringing in more income than they were when the vendor first started the occupation. Since most of the vendors in the study are supporting dependent children, and many of these without a father figure also bringing in income, theories that street food vending is often chosen as an occupation since it is capable of reconciling productive with reproductive roles (Floro & Swain 2013, see chapter 2.4.1). Although the concept of *pluriempleo* means that many vendors' families have multiple incomes coming from a number of different businesses or occupations, four of the vendors in the study were from small family units comprising only themselves and dependent children not earning separate incomes. These vendors report that they are able to support their family using the street food business as a sole source of income.

However, the evidence that vendors' businesses can and do expand counters the idea that female owners of small-scale businesses' interests tend to be *purely* reproductive, with less focus on being entrepreneurial and expanding the business (FAO 2007, see chapter 2.4.2). It also points to the idea that street food vending as a trade may not be as precarious as some would claim (Tinker 2003, see chapter 2.4.2), suggesting that other forces may be at play to counter more precarious aspects such as the need to cook and sell food daily and provide economic stability for the vendor. Since social capital was identified in chapter 2.4.3 as a possible buffer against such economic risk (Turner & Schoenberger, 2011), the analysis of social networks will also be relevant in this context.

The characteristics observed produce an overall view of street food businesses in El Alto as playing an important role in the food security of the urban consumer. Evidence on the stability of street food vending as an occupation therefore also points to the long-term stability of those aspects of food security that are dependent on the *agachaditos* in the city. Such observations highlight the relevance of street vendors to food security in the city and provide a base on which to study the role that street food vendors' networks, specifically, play in the phenomenon.

7.2 Street food vendors' networks and food access

The examination of different forms of networks in the economic system of street food vendors and how they operate reveal a strong contribution of these networks to both the economic and physical access to food for the urban consumer. As noted in the FAO definition of food access in chapter 2.5.1, 'an adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives'. Theory that is specific to urban food security highlights the relevance of access in cities, since both the way that food reaches the city from the countryside (physical access) and the fact that food security is more income dependent in urban settings (economic access) are highly relevant in this context.

Use of networks was found to reduce costs in a number of ways. Family networks contribute to lowering costs for the vendor, where family members contribute to the running of the businesses to help the vendor, and where different businesses owned by members of the same family interlink in order to reduce costs for one or both businesses. Family networks have also been shown to provide economic opportunities and bargaining power.

Casero relationships with suppliers also reduce costs in a number of ways, either directly by offering lower prices for ingredients, or higher quantities for the same price, or indirectly by delivering ingredients to a vendor's home or saving ingredients that may run out for a vendor who frequently purchases that product. Having *casero* suppliers is almost a universal practice among the vendors in the study, with all but one vendor using them for some or all of their

ingredients. While, due to the small sample size of vendors involved, this does not mean that evidence of use of *casero* suppliers can be generalised to all street food vendors in El Alto, the suggestion is that having a *casero* supplier, and the related cost reductions, are a common occurrence among street vendors there. The fact that the vendor who does not have *casero* suppliers is more susceptible to price and availability fluctuations in her ingredient, quinoa, and uses her networks in other ways to secure supply, suggests that the *casero* supplier relationship works better for those vendors who source ingredients whose availability and price involves less fluctuation.

The fact that the personalised relationships that form street food vendors' networks are rooted in Aymara culture also appears to play a role in economic access, for the lowest-income members of society. The giving away of food to the poorest members of society by all vendors involved in the study suggests that social responsibility is a primary concern of the vendors, which may be rooted in the centrality in Aymara tradition of solidarity, and the responsibility of the individual to the group (see chapter 4.2.3).

The benefits of vendors having their own *caseros* as customers, which provides economic stability through their repeat custom, is also found to drive strategies by the vendors, who lower prices or give larger portions for their regular customers in order to incentivise this repeat custom. This means that reductions in costs found in kinship and supplier networks are translated into lower prices or larger quantities for the consumer, whose regular custom the vendor tries to secure. The ways, therefore, that vendors use their networks to reduce costs represent not only greater economic gain for the vendor but also greater economic access to food for the urban consumer, who is able to use his/her own networks of *casera* vendors to secure lower prices or higher quantities for his/herself. The personal networks in popular economies, therefore, that have been observed to reduce transaction costs (Castillo et al. 2012, see chapter 2.3.2) in turn increase economic access to food for the consumer.

Crush and Frayne's findings that food supply in Southern African cities 'rests on a well-organised informal marketing system' (2011, see chapter 2.5.2) is also found to be true of El Alto and the food systems in which street food vendors operate. Vendors, in order to source quantities at the lowest possible prices, purchase their different ingredients from a number of different suppliers, depending on who has ingredients that satisfy the vendor's requirements in terms of price and quality, and on who the vendor has established a personal relationship with. This means that different small-scale vendors, sourcing from a number of different small-scale producers, form a network that gives business to a number of different small-scale producers. In this sense, the vendors' networks do indeed contribute to a fairer distribution of resources and "trickle-down", as suggested by Tassi et al. (2013, see chapter 2.1.3). The fact that many vendors maintain links to family members in the countryside also provides a crucial link

between urban and rural areas and the movement of fresh, local products from the latter to the former.

Some of the sourcing strategies of vendors rest on highly responsive information networks, such as the case of the way Doña Dolores sources quinoa. The ability to reach up-to-date information on locations of quality quinoa at a good price and respond to this information in order to acquire a product that is difficult to get hold of demonstrates another characteristic of popular economies, that they are highly flexible and able to adapt to a fluid economic environment (Castillo et al. 2012, see chapter 2.3.2). The findings therefore suggest that street food vendors in El Alto and the way they make use of networks contribute to physical accessibility of food in urban settings by playing an important role in the marketing system that moves food products from the countryside to the city. This capacity, a product of an efficient and responsive decentralized structure, counters views of popular economies as backward and unorganized (see chapter 2.1.3) and suggests that the ability of networks to negotiate requirements both of stability (long-term, personal relationships) and fluidity (responsiveness and adaptability) may make them an ideal structure for economic activity. This idea will be returned to in chapter 7.5.

7.3 Street food vendors' networks and food preference

The importance to vendors of their *casero* relationship with their customers has been found to create a high degree of concern for catering to their specific preferences. Vendors frequently remember the specific tastes of their different *caseros* and react to them without being asked, remembering, for example, that a specific customer does not like *chuño*, and not adding this to the plate whenever that customer orders. Vendors also frequently receive verbal feedback from their customers and react to it on a daily basis. This means that the network structure within which vendors operate, and the responsiveness to consumer demand, translate into a contribution of these networks to food preference, an integral part to the 1996 World Food Summit's definition that 'food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs *and food preferences* for an active and healthy life' (my italics, see chapter 2.5.1).

Noted in chapter 7.1 is the collective variety offered by street food vendors in El Alto, since a number of different dishes are served by different vendors. As shown in chapter 6.3, this is partly due to the vendors' involvement in *asociaciones*, which combat excessive competition by making sure that not too many members of the same *asociación* are serving the same dish. The regulatory framework of many *asociaciones*, a more formal type of network, constrains the behavior of vendors by controlling the type of dishes they are able to sell, but the variety in dishes sold that results from this increases the capacity of the *asociación* as a whole, or of street food vendors in El Alto in general, to cater to the diverse food preferences of the population.

7.4 Street food vendors' networks and food utilisation

The chapters on food access and food preference relate to the efficiency and dynamism afforded to popular economic systems by networks, discussed in chapter 2.3.2. The pillars of utilization relates more to the institutional role of networks outlined in chapter 2.2. In terms of food utilization, the aspect that is particularly relevant to the function of street food vendors' networks is food hygiene. As has been described in chapter 2.5.1, food hygiene affects the biological utilization of food consumed and perceived lack of food hygiene in street food is frequently cited as a reason why street food *does* not contribute to food security (FAO 2007, see chapter 2.5.2).

The fact, however, that networks and the personalized, face-to-face relationships that form them play such a crucial role in the socioeconomic systems of street food vendors means that these vendors are highly dependent on reputation, which is susceptible to gossip and rumour. Vendors have been found to engage in a great deal of gossip about the hygiene practices of other vendors. Moreover, vendors and consumers alike engage in a discourse that compares the freshness of food sold in the *agachaditos* with the *pensiones* which, it is believed, re-sell leftover food on subsequent days. This creates a shared standard of the desirability of good hygiene practices, since bad hygiene practices constitute a social stain through gossip and rumour. This means that gossip and word of mouth come to constitute an institutional role, fitting in with the definition of informal institutions by Helmke and Levitsky that informal institutions are rules which are 'socially shared', 'created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels', and which involve some kind of sanction if violated (Helmke & Levitsky 2004, see chapter 2.2.1), the sanction here being loss of reputation and, presumably, custom. The networks of street food vendors serve, therefore, both to diffuse the shared standard of good food hygiene practices, and also as an institutional basis for the vendors' behavior, causing them to self-regulate hygiene practices in order to avoid loss of reputation. The discourse on the relative freshness of food from the *agachaditos* also creates an economic incentive for the vendors to actually sell fresh food, and compete with the *pensiones*.

Self-regulation of hygiene practices was also found to stem from the importance of the *casero* relationship with customers, who would cease to frequent the stalls of vendors, even those with whom they have a long-standing *casero* relationship, if they became ill after eating badly prepared food at a *casera's* stall.

All vendors reported a proportion of their business being dependent on regular, *casero*, customers, with eight out of twelve estimating more than half of the business being dependent on this regular custom, with estimates reaching 80-90%. This is not necessarily representative of a very high importance of customer *casero* relationships in itself, due to the small sample size of vendors. Data from the consumer survey, however, shows that 65.9% of consumers of street

food have at least one *casera* vendor. The data can therefore be triangulated to suggest a very high general existence of the *casero* relationship between consumer and vendor, and subsequent dependence of a vendor upon this form of custom. It must be noted that the vendors involved in the study vend in specific sales plots at all times. Other, more mobile vendors often use different strategies, moving around different busy areas such as bus stations or protests and demonstrations. These vendors' custom will involve a far greater amount of one-time sales to non-regular customers, and they are, therefore, far less likely to be incentivised to regulate their hygiene levels. The findings on self-regulation of hygiene can therefore only be applied to *agachadito* vendors who always vend in the same place.

Vendors, aware, therefore of the dangers both of loss of reputation and loss of custom from selling badly prepared food, engage in hygiene regulation practices of their own accord, by, for example, washing vegetables, washing hands, sourcing good quality ingredients (often from a trusted *casero* supplier), and wearing protective clothing.

7.5 Street food vendors' networks and food stability

The contribution of street food vendors' networks to the stability of food security over time (see FAO definition in chapter 2.5.1) rests on the effectiveness of the institutional framework of their activity to provide stability to this activity. This is because, since street food vendors have been found to play an important role in urban food security, this food security rests on the long-term survival of the vendor's business. Networks of kinship in street food vendors' systems involve family collaboration in the businesses, interlinking of family businesses and maintaining of links with family in the countryside, while networks relating to the vendors' collective organization into *asociaciones* relates more to contract, both of which, according to Hart, 'offer a durable model for hierarchy and control: parental and legal sanctions respectively' (Hart 2000, see chapter 2.2.2). The fact that vendors operate within a number of networks grounded in kinship and contract therefore provide a solid institutional framework to reduce transaction costs and provide economic stability which, in turn, helps ensure the stability, over time, of food security for the urban consumer who relies on the *agachaditos*.

The reference to trust as a 'last resort' by Hart, however, may be less applicable to the context in question. Traditional Aymara values can be seen in the activity of street food vendors in El Alto. Solidarity and reciprocity are seen in friendship groups and allegiances that run within the institutions and the *casero* relationship. Furthermore, the value of the responsibility of the individual to the group is seen in the gifting of food to those who cannot afford to purchase the vendors' dishes. Such values, Arbona writes, have been imported into modern *alteño* life due to historical gaps in State institutional structures, and they exist in relationships that have no grounding in kinship or contract, but still, especially in the case of *caseros*, often span generations. The relationships are also frequently enforced through participation in *fiestas* and

sharing of alcohol. The importance of cultural values to *alteños* in general and, in the case of street food vendors particularly, because networks based in Aymara identity have been found to provide a number of economic opportunities for vendors, suggests that adherence to key cultural values and practices has an institutional effect that reinforces trust-based relationships and means that even those networks grounded neither in kinship nor contract still entail a high degree of stability. Since the data was collected using primarily ethnographic methods, which tend to focus on the cultural context of behaviour, it is possible that this influenced this particular finding, since while conversing with and observing vendors, I was likely to be more sensitive to looking for cultural significance in the vendors' activity. Moreover, aspects of Aymara culture were particularly new and exciting for me in terms of personal interests, and my enthusiasm for participating in them may have reduced my objectivity in interpreting findings. Nonetheless, previous studies (e.g. Lazar, 2008; Tassi, 2012; Yampara, 2007) also point to the institutional role of traditional Aymara values in modern economic activity, which helps corroborate the finding and smoothen the bias I may have introduced as a researcher. This stability, however, interplays with the ability of networks to adapt to a fluid environment. As shown in chapter 7.2, vendors require the stability of long-term *casero* relationships with their customers, but, in order to achieve and maintain this, they must use and adapt other networks such as information networks and *casero* relationships with suppliers in order to adapt to changing prices, availability and quality of ingredients so that they may cater to the demands of the consumer. Different networks therefore operate on different levels to ensure stability through adaptability to fluid environments. This relates back to the idea that popular economic systems grounded in personalized networks may be a highly effective socioeconomic structure that is well-suited to a economic environment that is constantly in flux due to modern processes such as globalization (see chapter 2.3.3).

8. Concluding Remarks

The objective of the research has been to explore and explain the contribution of street food vendors' networks to food security in El Alto, and this has led to interesting findings about the importance of the role that these vendors play in the city.

Street food vendor activity in El Alto is based in a wide variety of networks that operate in different ways and contribute to various aspects of food security for the urban consumer. The efficiency, dynamism and responsiveness that result from the vendors' network system play a crucial role in the effective provision of food from the countryside to the urban consumer (physical access); in driving down food prices for the consumer (economic access); and in catering to food preference. Moreover, the fact that networks are both grounded in and diffuse shared values serves not only to regulate hygiene practices, thus making a key contribution to food security through the pillar of utilisation, but also to ensure the continued importance of traditional Aymara values that make the economic system within which vendors operate a socially responsible one.

Previous studies on street food vendors have found the occupation to be a precarious one due to the need to cook and sell food daily (Tinker 2003), have seen the occupation as a necessity rather than a choice, to which female vendors are driven out of the need to reconcile productive with reproductive roles (Floro and Swain 2013), or have envisaged food marketing systems as a hierarchy, with street food vendors at the bottom of the chain (Lourenco-Lindell 1995). While elements of economic risk such as the need to cook and sell food daily do exist for the street food vendors in El Alto, their networks serve as social capital that is capable of buffering against such risks, and, in the case of cooking and selling food daily, even diffuse discourses that turn this potentially negative element of economic risk into a positive marketing tool that contrasts the freshness of *agachadito* food with food from the *pensiones*, seen as less fresh by consumers and vendors alike. As has been noted in chapter 2.4, Turner and Schoenberger note the crucial role played by social capital in providing stability and a buffer to economic risk to street vendors in Hanoi, Vietnam (Turner & Schoenberger, 2011). In the Hanoi context, however, the economic system of networks of solidarity was rejected as an alternate economic model due to lack of scope for democratic participation among vendors. In El Alto, on the other hand, vendors are part of powerful collective organisations, and these form part of their networks, giving vendors political voice and mediating between them and the State. The vendors in the study note the democratic nature of the *asociaciones*: all members participate in regular meetings, and the *asociación* leaders, elected democratically, are not able to push through any decisions that do not have the support of the 'base'.

The qualities found in street food vendors' socioeconomic system, which are a product of the networks in which they are grounded, are therefore highly compatible with goals found in

Bolivian government policy rhetoric: The social responsibility of an economic system rooted in Aymara values is relevant to the current government's upholding of indigenous cultures and to its rejection of the Western, neoliberal economic model and its pure focus on capital accumulation (see chapter 4.5.1). Furthermore, the repeated references to ownership of concepts relating both to development in the PND and to food sovereignty, which has been adopted into Bolivian policy (see chapter 4.5.4) are highly compatible with a de-centralised network system of small-scale popular economic actors. Vendors operate within a system that is already effective in contributing to urban food security and in which popular economic actors have enough political voice to offer the system as a viable model for marketing food between countryside and city.

Nonetheless, Bolivian policies continue to focus on formalization in terms of popular economies, a focus on production rather than access in terms of food security, and a focus on linking to global value chains in terms of policy towards small-scale rural producers. This reinforces the observation that government policy ignores the importance of popular trade and informal markets to food security in urban areas (Aramayo 2013, see chapter 4.5.3).

A number of policy guidelines have therefore been identified as a result of the findings of the study:

- Since vendors have already been observed to regulate their own hygiene practices, free workshops might be offered to street food vendors to teach them more about how to handle and prepare food hygienically, so that they may incorporate knowledge voluntarily into their activities.

- An interesting option suggested by Ranaboldo in the context of small-scale producers is for authorities to recognize current forms of logic that are in place in popular economies, strengthening networks that are in place in tandem with local governments. She sees this as a way of promoting cooperation between popular actors and local State authorities, and of promoting agency among popular actors (Ranaboldo, 2011).

Supporting the current system that is in place is seen here as a policy strategy that has far more scope for success than policies to formalize street food businesses. First, for the system to formalize, prices would need to rise, which would threaten the contribution to economic food access by street food. Indeed, as has been shown, it is precisely processes that operate outside officially sanctioned channels and bureaucratic procedures that allow low-cost food to reach the urban consumer. Moreover, as noted by Vorley (2013), when introducing new forms of regulation, there is often risk of exclusion.

The socioeconomic system of street food vendors is not being upheld as a perfect solution to food security issues and rural/urban food provision. With a system based heavily on inclusion into networks, there is risk of exclusion of those vendors who, for example, do not benefit from

the same family ties or other connections that other vendors do. It has also been noted that popular economic network systems in Bolivia are hierarchical, and do involve the more powerful dominating the less powerful (Tassi, 2013). While the system has been seen to be more attentive to social welfare than a pure market economy, therefore, and while there is strong evidence of economic stability and upward trajectory for street food vendors, there is still a risk of vulnerability for actors in this type of structure. Moreover, the current study focuses on the busy, central area of El Alto with a high proliferation of foot traffic and stalls that make use of this foot traffic. Further investigation would be required in order to investigate the role of street food vendors in more remote areas of El Alto to issues of food security, particularly physical access.

Nonetheless, the research shows that, rather than being a problem that needs to be eradicated, street food vendors make a valuable contribution to urban food security in El Alto that should not be ignored.

References

- Albro, R. (2006). Actualidades Bolivia's "Evo Phenomenon": From Identity to What? *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, 11(2), 408–428. doi:10.1525/jlca.2006.11.2.408
- Aramayo Canedo, L. (2013). El rol de los tambos de fruta en la seguridad y soberanía alimentaria de La Paz-Bolivia. *Cultura Y Representaciones Sociales*. Retrieved from <http://revistas.unam.mx/index.php/crs/article/view/41908>
- Arbona, J., Canedo, M. E., Medeiros, C., & Tassi, N. (2015). El Sistema Económico Popular: Consolidación y expansión de la economía popular en Bolivia. In N. Tassi, A. Hinojosa, & R. Canaviri (Eds.), *La Economía Popular en Bolivia: Tres Miradas* (p. 296). La Paz: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS), Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia.
- Arbona, J. M. (2011). Dinámicas históricas y espaciales en la construcción de un barrio alteño. *Columbia Internacional*, 73, 91–120.
- Bank, W. (2009). *Bolivia: Policies for increasing firms' formality and productivity*. Washington, DC.
- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Böhme, M., & Thiele, R. (2012). Is the Informal Sector Constrained from the Demand Side? Evidence for Six West African Capitals. *World Development*, 40(7), 1369–1381. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2011.12.005
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (Fourth edi.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Canaviri, R. (2015). La gente piensa que dormimos en colchon de plata: Un estudio acerca de las redes sociales como forma de reproduccion social y economica en las cooperativas auríferas del departamento de La Paz. In N. Tassi, A. Hinojosa, & R. Canaviri (Eds.), *La Economía Popular en Bolivia: Tres Miradas* (p. 296). La Paz: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS), Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia.
- Castells, M., & Portes, A. (1989). World Underneath: The origins, dynamics and effects of the informal economy. In A. Portes, M. Castells, & L. A. Benton (Eds.), *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries* (pp. 11–37).
- Castillo, L., Galleguillos, L., Guharay, F., Monteroso, A., Ranaboldo, C., & Tassi, N. (2012). ¿Cómo se posicionan los pequeños productores en América Latina respecto a los mercados? *IIED/Hivos/Mainumby*.
- Chen, M. A. (2012). *The informal economy: Definitions, theories and policies* (No. No. 1) (pp. 1–26).

- Chen, M. A. (2014). Self-employed women in the urban informal economy: reducing their risks and constraints. *Www.inclusivecities.org*.
- Choudhary, N. (2013). Potential and Challenges of SSE Initiatives for Informal Street Trade: A Case Study of Two Indian Cities | Publications | UNRISD. Retrieved December 08, 2014, from <http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/search/4D39A59E81B84271C1257B5F005AD889?OpenDocument>
- Crush, J., & Frayne, B. (2011). Supermarket Expansion and the Informal Food Economy in Southern African Cities: Implications for Urban Food Security. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37(4), 781–807. doi:10.1080/03057070.2011.617532
- Cuesta, J., Edmeades, S., & Madrigal, L. (2013). Food security and public agricultural spending in Bolivia: Putting your money where your mouth is? *Food Policy*, 40(June), 1–13.
- De Soto, H. (1989). *The Other Path; The Economic Answer to Terrorism*. London: Harper & Row.
- Dijkstra, G. (2011). The PRSP Approach and the Illusion of Improved Aid Effectiveness: Lessons from Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua. *Development Policy Review*, 29(S1), S111–S133.
- Estrada, E., & Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2010). Intersectional Dignities: Latino Immigrant Street Vendor Youth in Los Angeles. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 40(1), 102–131. doi:10.1177/0891241610387926
- FAO. (2003). An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security. *FAO Practical Guides*.
- FAO. (2007). *Promises and Challenges of the Informal Food Sector in Developing Countries*.
- Floro, M. S., & Bali Swain, R. (2013). Food Security, Gender, and Occupational Choice among Urban Low-Income Households. *World Development*, 42, 89–99. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.08.005
- Friedman, M. (1970). The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. *New York Times Magazine*.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudynas, E. (2011). Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow. *Development*, 54(4), 441–447.
- Hart, K. (1973). Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(01), 61. doi:10.1017/S0022278X00008089

- Hart, K. (2000). Kinship, Contract, and Trust: The Economic Organization of Migrants in an African City Slum. In D. Gambetta (Ed.), *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Electronic., pp. 176–193). Oxford: Oxford Department of Sociology. Retrieved from <<http://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/papers/hart176-193.pdf>>
- Helmke, G., & Levitsky, S. (2004). Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(04), 725–740. doi:10.1017/S1537592704040472
- Hillenkamp, I. (2014). *La Economía Solidaria en Bolivia: Entre mercado y democracia* (p. 373). La Paz: CIDES-UMSA.
- ILO. (2011). Statistical update on employment in the informal economy. *ILO Department of Statistics*.
- Lazar, S. (2007). In-betweenness at the margins: Collective organisation, ethnicity and political agency among Bolivian street traders. In J. Staples (Ed.), *Livelihoods at the Margins: Surviving the City* (pp. 237–256). Left Coast Press.
- Lazar, S. (2008). *El Alto, Rebel City: Self and Citizenship in Andean Bolivia*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Long, N., & Van der Ploeg, J. D. (1994). Heterogeneity, actor and structure: towards a reconstitution of the concept of structure. In D. Booth (Ed.), *Rethinking Social Development* (pp. 62–89). Essex.
- Lourenco-Lindell, I. (1995). The informal food economy in a peripheral urban district. *Habitat International*, 19(2), 195–208. doi:10.1016/0197-3975(94)00066-B
- Ministerio de Planificacion. (2009). *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010-2015, Bolivia*.
- Molina, F. (n.d.). La oposición boliviana gana espacios clave en las elecciones regionales. *El Pais*. Retrieved from http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/03/30/actualidad/1427673912_141810.html
- New Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia*. (2009).
- North, D. C. (1989). Institutions and economic growth: An historical introduction. *World Development*, 17(9), 1319–1332. doi:10.1016/0305-750X(89)90075-2
- Núñez del Prado, J. (2009). Economías Indígenas, Estados del Arte desde Bolivia y la Economía Política. *CIDES-UMSA, Santa Cruz*.
- Oxford English Dictionary. (2010). Oxford University Press.
- Pejovich, S. (2012, June 4). The Effects of the Interaction of Formal and Informal Institutions on Social Stability and Economic Development. *Journal of Markets &*

Morality. Retrieved from
<http://www.marketsandmorality.com/index.php/mandm/article/view/624>

Polanyi, K. (1957). *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Ranaboldo, C. (2011). Productores de pequeña escala, productos y servicios con origen territorial/cultural: el valor de la diferencia en los mercados globalizados. In *Documeto C - Documento final de investigación de la red de aprendizaje*. La Paz: DTR-IC/Rimisp & PUCP.

Ranta, E. M. (2014, October 31). In the Name of Vivir Bien : Indigeneity, State Formation and Politics in Evo Morales' Bolivia. University of Helsinki. Retrieved from <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/136101>

Ruel, M. T., Garrett, J. L., Hawkes, C., & Cohen, M. J. (2010). The food, fuel, and financial crises affect the urban and rural poor disproportionately: a review of the evidence. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 140(1), 170S–6S. doi:10.3945/jn.109.110791

Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Tassi, N. (2012). *La Otra Cara del Mercado: Economías Populares en la Arena Global*. La Paz: ISEAT.

Tassi, N. (2013). Informal Economy Bolivian Style. *Boliviarising.blogspot.com*.

Tassi, N., Medeiros, C., Rodriguez-Carmona, A., & Ferrufino, G. (2013). *Hacer Plata Sin Plata: El desborde de los comerciantes populares en Bolivia* (p. 286). La Paz: Fundación PIEB.

Telesur. (2014). Bolivia Predicts It Will Achieve Food Sovereignty. *Telesur.tv.net*.

Timmer, C. P. (2009). Do Supermarkets Change the Food Policy Agenda? *World Development*, 37(11), 1812–1819. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.08.022

Tinker, I. (2003). Street Foods: Traditional Microenterprise in a Modernizing World. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 16(3), 331–349. doi:10.1023/A:1022300210762

Transforming our food system: The movement for food sovereignty. (2012). London.

Turner, S., & Schoenberger, L. (2011). Street Vendor Livelihoods and Everyday Politics in Hanoi, Vietnam: The Seeds of a Diverse Economy? *Urban Studies*, 49(5), 1027–1044. doi:10.1177/0042098011408934

Vorley, B. (2013). Meeting small-scale farmers in their markets. *IIED/HIVOS/Mainumby Knowledge Workshop Report*.

- Vorley, B., Del Pozo-Vergnes, E., & Barnett, A. (2012). *Small producer agency in the globalised market: making choices in a changing world* (p. 82). IIED/Hivos/Mainumby.
- Webb, J. W., Bruton, G. D., Tihanyi, L., & Ireland, R. D. (2013). Research on entrepreneurship in the informal economy: Framing a research agenda. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(5), 598–614. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.05.003
- Williams, C., & Gurtoo, A. (2012, June 24). Evaluating competing theories of street entrepreneurship. *Springer*. Springer. Retrieved from http://eprints.iisc.ernet.in/49286/1/int_ent_man_jou_8-4_391_2012.pdf
- Yampara Huarachi, S. (2007). *La cosmovisión y lógica en la dinámica socioeconómica del qhatu/feria 16 de julio* (p. 162). La Paz: Fundación PIEB; UPEA; CEBIAE; Centro de Promoción de la Mujer Gregoria Apaza; Red HABITAT; Wayna Tambo; CISTEM.

Annexe 1: Glossary of Spanish and Aymara Terms

(in alphabetical order)

Agachadito – the word used to describe a specific type of street food stall that sells traditional Bolivian dishes, where customers often sit on low benches or stools to eat

Ahogado – A sauce that accompanies a number of the dishes sold in the *agachaditos* made with onion and spices and sometimes vegetables such as carrots and peas, depending on the dish

Aji – Might refer to a dish featuring a main ingredient in a thick sauce. E.g. *aji de papa* is potato in a thick sauce. It might also refer to a spicy sauce served in small amounts as an accompaniment to the dishes.

Aji de alberja – Lentils served in a thick, *aji* sauce

Albóndiga – Meatballs served with *ahogado*, a sauce made with vegetables and onions

Alteño – Spanish word for somebody who is from or lives in El Alto

Asociación (Plural = asociaciones) – a type of collective organisation in El Alto often made up of (predominantly female) street traders

Awayu – an Aymara word for a printed cloth with a specific design used by Aymara women to carry either goods or children on their back

Biste – A beef patty made from ground meat and served with *ahogado*, a sauce made with vegetables and onions

Caldo de pata – Clear soup with a cow's hoof, grains and vegetables inside

Chayro – A hearty soup made from ground *chuño*, vegetables, some form of grain and a piece of meat. It is very common in the Western highlands and is often seen as the trademark dish of the La Paz department

Chicharrón – Consists of meat – usually chicken and pork but also llama and fish – deep fried in a special type of pan and, when sold on the street, cooked there and then rather than being brought ready-cooked from a vendor's home like with most dishes. The meat is accompanied by potato, *chuño* and *mote*.

Ch'iwña – Aymara word for the stalls made from tarpaulin stretched over wooden poles

Cholita – A word used to describe a woman who dresses in the traditional Aymara style

Chuño – Potato that has been freeze dried by leaving it out to freeze in the cold, high-altitude night and drying it in the sun during the day. The result is a black, hard, potato-like product with a slightly fermented taste. It accompanies most dishes served in the *agachaditos*.

Feria – Whereas a market (*Mercado*) is held every day, a *feria* is held only on certain days of the week

Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas – National Institute of Statistics

Mote – A large, fat variety of corn, boiled in its husk.

Paceño – Spanish word for somebody who is from or lives in La Paz

Pachamama – Mother Earth, a central figure of Aymara cosmology, often exalted in burnt offerings or with libations of alcoholic drinks

Papaliza – A specific variety of potato that is small in size, long and thin and can be reddish in colour. It has a distinctive and more delicate flavour than other varieties.

Pensión – A kind of low-cost restaurant that serves 3 or 4 course lunches and sometimes dinners for a set price. They sometimes double up as a nightclub at night.

P'esque – A kind of porridge made with quinoa and served with the customers choice of cheese and milk or cheese and *ahogado*

Pluriempleo – Multiple forms of employment or economic activity at the individual or household level

Pollera – The wide skirt characteristic of Aymara dress worn over many petticoats in order to accentuate the hips of the wearer

Quiosco – Kiosk. Often used in reference to the blue metallic stalls used by vendors in El Alto and La Paz

Revuelto – A dish that consists of ground meat fried with onions and sausage and some form of vegetable, often carrot

Saice – A dish typical to the Tarija region consisting of minced meat fried with onions

Sajta – Chicken cooked in sauce and served with *t'unt'a*

Salchipapas – A type of fast food commonly found on the streets of El Alto and La Paz, consisting of sliced 'salchicha', a frankfurter-style sausage, on top of 'papas', french fries.

Sopa de maní – A peanut soup, usually with a piece of meat inside

Th'impu de panza – Boiled stomach served with onion sauce, rice, potato and chuño

T'unt'a – Similar to *chuño* but white in colour and with a more pungent taste, having been fermented using a water- rather than a freezing- method

Wallak'e – A soup made with fish from Lake Titicaca and *k'oa*, a type of aromatic herb which also comes from the lake

Annexe 2: Qualitative Interview Guide for Street Food Vendors

Guía de entrevistas- Sistema socioeconómico de vendedoras de comida callejera

Parte I: Datos Personales

1. Naciste en La Paz/El Alto o en otro lugar? Si en otro lugar, cuál es tu pueblo de origen y cuándo viniste a La Paz/El Alto?
- 2.Cuál es tu estado civil?
3. Tienes hijos? Cuántos y qué edades tienen? Son dependientes de ti todavía?
4. Si tienes hijos, los traes a tu puesto contigo?
5. Qué nivel de educación tienes? Hasta qué grado has terminado?
6. Qué edad tienes?
7. Dónde está ubicado tu puesto?
8. Dónde vives? En que barrio?
9. Cuánto tiempo lleva llegar a tu puesto?
10. Cuánto dinero tienes que gastar para viajar a tu puesto?

Parte II: Temas Sociales

División de trabajo entre familiares

1. Otros miembros de familia trabajan también en el negocio? Cuáles son y qué actividades hacen?
2. Tienes vínculos con tu pueblo? Traes productos de ahí?
3. Qué tipo de vínculos son los que tienes con tu pueblo? (Familiares u otro?)

Clientes

4. Cómo aseguras tus clientes?
5. Quiénes son tus clientes?
6. Cuántos clientes son seguros en un día?
7. Cómo están tus relaciones con tus clientes?
8. En un día, qué proporción de tus clientes son caseros o personas que conoces?
9. A veces vendes fiado a tus clientes? A quienes y cuán frecuentemente?

10. Tienes algunas veces problemas con tus clientes? Qué tipos de problemas?

11. Algunas veces regalas comida a alguien? Si es que sí, a quién y porqué?

12. Qué cosas te exigen tus clientes y cómo respondes?

Abastecedores de productos

13. Tienes caseros que te abastecen regularmente con tus productos? Porqué y para cuáles productos?

14. Tienes la posibilidad de comprar tus productos fiados?

15. Como están tus relaciones con tus abastecedores de productos?

16. A veces tienes problemas con tus abastecedores de productos? Qué tipos de problemas?

Organización/Gobernación

17. Estás asociada? Cómo se llama tu asociación? Desde cuándo estás asociada?

18. Cuáles son los costos de ser asociado? Ej. Cuánto pagas en cuotas/para inscribirse/para fiestas?

19. Si estás asociada, qué tipos de servicios/protección te ofrece tu asociación?

20. Cuáles son las normas/las reglas bajo las cuales tienes que operar? (Alcaldía? Asociación?)

21. Tu asociación tiene normas de higiene, de preparación de la comida y de cómo es servida? Cuáles son?

22. Hay otras comideras con quienes compartes algunos costos?

23. Cómo conseguiste tu puesto?

24. Qué tipos de cooperación o solidaridad existen con otros vendedoras?

Redes Sociales

24. Algunas veces recibes regalos? De quién y porqué?

25. De qué otras maneras puedes usar de contactos personales para ayudar con tu negocio?

26. Asistes/invitas a eventos sociales para mejorar relaciones o con tus clientes o con tus abastecedores de productos?

27. Qué fiestas tienes con tu asociación?

28. Qué tienes que traer/pagar para las fiestas (Ej. Ropa, cerveza, pagos de participación)

Parte III: Temas económicos

Características y historia del negocio

1. Porqué escogiste el negocio de comidera?
2. Hace cuánto tiempo tienes el negocio?
3. Número de platos que vendía en un día al inicio vs ahora
4. Horarios al inicio vs horarios ahora
5. Precio de un plato al inicio vs precio de un plato ahora
6. Podías escoger tu puesto? Si es que sí porque escogiste este sitio?
7. Cuáles son tus horarios? (Tienes el mismo horario todos los días)
8. Eres la dueña del puesto? Si no, quién es? Si alquilas, cuánto pagas para alquilar?
9. Si no eres dueña de tu puesto, te gustaría ser dueña de un puesto? Cómo lograrías esto?
10. Eres la única dueña de tu puesto? Si no, quiénes son los otros dueños?
11. De cuántos puestos eres dueña?
12. Tienes empleados/as? Cuántos/as?
13. Hay alguien que te ayuda a veces? Quién es, y cómo le pagas?
14. Tienes registro escrito de tus ingresos y tus ganancias?

División de trabajo entre familiares

15. Qué otros negocios/trabajos tiene la familia?
16. Qué proporción de los ingresos familiares viene del negocio de comida?
17. Los ingresos del negocio de comida, cómo están divididos entre familiares? Quién decide cómo están divididos?
18. Quién hace las decisiones sobre cómo manejar el negocio?

Regulación

19. Tienes patente con la alcaldía? Cuánto pagas? Lo pagas a la alcaldía directo o a tu asociación?
20. Tienes permiso del dueño del edificio de tener tu puesto afuera?
21. Cómo controlas el higiene de la comida?
22. Hay alguien que te impone normas de higiene desde afuera? (La alcaldía? Tu asociación?)

Inversiones/Compras

23. Dónde compras tus ingredientes?
24. Dónde compras tu equipaje (platos, ollas, horno/cocina, refrigeración)?

25. Llevas prestado dinero para comprar cosas para tu negocio?

26. Cuántas veces vas al mercado y cómo guardas tus productos?

Ganancias/Ventas

27. Cuáles platos vendes? Vendes los mismos todos los días o cambias?

28. Cómo decides qué platos vender?

29. Cuánto dinero normalmente ganas en un día?

30. Cómo calculas tus ganancias?

31. Cómo decidiste sobre el precio de los platos y el tamaño de las porciones?

Futuro del negocio

32. Cómo ves tu situación económica ahora? Haces buenos negocios?

33. Cuáles son tus planes para el negocio en el futuro?

34. Te gustaría crecer el negocio: vender más; tener más puestos?

35. Si es que sí, lo podrás lograr? Cómo?

Annexe 3: Questionnaire for Consumers

Encuesta: Consumo de comida callejera en La Ceja, El Alto

Nombre de investigador:- Fecha:- Hora:-

Lugar de La Ceja:-

“Estoy ayudando con un sondeo para entender el papel que juega la comida callejera en la vida de los ciudadanos de El Alto. Hay 11 preguntas y llevará 10-15 minutos. El cuestionario es anónimo- no preguntaremos tu nombre. Agradecería mucho su participación.”

1. Cuál es su ocupación?

2. Qué edad tiene?

3. En los últimos 7 días, ¿cuántas veces consumó comida tradicional en la calle (e.g. sajta, biste, chayro, aji de fideo, fricase, etc.)

- 0 veces
- 1 - 3 veces
- 4 - 6 veces
- 7 - 9 veces
- Más de 10 veces

4. En los últimos 7 días, ¿cuántas veces consumó comida rápida en la calle? (e.g. salchipapas, hotdogs, hamburguesas)

- 0 veces
- 1 - 3 veces
- 4 - 6 veces
- 7 - 9 veces
- Más de 10 veces

(Todas las siguientes preguntas se refieren a la comida tradicional de los agachaditos y no a la comida rápida)

5. Si come comida tradicional en la calle, ¿porqué come en los agachaditos en vez de en otros lugares (e.g. en casa, en pensiones, comida rápida)?

.....
.....

6. ¿Cuáles son los mayores beneficios de los agachaditos?

.....
.....

7. ¿Cuáles son los mayores problemas con los agachaditos?

.....
.....

8. Tiene caseras o come de cualquier lugar?

9. Si tiene caseras, cuántas tiene?

10. Si tiene caseras, ¿hace cuánto tiempo la(s) conoces a la más conocida y cuáles son los beneficios de tenerla(s)?

.....
.....

11. Por favor, poner en orden de importancia (1 - 3) las siguientes consideraciones cuando come en la calle

..... Precio

..... Sabor

..... Higiene

¡Gracias por su participación!

